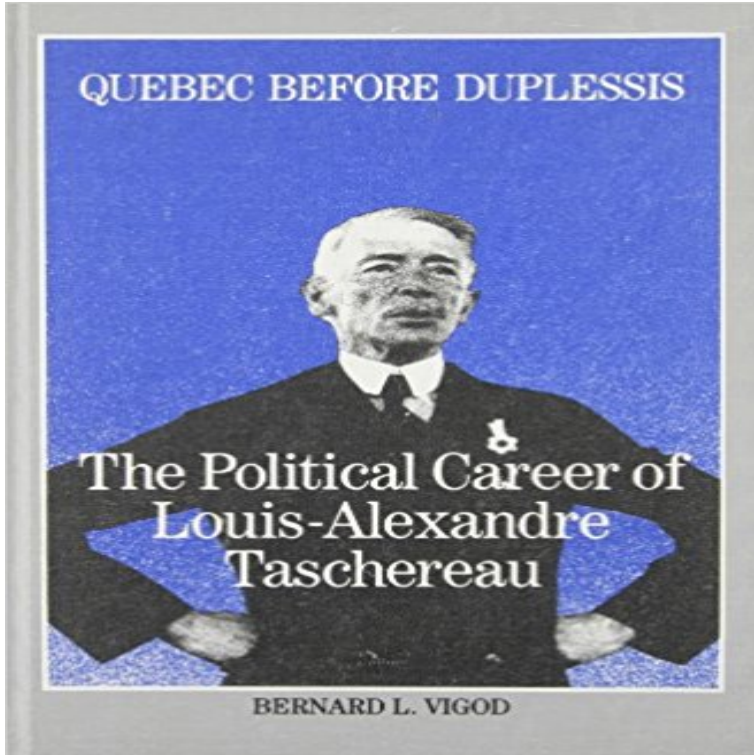


Quebec Before Duplessis: The Political Career of Louis-Alexandre Taschereau



Born into French Canada's traditional elite, a legal and landholding aristocracy, Louis-Alexandre Taschereau emerged as the leading champion of industrial development in early twentieth-century Quebec. As premier from 1920 to 1936, and previously as chief lieutenant in the Liberal government of Sir Lomer Gouin, Taschereau vigorously advocated the development of Quebec's immense hydraulic forest, and mineral resources as the key to a prosperous future. His policy of encouraging private, usually non-French-Canadian entrepreneurs earned him the undying enmity of nationalist and conservative forces, yet he defended his position openly and won four general elections despite an unfavorable economic climate during much of his premiership. Bernard L. Vigod provides the first balanced assessment of Taschereau's long career, countering the popular image of him - largely the creation of his political opponents - as the leader of a corrupt, reactionary regime tied to foreign financiers. Vigod shows that Taschereau possessed a coherent vision of French-Canadian society, a liberal one which welcomed material and intellectual progress and rejected the isolationism and resistance to change favoured by traditional nationalist and ultramontane thinkers. He gives Taschereau credit for his courageous attempt to guide Quebec through the depression, without ignoring his fatal inability to deal with the issues of social security and the electricity trust. This study reveals in its subject an intense if partisan commitment to Wilfrid Laurier's ideal of tolerance and compromise in Canadian political life. It also testifies to a genuine sense of public duty in a politician who was far more than a Duplessis with manners.

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