



John A. Macdonald: Canada's First Prime Minister (Quest Biography)

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A biography of Canada's first prime minister, a legendary political strategist who helped found a new nation in 1867.

Shocked by Canada's 1837 rebellions, John A. Macdonald sought to build alliances and avoid future conflicts. Thanks to financial worries and an alcohol problem, he almost quit politics in 1864. The challenge of building Confederation harnessed his skills, and in 1867 he became the country's first prime minister.

As "Sir John A.," he drove the Dominion's westward expansion, rapidly incorporating the Prairies and British Columbia before a railway contract scandal unseated him in 1873. He conquered his drinking problem and rebuilt the Conservative Party to regain power in 1878. The centrepiece of his protectionist National Policy was the transcontinental railway, but a western uprising in 1885 was followed by the controversial execution of rebel leader Louis Riel.

Although dominant nationally, Macdonald often cut ethical corners to resist the formidable challenge of the Ontario Liberals in his own province. John A. Macdonald created Canada, but this popular hero had many flaws.

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