

CHAPTER 3

1939 TO PRESENT-DAY

Modernization of Québec,

Quiet Revolution

& Contemporary Québec

PART 2

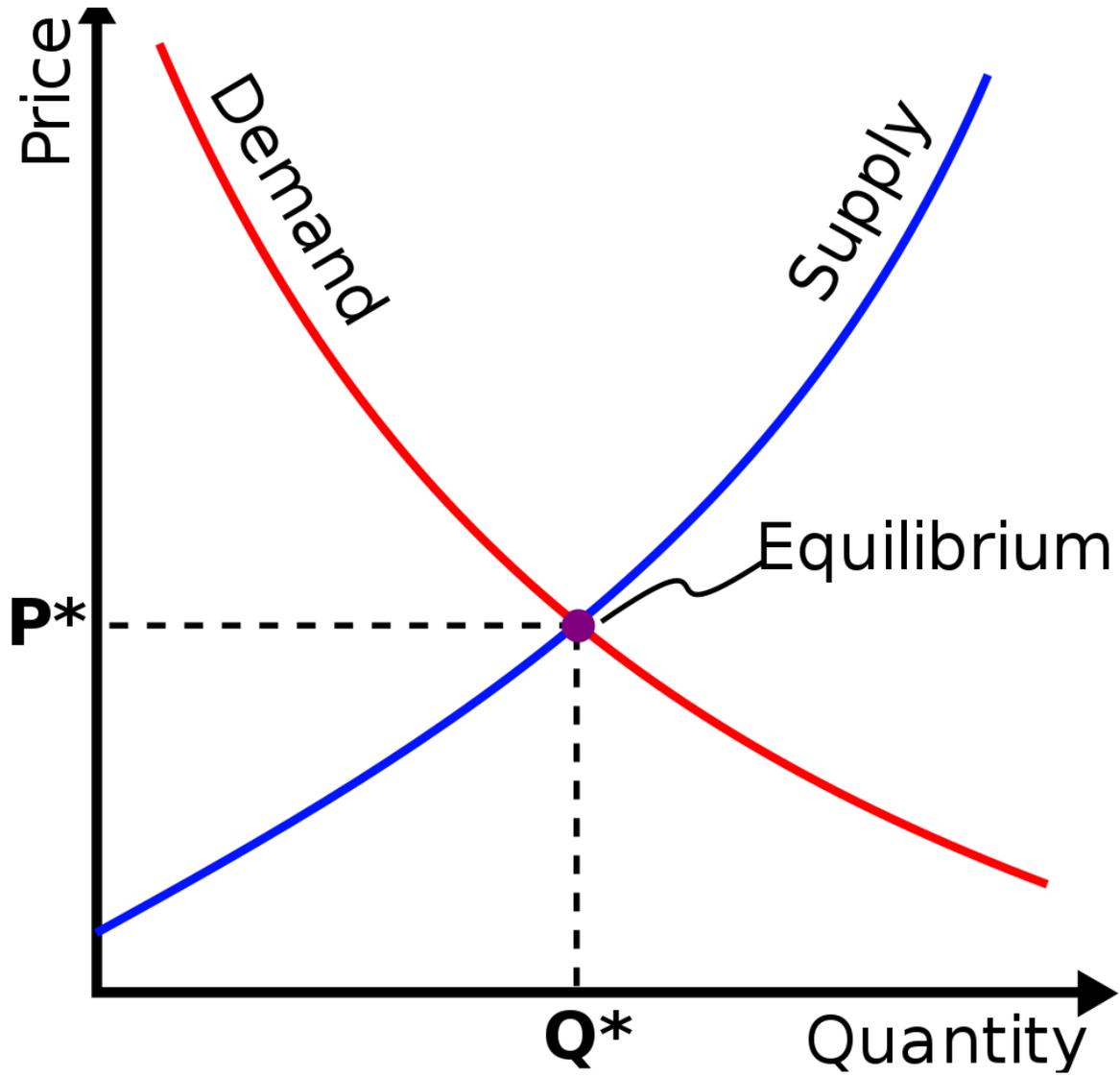
Duplessis era



Maurice Duplessis *(Union nationale)*

Premier of Québec:

- 1936-1939
- 1944-1959 (death)
- *Le chef or La Grande Noirceur?*
- During this era, Québec was pulled in two directions: between the security of tradition and the attractions of modernity.



Economic liberalism

Duplessis supported economic liberalism.

According to this principle:

- the government should **intervene as little as possible** in the economy.
- the economy should be governed by the **laws of supply and demand**.



Economic liberalism

- When Duplessis returned to power in 1944, **the economy of Western countries was booming**. There was a **high demand for raw materials** (iron, wood, pulp and paper, aluminum and asbestos).
- To stimulate the economy, **Duplessis attracted foreign investors in Québec**. He praised Québec's:
 - obedient and diligent workforce
 - low tax rates
 - lack of government intervention.



Economic liberalism

- For example, Duplessis managed to attract **American mining companies** that exploited the large **iron ore deposits on the Côte-Nord and Northern Québec**.
 - These companies built roads, railways and wharves.
 - They generated population growth and development.
 - However, they sold the iron ore at very low prices.



Economic liberalism

Duplessis invested in regional development:

- The government invested \$12 million **to provide electricity to rural areas.**
- From 1945 to 1955, the **proportion of farms with access to electricity jumped from 19% to 90%.**

Economic liberalism



Under Duplessis, the province was deficit-free:

- The government borrowed as little money as possible.
- The government invested as little as possible in infrastructure (roads, hospitals and schools).
- The few contracts the government awarded were often to “friends” of the party, who donated a certain percentage of their profits to the *Union nationale*’s campaign fund in return.

Social conservatism



Duplessis was also a strict **social conservative**.

Duplessis' main aspirations were to:

- preserve the **French language**, the **Catholic religion**, **tradition**, and the **status quo**.
- promote **farming** and **country living**.

As a result, support for the *Union nationale* came mainly from **rural areas** and **members of the clergy**.

Padlock Law



In 1937, the **Duplessis** government adopted the *Act to Protect the Province Against Communist Propaganda*, or the ***Padlock Law***.



Padlock Law



- It allowed the attorney general to **shut down** any building used to create **communist propaganda** (by padlocking the door) and to **imprison** anyone involved.
- By not specifying what constituted “communist propaganda”, it gave the **government power to limit the influence of unions** by associating them with communism.
- Workers’ strikes were harshly suppressed.
- In 1957, the **Supreme Court of Canada struck the law down** (deemed unconstitutional).

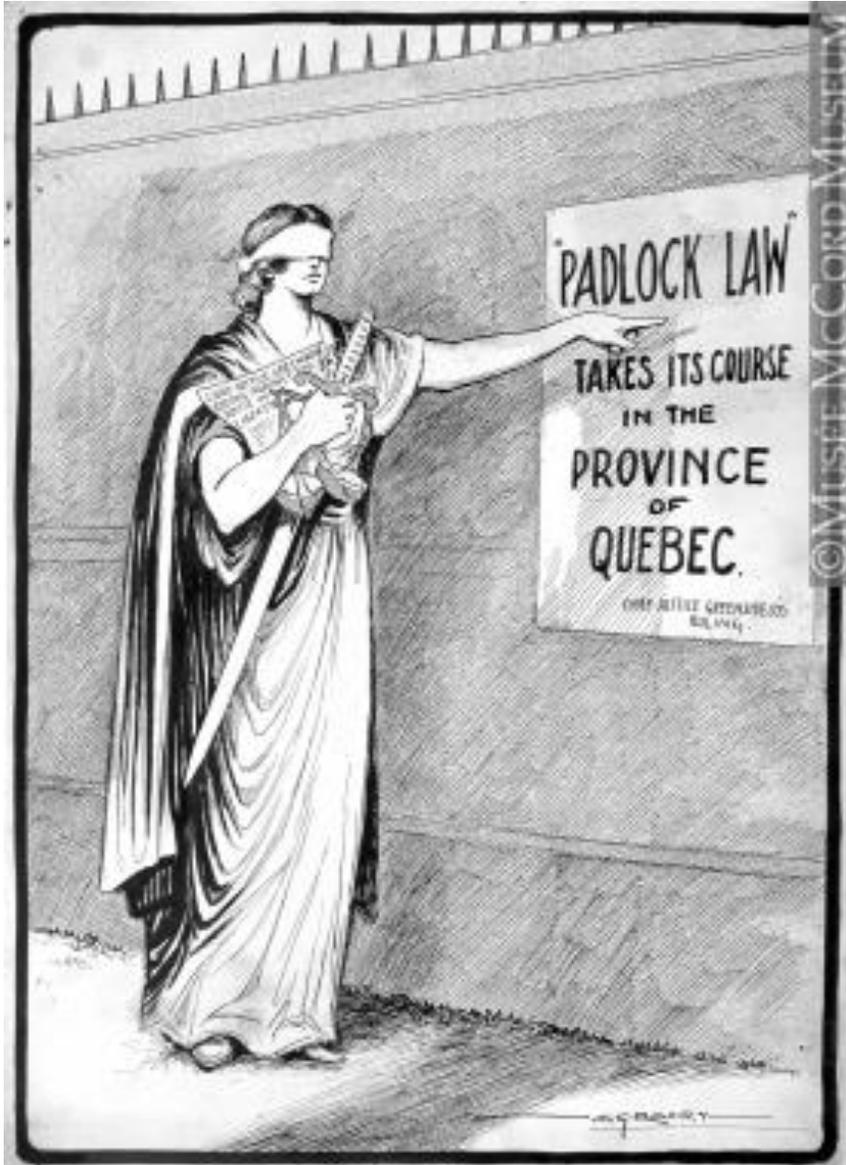
Padlock Law



- In 1949, in the town of Asbestos, a **strike broke out among asbestos workers**.
- The workers demanded better health protection.
- Duplessis sided with the bosses, and the strike was declared illegal.

Maurice Duplessis & Bishop Charbonneau





Padlock Law



← *Justice and the Padlock Law*
Arthur George Racey, 1937

Justice is represented by a woman with her eyes covered.

The artist responsible for the caricature is implying that the Padlock Act is a blind and unfair law.

Funding of education and health

Following WW2, there was a **baby boom** that brought greater needs in terms of education and health care.

Under Duplessis, the education and health systems of Québec:

- were still the responsibility of the Catholic Church
- depended on government funding
- were underdeveloped
- were underfunded
- lacked equipment, facilities and teachers.



Clericalism

Since the Conquest in 1760, the Catholic Church had a great deal of influence over the lives of everyday citizens and the ruling elite:

- It allowed the French Canadian population to keep its **traditions, language and nationhood**.
- It was responsible for **education** (from primary school to university).
- It **ran hospitals**.
- It provided **social services** (orphanages, aid for the poor, etc.).
- It organized **unions**, farmers' associations, youth and women's groups.
- Etc.



Clericalism

The influence of the Church was especially strong during the Duplessis era:

- Duplessis encouraged Christian values.
- In exchange for Duplessis' support, the Catholic Church encouraged the public to vote for his party, the *Union nationale*.



Clericalism

A slogan repeated both by partisans of the *Union nationale* and by a number of priests illustrates the relationship between Duplessis and the Catholic clergy: “**Heaven is blue, hell is red.**” Blue was the colour of the *UN* and red was the colour of the *Parti libéral*.

Provincial autonomy

L'INTREPIDE DÉFENSEUR DE NOS DROITS



THE FEARLESS DEFENDER OF OUR RIGHTS
COOPERATION YES, ASSIMILATION NEVER

COOPÉRATION
OUI
ASSIMILATION
JAMAIS

1949?

Since WW2, the Canadian government had centralized its powers in Ottawa by passing the *War Measures Act*. Among other things, **this law allowed the federal government to encroach on the powers of the provinces.**

- Duplessis was a strong **defender of provincial autonomy.**
- Duplessis feared that the loss of power in Québec **would lead to the assimilation of French Canadians.**
- Duplessis demanded that the Constitution of 1867 be respected.

Provincial autonomy

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1949?

Example #1 of Duplessis' autonomy policies:

- In 1954, Duplessis passed a law implementing a **15% provincial income tax**, despite the existing federal law. Ottawa eventually had to cede part of its tax deducted in Québec. It was a major victory for Duplessis.

Provincial autonomy



Example #2 of Duplessis' autonomy policies:

- To affirm the distinct character of Québec, Duplessis adopted the Québec flag, the *Fleurdelisé* in 1948, replacing the Union Jack.

The current flag of Québec – *le Fleurdelisé*



Opposition

Maurice Duplessis had harsh critics among young intellectuals, trade unionists and some influential members of the Catholic Church:

- In 1956, 2 priests published an article entitled *The Christian and the elections*, which denounced the **stupidity and immorality of the election practices of the *Union nationale*** (corruption, bribes, threats).

Opposition

Maurice Duplessis had harsh critics among young intellectuals, trade unionists and some influential members of the Catholic Church:

- Socially, Duplessis was criticized for **clinging to the past** and for **including religion in electoral campaign**. Many **feminists opposed him**, demanding to have the same rights as men.

Opposition

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- Politically, Duplessis was criticized for “**selling out**” Québec to **American companies**.
- **Unions** mobilized and opposed the Duplessis government for the side of the bosses in labour conflicts.
- Journalists like Pierre Elliott Trudeau started a magazine, *Cité libre*, that gave them a platform to express their ideas.

Duplessis orphans scandal



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