

'Genius' And 'Dictator' Were Duplessis Labels

By THE CANADIAN PRESS
Some called Maurice Duplessis a political genius and saviour of Quebec. Others called him a dictator. Some hailed him as a great man while others denounced him as a politician who rewarded party friends and crushed foes.

He made no bones about his views on government affairs. He called the system of letting out tenders for contracts "disguised hypocrisy." He said of government purchases it was his policy to encourage "our friends first" and to buy elsewhere when necessary.

He said his government paid the highest retail prices for many goods because it believed in encouraging small business, as well as big wholesale organizations.

In the 1956 election campaign, he told voters in one riding they would not get a needed bridge unless they elected a Union Nationale candidate to the legislature. They elected a Liberal and the bridge was not built.

SYSTEM WORKED
The same principle applied elsewhere to new roads or hospitals.

"If you approve, let us know by your vote," he said.

His system worked. He was the first Quebec premier to serve five terms of office—four of them consecutive. His Union Nationale party held at one time more seats in the legislature—82—than any other before.

On May 16, 1957, Premier Duplessis observed the 30th anniversary of his first election to the legislature as Conservative member for the newsprint-making city of Trois-Rivieres. Four days later, he set a record of 5,818 days in office, one day more than the provincial mark of the late Alexandre Taschereau. In the months that followed, he far outdistanced the term of the once-powerful Liberal whose regime he brought crashing down in 1936.

Mr. Duplessis, always a skilled manager of people, formed an alliance of rebel Liberals, Conservatives and nationalists to accomplish the overthrow, ending a 39-year Liberal reign in Quebec. Once installed at the government leader's desk in the legislature, Premier Duplessis dominated proceedings.

DOMINATED HOUSE
He used flashing oratory to praise the works of his own government and scathing attack the opposition.

When any of his own supporters, cabinet ministers or members, got into hot water in the House, the premier motioned to them to sit down and he took over eagerly.

He paid only slight attention

ful turn of mind and once told a newspaper man:

"If you have children, your life goes on forever." What he enjoyed most was talking politics, and he loved a joke of which a political opponent was the butt.

He was a New York Yankees baseball fan and at one time disappeared from his office every autumn to attend the world series. He was a regular Saturday night customer of the Montreal Forum where Montreal Canadiens of the National Hockey League performed on weekends.

His spoken French had an earthy flavor responsible for part of his popularity with voters and his English though good had a slight accent and French turn of phrase.

In his younger days he was a hard-living, hard-driving politician who once joked that he would trade 200 years of purgatory for a few years of political power. He smoked cigars, drank champagne and his good looks attracted the ladies.

DIABETES SUFFERER
He gave up alcohol in 1942, three years after his Union Nationale party's only general election defeat, and turned himself into a skillful master of politics.

A victim of diabetes, he ate simply and observed regular habits though he got only about six hours sleep after his busy day.

On Wednesdays, he left his compact suite in the Chateau Frontenac at Quebec and accompanied by a provincial police officer in plain clothes attended 6 a.m. mass at the Roman Catholic basilica.

General elections, byelections and all his important political moves were undertaken on Wednesdays, a day of special devotion to St. Joseph.

On fine days, Mr. Duplessis walked the 10-minute distance from the hotel to his legislature offices with his police companion fending off anyone wanting to engage the premier in undesired

conversation.

The institution of the plain-clothes guard dated back to times when threatening letters found their way into Mr. Duplessis' mail.

Mr. Duplessis was born at Trois-Rivieres April 20, 1890. His father was a conservative member of the Quebec legislature for eight years.

POLITICAL ENVIRONMENT
He grew up in a political atmosphere. Two uncles were members of the legislature—one sat on the government benches with the Liberals when Mr. Duplessis was first elected—and a sister married the son of J. A. Bureau, long-time Liberal member of the Commons for Trois-Rivieres and later a senator.

Mr. Duplessis cut his political teeth in municipal elections, working for a Liberal. When he ran as a Conservative in the 1923 provincial election, the 33-year-old Duplessis went down to de-

feat. But he was elected by 130 votes in 1927 and within eight years was leader of his party.

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The two most talked-about pieces of legislation to emerge from his 1936-39 administration were the Farm Credit Act, under which more than \$200,000,000 has been lent to farmers since 1937, and the Padlock Law, which empowered the attorney-general to order any premises padlocked for one year if he was satisfied they were used as Communist propaganda centres. The padlock law has been ruled invalid.

DEFEAT BY LIBERALS
Federal Liberals joined forces with the provincial Liberal party to defeat the Duplessis government a few weeks after the outbreak of the Second World War.

Mr. Duplessis never forgave the federal party for this "interference" in provincial affairs.

He opened his 1939 election campaign with a remark about "participation" interpreted as indicating opposition to the war effort.

Quebec voted Liberal on that occasion but elected Mr. Duplessis' Union Nationale in 1944 when the war was in its closing stages. Post-war developments and mounting budgets favored a far-reaching building program.

His government enacted unusual and drastic legislation—establishing a redefinition of freedom of worship aimed at restricting the activities of Jehovah's Witnesses, a provincial lottery, television censorship, newsprint controls—but much of it remains a dead letter.

The lottery law, for instance, cannot legally be promulgated unless the Canadian Criminal Code is amended.

His anti-margarine legislation, in effect for the last seven years, was held up as evidence that the Union Nationale government concentrates its attention on rural constituencies.

Rural districts with new highways and school overwhelmingly supported the premier but there was anti-Duplessis feeling in Montreal and Quebec where rapid growth and expansion have given rise to increased social and labor problems.

A BUILDER
To Quebec voters, Mr. Duplessis was first of all the builder of new roads, bridges, schools, hospitals. He is associated with progress and development. He was the man who gave Quebec a flag—a white cross on an azure field with four white fleurs-de-lis.

Ungava's gigantic iron ore mining development; Bersimis, Manicouagan, Chute-au-Diable, and other hydro-electric projects; high-voltage cables laid under the

St. Lawrence River to carry electricity to the dormant Gaspé Peninsula; roads that opened the northern regions of barren Chibougamau and sparsely-inhabited Lake St. John to an era of booming growth—these were achievements of the Duplessis administration.

ANCIENT CEMETERY
HERAKLION, Crete (Reuters) A farm tractor working near the village of Mysini in eastern Crete uncovered an ancient cemetery believed to date from about 1300 B.C.

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