

SPORT, A MICROCOSM OF SOCIETY

Football as a Microcosm of Canadian Society

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Three different time periods were taken in order to analyze the relationship between Canadian Football and society.

At Confederation, in 1867, Canada was a British Colony. It was a miniature England, the customs and approach to life simply transplanted across the sea. Sport was the privilege of a few, those with time available. For the most part it was an opportunity for social interchange. Rugby was one of several types of football in vogue particularly among graduates from Rugby School. The British military stationed in Montreal and McGill University students were the chief exponents of it in Montreal, a city which, although predominantly French speaking, had a sizeable English community seeking ways to manifest and preserve its "Englishness."

The Canada of 1931 was somewhat different. The Statute of Westminster of that year affirmed Canada's independence, although there were still formal ties such as to the Monarchy. Some Canadians wished to maintain and strengthen the British ties; others wished to forge new ones with the United States. The term "rugby" was still used to describe Canadian football. The game still retained its British character. Like the country, however, there existed the lure of the United States. When the forward pass became part of the Canadian game for all leagues in 1931, the implementation reflected what was happening in society as a whole in its search for "American know-how."

Canadian society of 1981 was concerned with forging a national consciousness giving scope to full opportunity while being aware of the nation's cultural diversity, East-West rivalry, and American influences. An interventionist government policy was apparent. Football reflected each of these national concerns and in some ways led the way in new solutions. American influence was still high but seemed to be stabilized at the per cent government set for radio and tv programming. East-West rivalries were being minimized in favour of a one "national" league concept. The CFL was much like other Canadian industries: a Canadian identity led by American talent in search of the traditional English values as represented by the Grey Cup.