



IMPERIAL STANDARD: Imperial Oil, Exxon, and the Canadian Oil Industry from 1880

Graham D. Taylor

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CONCLUSION

The last half of the nineteenth century witnessed transformations in the technologies of extraction, production, transportation, and communications that provided opportunities for aspiring entrepreneurs to achieve economies of scale in production and expand their market reach across entire countries and abroad. In the burgeoning kerosene industry, John D. Rockefeller fashioned an empire through the vertical integration of refining, pipelines, and marketing to achieve a dominant position for Standard Oil in the United States by the 1880s and a worldwide market position over the following decade. In Canada, a group of refiners formed Imperial Oil in 1880 to establish a similar degree of dominance in the Canadian market. Imperial never achieved that goal, and lost a crucial edge in technology when the scientist Herman Frasch moved from Imperial to Standard Oil. But by the 1890s it had developed an integrated system that in many respects paralleled for Canada the much larger operations of Standard Oil across the border.¹

The period from the 1880s to the First World War has been designated the first era of globalization as British, European, and later American companies extended their reach across much of the rest of the world. The emergence of new investment markets and expansion of existing ones, as well as the development of new financial instruments to reach a wider investing public, provided sources of capital on a much larger scale. In turn this enabled the rise of companies with national or international aspirations. The mercantilist empires of Britain and France dismantled many of their investment trade barriers by the 1860s. The establishment of the

“gold standard” among major industrial nations in the following decade fostered the acceleration of capital mobility across borders.²

At the same time, the exponents of globalization encountered increasing resistance, particularly from emerging industrial nations including Germany, Japan, and the United States. Protective tariffs were erected and trade restrictions were developed in order to foster domestic industries. One of the by-products of these policies—anticipated or not—was that companies seeking to enter promising new markets abroad, or to access raw materials essential for industrial growth, turned to portfolio and direct investment in these protectionist countries. By the early twentieth century, the United States was host country to over \$7 billion (USD) from overseas investors, of which \$1.5 billion (USD) was in direct investment.³

Canada established its own protectionist system with the National Policy in 1879—not necessarily because it expected to become an industrial powerhouse, but rather to protect jobs at home by inviting foreign direct investment. If this was the intent, it seems to have worked: by 1914 Canada was host to \$800 million (USD), equivalent to 53 per cent of FDI in the US, which had a population ten times larger. Likewise Canada’s GNP more than doubled between 1880 and 1910.⁴

Imperial Oil was not so fortunate. Even before the amalgamation of the company in 1880, exports of Canadian kerosene had declined substantially, and Imperial lobbied for trade protection under the National Policy. Standard Oil’s products, however, remained competitive, particularly in the Maritimes, and in the 1890s the US company embarked on a strategy familiar from its expansion ventures at home. Imperial found itself surrounded by competitors that had financing and technological support from Standard. A sharp depression in the US in the mid-1890s accelerated Standard’s campaign to conquer the Canadian market. Although Imperial sought to hold its investors through generous dividend payments, by 1898–99, with prospects for a shrinking market and diminishing output from the Petrolia oil wells, the outlook was bleak. Standard offered good terms, as it had in take-overs of US competitors, and the merger was swiftly consummated.⁵

In the normal course of events, it is quite probable that Imperial would have become simply a vehicle for marketing Standard Oil products in Canada: all but one refinery was closed and the output of the Petrolia fields continued to decline. In addition, the government of Canada under

the Liberal regime of Wilfrid Laurier seemed headed for some form of reciprocity in trade with the US in the first decade of the twentieth century. Three events in 1911, however, disrupted this “normal course” and transformed the relationship between Standard Oil and Imperial Oil.

At the national level, in 1911 a proposed US-Canada Reciprocity Treaty was defeated, and Canada remained protectionist for several more decades. On the industry front, Standard’s greatest rival, Royal Dutch Shell, launched a beachhead in Canada, establishing an oil and gas storage facility in Montreal in 1911. This was followed with threats to embark on major exploratory ventures in Alberta a few years later. But the most significant event took place in the US when the Supreme Court upheld a ruling ordering dissolution of Standard Oil in 1911.

Small oil producers in the US, as well as populist and progressive politicians and state authorities from Pennsylvania to Texas, had been pursuing Standard Oil for more than two decades. The company had been regarded as a target of the federal Sherman Antitrust Act of 1890, but had avoided prosecution in part through various legal stratagems. In 1908, however, the US Justice Department brought a case against it, and a court-ordered dissolution was upheld three years later. Standard Oil was broken up into thirty-four companies, of which the largest were Standard Oil of New Jersey (Jersey Standard, later Exxon) and Standard Oil of New York (Socony, later Mobil). In 1999 Exxon and Mobil were reunited.⁶

Imperial Oil ended up with Jersey Standard, which proved to be providential for the Canadian company. Walter Teagle took charge of Jersey Standard’s foreign sales and also became president of Imperial Oil. Combining these roles, he fashioned a strategy for both companies that would sustain them through the next thirty years, during which time he also became the chief executive of Jersey Standard.

Teagle recognized, as did other managers of Jersey Standard, that the company had immense refining assets and a strong transportation and marketing structure but virtually no direct access to crude oil, which it had to buy from other Standard remnants or independent suppliers. Standard Oil had missed an opportunity to enter the burgeoning Texas oil fields in the early 1900s, and in any case expansion into production in the US might arouse antitrust authorities. The alternative was to look for new oilfields abroad, particularly in Latin America. In that region, the British

had well established commercial connections, while thanks to President Theodore Roosevelt's "Big Stick" diplomacy American companies faced hostility from local governments.

In this situation, Imperial Oil could prove useful. As part of the British Empire, the Canadian company could facilitate dealings with British companies, as was the case in Peru. In addition, it could provide cover for an American company in a hostile environment, as was the case in Colombia. In addition, Teagle regarded Imperial as a potential platform for a broader array of Jersey Standard overseas interests, shielded from scrutiny and possible further tax and antitrust measures by the US government. As it happened, this proved to be an unwarranted fear: as the US moved toward intervention in the First World War, the value of big businesses for military preparedness underwent a reconsideration. By the 1920s the US government was an enthusiastic proponent of overseas investment by the oil industry for "national defense." In the Middle East Jersey Standard acquired a foothold in the Anglo-French consortium, Iraq Petroleum, with assistance from the US State Department. In the meantime, however, Imperial Oil served Jersey Standard's purposes as a vehicle for expansion in South America through the International Petroleum Company.⁷

As president of Imperial Oil Teagle arranged for a substantial increase in capitalization—to \$50 million (CAD)—to construct refineries across the country, provided Imperial with access to thermal cracking refining technology, and supported what proved to be extensive exploration for new oil resources in Alberta and the Northwest Territories. Retrospectively this might be deemed an overreaction to the threat of Royal Dutch Shell in Canada. But these measures also equipped Imperial with an updated and integrated system that enabled it to sustain its position as the leading company in the industry in Canada for much of the rest of the century.

But Imperial was also firmly embedded in Jersey Standard's international structure. While oil from Peru was carried to Imperial's market on the west coast of Canada, and Colombian oil to the Maritimes, a substantial amount of the oil from both sources went to Jersey Standard's refinery in Bayonne, New Jersey. Most of the profits from International Petroleum in the 1930s flowed ultimately as dividends to Jersey Standard. Although Imperial had established a research lab at Sarnia in the 1920s, it remained dependent on the parent company for access to the most

up-to-date technology in many areas. Marketing strategies and labour relations policies drew on Jersey Standard models. International Petroleum provided opportunities for Imperial's managers, engineers, and geologists to develop their capabilities while at the top levels Imperial executives served on the Jersey Standard board of directors, and the parent company designated individual members of their executive committee to act as liaisons with Imperial Oil.⁸

As the Second World War ended, new opportunities for overseas expansion opened for Jersey Standard, particularly in the Middle East where it joined the Aramco consortium in Saudi Arabia in 1947. By that time oil production from Jersey Standard's affiliates in Venezuela had far exceeded output from Colombia and Peru, augmenting the large producing and refining operations of Humble Oil in Texas, which it had acquired in 1919. For Imperial Oil, however, the future was far less promising. During the 1920s Imperial's subsidiary, Royalite, had found gas and oil in Alberta's Turner Valley near Calgary, but by the postwar years the production rate was declining. Meanwhile, the government of Colombia was proposing to take over International Petroleum's fields by 1951. Imperial had been exploring for oil in northern Alberta and the Northwest Territories since 1921 with limited success—aside from Norman Wells, which had supplied the Canol project during the Second World War but was too distant from markets to be commercially viable.

In 1945, Henry Hewetson took over as president of Imperial. Although he was an American Hewetson had connections to Canada, having served with the Royal Flying Corps in the First World War, and he worked at the Sarnia refinery before going back to the US. Eventually Hewetson headed Standard Oil of Louisiana, then returned to Imperial Oil in 1935, where he overhauled the company's sales and marketing operations. In many respects he resembled Teagle, both physically and in his stature with the parent company, where he was appointed director in 1950.⁹

Since Alberta had plentiful reserves of natural gas, Jersey Standard contemplated providing Imperial with access to a modified version of a German patent it had acquired in the 1930s that would produce synthetic crude oil from gas. But Hewetson backed Link and other geologists seeking a "last chance effort" to strike oil, and arranged for Jersey Standard to bring in specialists and undertake research using seismic surveys to

identify “anomalies” in an area of central Alberta known as the western Canadian sedimentary basin. According to one account of the events leading to the Leduc discovery, the area chosen was “geologically all wrong but [Imperial] found oil anyway.”¹⁰

Leduc had a larger impact on the Imperial-Jersey Standard relationship than either party may have anticipated. In order to finance developing the infrastructure around Leduc, including building a pipeline to central Canada, Imperial sold International Petroleum to Jersey Standard. In effect Imperial Oil became primarily a vertically integrated Canadian operation, still linked to its US parent but increasingly oriented to the domestic Canadian market. Over the next seventy years Imperial’s commitment to developing Canadian oil resources deepened as it advanced into the oil sands of Alberta and the oil and gas frontiers of northern Canada.

In 1947–48 by a curious—and unrelated—coincidence, the government of Canada contemplated, and then recoiled from, a proposed customs union and comprehensive trade agreement with the United States. During the Second World War there had been a good deal of economic cooperation between the two countries, but by 1947 Canada faced a serious imbalance in its trade and currency accounts as the British market failed to rebound and imports from the United States soared. Eventually the Marshall Plan, in which Canada was allowed to participate as a supplier of goods, mitigated these problems. But in the interim proposals for greater integration between the two countries had support, at least within the government agencies and ministries. Nevertheless their views were not endorsed by Canada’s prime minister Mackenzie King, who had been a member of the Laurier cabinet during the Reciprocity Treaty debacle of 1911 and did not wish to repeat the experience.¹¹

This rejection did not, then, reflect a nascent Canadian nationalism. But over the next two decades issues involving American economic (and political) influence in Canada would begin to take effect, culminating in the early 1970s when the first energy crisis focused public attention on the role of foreign-owned companies in the oil and gas industry, with Imperial Oil as exhibit number one. Even in the 1950s there was some incipient discontent: the role of Americans in financing the Trans Canada Pipe Line engendered criticism, and John Diefenbaker indulged in nationalist rhetoric during election campaigns. Generally, however, government

policies reflect what later was characterized as a “continentalist” approach: the National Oil Policy, for example, supported the existing arrangements under which eastern Canada imported oil, relying on multinational suppliers—and the proposal for a pipeline to Montreal was shelved.¹²

Within the Jersey Standard system, relations with Imperial also exhibited a “continentalist” (or “corporatist”) character during this period. The “Esso” oval sign towered over service stations, while the name “Imperial” diminished into the background. Generous dividends continued to flow from Imperial, although it was able to retain a somewhat greater amount of earnings for reinvestment.¹³ More Canadians rose to the senior management level at Imperial, and they were also encouraged to pursue lateral promotions across other Jersey Standard divisions and affiliates: Ken Jamieson, who became president of Jersey Standard in 1965 and chairman of the board in 1969, was a prominent example of this career path.¹⁴

At the same time, however, Imperial was moving toward a strategy of expansion and diversification within Canada. As the company focused on new initiatives into northern Canada and the oil sands, it strengthened its research operations to support these areas. The achievements of Roger Butler and others in developing technologies to enhance *in situ* oil sands extraction and drilling for oil in Arctic conditions were the result of these measures.

Multinational oil companies, including Jersey Standard, had faced nationalism in producer states since early in the twentieth century. In 1918 Russian revolutionaries seized the Baku oil fields. During the 1930s, Bolivia and Mexico nationalized their oil, joined by Colombia in the 1950s, and Argentina, Peru, Indonesia, and Iraq in the 1960s. The floodgates opened after the first energy crisis in 1973–74 as most of the major OPEC members either nationalized their industry or set up government-owned corporations to run them.

Canada of course never experienced such upheavals, but the oil multinationals did face intense criticism in the early 1970s and again in 1979–81 in the wake of the two energy crises. The government of Canada also established a crown corporation whose initial mandate was supposed to be to promote “frontier exploration” for new oil sources. In practice it evolved into an integrated company that challenged the oil majors before being privatized in the 1990s.

The National Energy Program was an ambitious set of policies intended to encourage both new resource development and “Canadian” (not necessarily publicly owned) oil companies while enhancing federal tax revenues. It foundered in the midst of volatile oil price gyrations and feuding between the federal and provincial governments. By the end of the century, with continental free trade agreements in place, nationalist controversies over oil and other resources seemed to be vestiges of a rapidly disappearing past—except, perhaps, for Albertans with long memories.

Throughout these events, Imperial Oil was a target for criticism by Canadian nationalists. In 1981, Jack Armstrong as board chairman vigorously defended the importance of foreign investment, multinationals, and foreign technology in developing Canada’s oil resources.¹⁵ It was a forceful statement on behalf of multinationals in an era when Jersey Standard’s executives and the heads of other big oil companies were being haled before committees of the US Congress, and accused of profiteering from the energy crises.

At the same time, it was a defense of the benefits the foreign-owned oil companies offered to Canada, and Armstrong presented himself as the head of a Canadian company rather than as a spokesman for Jersey Standard. This did not of course necessarily convince Canadian critics of multinationals, nor did the underlying nationalism necessarily resonate at Jersey Standard’s headquarters. In 1981 Imperial was reporting record earnings levels and had promising new projects in the oil sands and northern Canada. As the historians of Exxon noted, Imperial’s “independence” was respected “as long as the company remained successful.”¹⁶ Over the next two decades that perspective shifted along with the fortunes of both companies.

The events of the 1970s–80s left Jersey Standard (rechristened Exxon in 1972) in a situation reminiscent of the years following the breakup of Standard Oil. Although it retained producing fields in North America, including those of Imperial in Canada, it had lost direct access to many of its overseas production holdings. As with the other oil multinationals, it had to adapt to a world in which it processed, transported, and sold oil owned by the producer states. Beyond that role, it faced several strategic options. It could diversify into other “energy-related” fields or indeed transform itself into a kind of conglomerate. It could expand into new producing fields. Or it could accommodate to changing conditions by merging with

other companies that had greater access to production or a strong market position or innovative technology.

Exxon pursued all of these options, although not simultaneously. During the 1970s–early 1980s under Clifford Garvin the company presented itself as being in “the energy business . . . rather than just the oil business.”¹⁷ To that end Exxon explored initiatives in nuclear fuel, solar power, even coal as well as supporting Imperial’s oil sands ventures. Perhaps the most ambitious operation involved shale oil in Colorado; but it proved to be premature and was shut down in 1982. It was during this period that Exxon scientists were conducting research into the role of fossil fuels in climate change. As oil prices spiked up in the early 1980s, however, diversification efforts diminished; Lawrence Rawl and Lee Raymond, who by mid-decade emerged as the new leaders at Exxon, vowed to return the company to its “core business”—oil and gas.¹⁸

In the following decade Exxon embarked on a search for new producing fields, sometimes alone but often within a consortium or in partnership. Africa in particular looked promising, leading to ventures in Chad, Cameroon, and Angola. These undertakings sometimes presented physical risks for company employees as well as financial risks, reminiscent of exploratory operations in the early twentieth century in Latin America and Russia. The collapse of the Soviet Union seemed to present great opportunities not only in central Asian states such as Kazakhstan and Azerbaijan but also in Russia, although the complex politics and bureaucratic hurdles presented endless obstacles. Ultimately Exxon was able to mount a profitable venture on Sakhalin Island, after eleven years of manoeuvring.¹⁹

Given its quest for new sources of oil, a merger with another oil major with producing fields seemed logical. But there were other factors involved. After the boom and collapse of oil prices in 1981–85, the industry entered a long period of depressed prices—except for sudden episodes of volatility, as happened during the first Gulf War in 1991. The growth of the “Asian Tigers” of Southeast Asia at the end of that decade promised a larger and more enduring market for oil, but the abrupt collapse of that boom in 1998 generated a sudden rush toward consolidation among the large multinationals. This rush was initiated by BP, which sought to merge with Mobil. When that fell through, BP turned to Amoco. Soon all the other big companies were alert for further action. Exxon in particular

feared losing ground to BP and Shell, two traditional rivals. This led to the quick merger of Exxon and Mobil in 1999, reuniting the two largest survivors of the breakup of Standard Oil in 1911, ironically with the blessing of the US Federal Trade Commission on the grounds that this was “a very different world.”²⁰

These developments at Exxon would affect the manner in which the parent company related to Imperial Oil. The oil price collapse in 1985–86 hit Exxon hard and led to a full-scale review of the company’s structure by Rawls and Raymond. They concluded that Exxon had become overly bureaucratic, burdened with multiple committee reviews and reports. At the same time there was too much decentralization, so that top management lacked the capability to react in a “nimble” way to changing conditions. Imperial in particular was perceived as having too much autonomy, as did Humble (now designated Exxon USA). For the time being, both affiliates escaped the full impact of reorganization—although the reformers reoriented the company toward a renewed effort at overseas expansion of production. In 1991 Rawl orchestrated the unification of all overseas oil exploration into a new entity, undercutting Exxon USA. He and Raymond also contemplated buying out the minority shareholders in Imperial but they were reluctant to shoulder the costs and to challenge Canadian regulations of foreign takeovers.²¹

The Exxon-Mobil merger provided a new opportunity to bring Imperial Oil to heel. Raymond supported the continuation of Mobil’s Canadian operations to counter those of Imperial, even though he acknowledged that this was an “inefficient arrangement.”²² Over the following years Mobil veterans were placed in managerial positions at Imperial, including the presidency of the company. This was not out of line with the policies of Exxon—or indeed of any multinational company—but still it was definitely a signal that things were changing.

Meanwhile the issue of fossil fuels and climate change loomed ever larger, both over companies and over the industry as a whole. In the 1990s Lee Raymond of Exxon adopted a position of denial and resistance to international pressures as exemplified in the Kyoto Accord. Rex Tillerson, Raymond’s successor, retreated from this defiant view and Exxon Mobil announced a new initiative in biofuels, aiming at generating gasoline from algae, which received a good deal of publicity. At the same time the

company continued to lobby against US measures to limit imports of oil sands products. More broadly, it took the view that world energy needs would have to rely on fossil fuels for at least another generation.²³

Imperial Oil was, if anything, in a more difficult situation. Since the 1980s it had committed large resources to the development of the oil sands and northern Canadian oil and gas. While hopes for the latter dwindled, the company continued to place its bets on the oil sands through investments in the Kearl mine and the reopening of Cold Lake and other *in situ* ventures. But delays and resistance to pipeline development linking the oil sands to world markets and continuing volatility in oil prices made for a perpetual cycle of uncertainty about the future.

In July 2018 a *Wall Street Journal* article focusing on the new chief executive officer of Exxon, Darren Woods, noted the company's acknowledgement that a \$20 billion (USD) oil sands project in Canada "was no longer profitable." The same article went on to observe: "Exxon is weighing reducing its exposure to Canada where it has operated for 130 years."²⁴ Imperial Oil—and for that matter Exxon—has been written off before, and risen from the dead, or at least from the sickbed. Nevertheless, this particular statement implied that a significant change in the Exxon Mobil-Imperial relationship was in the offing, although whether Exxon Mobil contemplated selling all or part of the Canadian company or just planned to scale back new investments in the oil sands was unclear.

In some respects, however, the two companies had been following different trajectories since the Leduc discovery in 1947. Exxon had lost many of its overseas production fields, then rebuilt its position. The amalgamation with Mobil had if anything made Exxon even more of a global player. Meanwhile, Imperial, while remaining part of the Exxon system, increasingly focused on serving the Canadian market and developing resources in Canada. For Exxon, Imperial's most important asset was its position in the oil sands, which was nevertheless a frustratingly expensive and controversial feature. But these conditions had been evident for more than twenty years, and while oil prices fell dramatically in 2014, they subsequently partially rebounded, rising above \$74 (USD)/bbl. (West Texas Intermediate) in July 2018.²⁵ So it is hard to know at this time whether Darren Woods's remarks reflect a response to continuing uncertainty in the oil market or a long-term change in strategy for Exxon Mobil.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1

Imperial Oil Company Financial Statements, 1892–98 (\$000 CAD)

Year	Assets	Surplus	Net Profit	Dividends
1892	931	297	52	32
1893	1,016	232	66	30
1894	1,094	351	69	25
1895	1,028	375	60	25
1896	1,087	447	104	36
1897	1,118	465	62	35
1898	1,055	456	n/a	30

SOURCE: Ewing, *History of Imperial Oil*, Chapter 3, Appendix II.

APPENDIX 2A

Imperial Oil Production, Sales, and Net Earnings, 1912–20 (\$000 CAD)

Year	Refining *	Sales/Mfg \$	Net income
1912	3,100	107,068	2,431
1913	3,400	119,011	3,362
1914	5,000	108,155	2,414
1915	7,000	133,620	4,784
1916	8,400	138,379	4,666
1917	13,700	227,258	5,124
1918	18,300	308,071	6,143
1919	21,200	277,877	7,174
1920	20,800	314,110	11,095

* bbl./day.

SOURCES: Ewing, *History of Imperial Oil*, Chapter 4, Tables 6–7; Gibb & Knowlton, *History of Standard Oil (NJ): The Resurgent Years*, 677–8.

APPENDIX 2B

Imperial Oil Ltd., Income Received, and Dividends Paid, 1921–47 (\$000 CAD)

Year	Mfg./Sales	Div. Rec'd.*	Net Income**
1921	1,350	1,008	315
1922	7,710	2,227	9,560
1923	2,528	1,251	5,596
1924	7,927	3,246	13,089
1925	7,927	2,155	11,221
1926	14,102	3,266	17,540
1927	5,648	3,266	13,615
1928	16,775	3,098	22,963
1930	7,215	8,850	19,020
1931	8,915	8,973	18,227
1932	4,331	9,371	14,713
1933	3,927	10,279	14,101
1934	3,023	22,165	25,772
1935	2,900	23,162	25,229
1936	3,082	23,104	25,628
1937	3,572	24,406	26,452
1938	3,573	24,482	25,960
1939	5,368	17,048	19,250
1940	7,113	14,032	17,039
1941	5,496	10,635	16,144
1942	7,936	9,673	14,063
1943	8,397	9,628	15,549
1944	9,141	9,473	16,193
1945	11,902	9,415	16,617
1946	14,902	5,713	17,326
1947	15,556	5,756	20,464

* Dividends received from subsidiaries: 90% from IPC 1923–40; 80% 1940–47.

** Net income after taxes.

*** Standard Oil (NJ) held 78–80% of IOL shares.

Sources: Ewing, *History of Imperial Oil*, Chapter 15, Tables 1–2; IOL Annual Reports 1932–46.

APPENDIX 2C

Imperial Oil Sales, Production, Earnings, and Dividends, 1947–80

Year	Sales 000 bbl./day	Production 000 bbl./day	Earnings \$M[CAD]	Dividends \$M [CAD]	%Dividends/ earnings
1947	130	6	20	14	66
1948	142	12	23	14	60
1949	154	25	25	14	54
1950	174	36	30	15	49
1951	196	63	36	17	49
1952	209	65	41	22	54
1953	212	78	48	24	50
1954	218	84	50	27	54
1955	250	93	62	29	46
1956	275	103	69	36	52
1957	276	95	75	37	52
1958	275	75	51	38	75
1959	293	82	55	38	69
1960	298	90	61	43	69
1961	295	111	68	44	65
1962	317	124	68	44	65
1963	327	126	71	49	69

APPENDIX 2C

Continued

Year	Sales 000 bbl./day	Production 000 bbl./day	Earnings \$M[CAD]	Dividends \$M [CAD]	%Dividends/ earnings
1964	342	131	79	55	70
1965	348	133	86	58	68
1966	356	146	92	63	69
1967	370	141	96	67	70
1968	383	150	100	67	67
1969	381	154	94	68	72
1970	400	170	105	68	65
1971	406	183	136	77	56
1972	417	224	151	77	51
1973	449	275	227	104	46
1974	443	224	290	104	47
1975	418	173	250	104	42
1976	441	154	264	106	40
1977	433	148	293	116	40
1978	449	147	314	124	39
1979	468	256	471	150	32
1980	449	226	601	201	33

SOURCES:

IOL and Consolidated Subsidiaries Financial Review 1959. IOL Archives, Series 4, Box 292A.
Acc. 80-0021; IOL Annual Reports, 1959–81.

APPENDIX 3A

Canadian Oil Companies, Comparison, 1947 (\$000 CAD)

	Imperial	British American *	McColl Frontenac **
Assets	241,506	71,529	44,692
Earnings	20,464	8,141	2,780
Production bbl. (000)	47,485	15,857	10,057

* British American became Gulf Canada in 1967.

** McColl Frontenac became Texaco Canada in 1941.

SOURCE: Imperial Oil Records, Series 4, Box 292A Acc. 80-0021.

APPENDIX 3B

Canadian Oil Companies, Comparison, 1994 (\$ M. CAD)

	Imperial	Shell Canada	Petro Canada	Amoco Canada	Nova
Assets	11,928	6,113	5,912	6,076	8,257
Sales	9,019	5,034	4,730	4,270	3,724
Net Income	359	320	262	-70	575
Employees	9,470	4,391	6,209	2,800	6,600

SOURCE: Rinaldo Stefan, *Report on Imperial Oil* (1996). Appendix 1. Imperial Oil Records, IOL-pub 6-157.

Notes

INTRODUCTION

- 1 www.theglobeandmail.com/report-on-business/rob-magazine/top1000.
- 2 See Appendices 3A and 3B.
- 3 www.fortune.com/fortune500/global500; Steve Coll, *Private Empire: Exxon Mobil and American Power* (New York: Penguin Press, 2012), 65–6.
- 4 Graham D. Taylor, *The Rise of Canadian Business* (Don Mills, ON: Oxford University Press Canada, 2009), 73.
- 5 Henrietta M. Larson, Evelyn H. Knowlton, and Charles S. Popple, *The History of Standard Oil (New Jersey): New Horizons 1927–1950* (New York: Harper & Row, 1971), 720–1.
- 6 Mira Wilkins, “The History of Multinational Enterprise,” in A.M. Rugman et al., ed., *The Oxford Handbook of International Business*, 2nd edition (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2010), 3–39.
- 7 The volumes of *The History of Standard Oil* (New Jersey) are cited throughout this work. Other examples include Mira Wilkins and Frank Ernest Hill, *American Business Abroad: Ford on Six Continents*, 2nd edition (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press 2011), and George David Smith, *From Monopoly to Competition: The Transformations of Alcoa, 1888–1986* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1988).
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- 13 Hidy, 209–25; Chernow, 330–42.
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CHAPTER 3

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- 12 Ewing, ch. 7, 30–4; chapter 9, 3–9; chapter 11, 96–8; Imperial Oil Board of Directors Minutes, 29 Sept 1914; 28 Aug 1916.
- 13 Wall and Gibb, 108–9, 113–14. The development of the Joint Industrial Committees at Imperial is described in chapter 5.
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- 17 Wall and Gibb, 110–11.

- 18 Imperial Oil and International Oil Co. in South America is discussed in chapter 4. Imperial Oil's quest for oil in western Canada is discussed in chapter 6.
- 19 Imperial Oil Board of Directors, Board of Directors, 1 Aug 1919.

CHAPTER 4

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- 2 W.C. Teagle to Montagu Pierce, London, 13 Dec 1913. London & Pacific Petroleum file, IOL Archives Gibb and Knowlton, 95–6.
- 3 Alan Hill, "Historical Foundations of Canada's Oil Industry" (MA thesis, University of Manitoba, 1979), 187.
- 4 M.J. Hanna, Imperial Oil Ltd., to W.T. White, Minister of Finance, Ottawa, 10 Apr 1914. London & Pacific Petroleum files, IOL Archives; Wall and Gibb, 99–100.
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- 8 Brown, 17–18; Peter Klaren, *Peru: Society and Nationhood in the Andes* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 213–18.
- 9 Goodsell, 120–1, 141–2; Alberto Pinelo, *The Multinational Corporation as a Force in Latin American Politics: A Case Study of the International Petroleum Company in Peru* (New York: Praeger, 1973), 13–14; Wall and Gibb, 101–4.
- 10 Hill, 190–3; Pinelo, 17; Harvey O'Connor, *World Crisis in Oil* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1962), 225–31. According to Hill, based on research in the State and Military Records of the Public Archives of Canada, the Canadian government did not officially requisition the tankers, and the British minister in Lima protested against the withdrawal of the IPC tanker supplying the domestic market.
- 11 Gibb and Knowlton, 99–105; Brown, 19–20.
- 12 Brown, 20; Goodsell, 121; Gibb and Knowlton, 367–9; Thorp and Bertram, 108–11. The 1922 agreement was subsequently endorsed by an arbitration panel of the Hague International Court.
- 13 Marcelo Bucheli, "Multinational Oil Companies in Colombia and Mexico: Corporate Strategy, Nationalism and Local Politics," unpublished paper presented at the

- International Economic History Meeting, Helsinki 2006, 9–10; Marco Palacios, *Between Legitimacy and Violence: A History of Colombia 1875–2002* (Durham: University of North Carolina Press, 2006), 85–6; Mira Wilkins, “Multinational Oil Companies in South America in the 1920s,” *Business History Review* 48, no. 3 (Autumn 1974): 430.
- 14 Gibb and Knowlton, 369–71; Wall and Gibb, 189–93.
 - 15 Bucheli, “Multinational Oil Companies in Mexico and Colombia,” 6–9; Richard Lael, *Arrogant Diplomacy: U.S. Policy toward Colombia 1903–1922* (Wilmington: Scholarly Resources Press, 1987), 93–4; Palacios, 69–71; Wall and Gibb, 192–3.
 - 16 Wall and Gibb, 84–5.
 - 17 The company name appears in various iterations, including Andean and Andian. I have used the latter because it is the spelling that appears most frequently in contemporary Imperial Oil documents.
 - 18 Teagle to Hanna, 7 Jan 1914. London & Pacific files, IOL Archives; Brown, 31–2; Hill, 194–5.
 - 19 “Stockholders Vote for Big Oil Merger,” *New York Times*, 20 Aug 1920; Gibb and Knowlton, 371–2.
 - 20 Minutes of Annual General Meeting of Imperial Oil, Toronto, 22 Feb 1923. Annual General Meetings, Corporate Records, Series 1, IOL Archives.
 - 21 Minutes of Imperial Oil Annual General Meeting, 26 Feb 1927. IOL Archives.
 - 22 Edwin Lieuwen, *Petroleum in Venezuela: A History* (New York: Russell and Russell, 1954), 84–5.
 - 23 Henrietta Larson, Evelyn Knowlton, and Charles Popple, *History of Standard Oil (New Jersey): New Horizons 1927–1950* (New York: Harper & Row, 1971), 58–9, 132–8; Greene, “Strategies of the Major Oil Companies,” ch. 4, 22–3.
 - 24 Frederick Pike, *The Modern History of Peru* (New York: Praeger, 1967), 268–76; Goodsell, 142; Thorp and Bertram, 165–6.
 - 25 Rene De La Pedraja, *Energy Politics in Colombia* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1989), 5–11, 25–6, 36–8; Palacios, 99–103; Stephen Randall, *The Diplomacy of Modernization: Colombian-American Relations 1920–1940* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1971), 90–4.
 - 26 Gibb and Knowlton, 372.
 - 27 *Imperial Oil Review*, June 1933, 6–7, 12–13; Gibb and Knowlton, 103–4.
 - 28 Imperial Oil Co., Annual General Meeting, 22 Feb 1923. IOL Archives.
 - 29 Bucheli (2008), 80.
 - 30 Brown, 29–30.
 - 31 Imperial Oil President Charles O. Stillman, Report to Annual General Meeting, Toronto, 15 Mar 1928. IOL Archives; Bucheli, (2006) 81–2; Palacios, 86. The main target of political ire at this point was the Colombian Oil Company, a subsidiary of Gulf Oil,

- which had acquired the “Banco concession” in eastern Colombia but had failed to develop the field: De La Pedraja, 12–14; Randall, 98–9.
- 32 “Petroleum Transport in the Tropics,” *Imperial Oil Review* (Sept 1927).
 - 33 Xavier Duran, “Oil in Colombia 1900–1950: Speculators and Multinational Companies,” *Ecopetrol: Energía limpia para el futuro*. www.ecopetrol.com.co/especiales, n16. During the 1930s–40s the average Bayonne refinery output was about twice the volume of all the Imperial refineries in Canada. Larson et al., 200–1.
 - 34 Imperial Oil, Minutes of the Annual General Meeting, 1922, 1924, 1927. IOL Archives.
 - 35 Gibb and Knowlton, 458–9; Larson et al., 115, 474, 720.
 - 36 Ewing, ch. 15, Tables 1–2; ch. 20, Tables 1–2. International Petroleum Company Annual Reports 1932–46. IOL Archives. See Appendix 1].
 - 37 Ewing, ch. 20, 6–7.
 - 38 See Appendix 2A.
 - 39 Ewing, ch. 20, 4–5;
 - 40 Duran, 4–5; De La Pedraja, 36–8.
 - 41 Larson et al., 726–7; Bennett H. Wall, *History of Standard Oil (New Jersey: Growth in a Changing Environment 1950–1975)* (New York: McGraw Hill, 1988), 431–44.
 - 42 Victor Bulmer Thomas, *The Economic History of Latin America since Independence* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 156–60, 424–5; Palacios, 14–15.
 - 43 Palacios, 58.
 - 44 Thorp and Bertram, 164.
 - 45 Wilkins (1974), 422–3. Gibb and Knowlton, 503–6.
 - 46 Wall, 435.

CHAPTER 5

- 1 Wall and Gibb, *Teagle*, 120–2.
- 2 Ewing, chapter 8, 83–4; *Imperial Oil Review* (August 1919): 13; February 1922, 3; “G. Harrison Smith the New President,” *Imperial Oil Review* (June/July 1933): 12–13; Thelma LeCocq, “LeSueur: Imperial’s President,” *Canadian Business* (July 1944): 28–9.
- 3 Wall and Gibb, 71.
- 4 Wall and Gibb, 202–10; Gibb and Knowlton, 279–307; Yergin, 197–204.
- 5 Wall and Gibb, 258–60; Yergin, 260–5; Anthony Sampson, *The Seven Sisters*, 86–7.
- 6 Wall and Gibb, 236–45; Alfred D. Chandler Jr., *Strategy and Structure: Chapters in the History of American Industrial Enterprise* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1962), 164–225.
- 7 *Historical Statistics of Canada*, T147–194a; Ewing, ch. 6, 5–6; Robert Ankli et al., “Adoption of the Gas Tractor in Western Canada,” *Canadian Papers in Rural History* 2 (1980): 9–39; Steve Penfold, “Petroleum Liquids,” in R.W. Sandwell, *Powering Up*

- Canada: A History of Power, Fuel and Energy from 1600* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2016), 276–9.
- 8 Gibb and Knowlton, 113–16; Purdy, *Petroleum*, 157–9.
 - 9 Gibb and Knowlton, 115–18.
 - 10 Ewing, ch. 11, 63–71; Gibb and Knowlton, 532–6; “Imperial Oil Announces New 3 Star Gasoline,” *Globe & Mail*, 3 Sept 1931, 15. Imperial’s research and development operations are reviewed in more detail in chapter 8.
 - 11 Ewing, ch. 9, 22–3. One of these independent distributors was Kenneth Irving in New Brunswick, who leveraged his “partnership” with Imperial in the 1920s into a full-fledged integrated oil company (with offshoots in shipbuilding and numerous other industries) in the years after 1948. Irving became one of the richest individuals in Canada, while hiding his wealth overseas.
 - 12 Gibb and Knowlton, 487–9, 502–3; Ewing, ch. 9, 26–33, 71–2.
 - 13 Ewing, ch. 9, 24–5, 66; *Imperial Oil Review* (February 1922): 3, 17; March 1934, 27. Union Oil of California (later Unocal) was acquired by Standard of California (Chevron) in 2005.
 - 14 Saywell, “Early History of Canadian Oil Companies,” 71–2; Earle Gray, “How Shell Bought the No. 3 Spot,” *Oilweek*, 27 Nov 1967, 19–25.
 - 15 Earle Gray, “BA Poised for Dynamic Growth,” *Oilweek*, 9 Oct 1967, 24–8; “A.L. Ellsworth,” *Globe & Mail*, 7 June 1929, 21. In 1965 Gulf Oil acquired British American Oil.
 - 16 Charles Law, “Trust Texaco to Go Where the Most Profits Flow,” *Oilweek* 1 Nov 1968, 21–4, 30; “McColl Brothers Oil Sale is Completed,” *Globe & Mail*, 7 Dec 1927, 7; “Texaco Buys into McColl Frontenac,” *Globe & Mail*, 27 Apr 1938, 18; “Texaco Corporation Wins McColl Fight,” *Globe & Mail*, 3 June 1938, 20. In 1994 Imperial Oil acquired Texaco Canada during the chaotic aftermath of Texaco’s bankruptcy.
 - 17 Ewing, ch. 15, 14–16; “Imperial Oil Ltd. Will Split Common Stock Four-One,” *Globe & Mail*, 2 Apr 1929, 7; “Imperial Oil Soars to New High 119 ½ under Heavy Buying,” *Globe & Mail*, 15 Apr 1929; “Losses Predominate Among Active Issues on Exchange,” *Globe & Mail*, 16 Oct 1929, 6.
 - 18 “Imperial Oil Limited and Consolidated Subsidiaries Financial Review: Twenty Year Statistics,” [1952, 8]. IOL Records, Series 4 [Comptrollers Records], Box 292A Acc. 80-0021.
 - 19 C.D. Crichton, “‘Exclusive Rights Agreement’ Newfoundland Petroleum Monopoly, 1932–34,” 5 Dec 1960; G.H. Smith, Vice President IOL, to Sir Wilfred Grenfell, 27 May 1932 (Attachment No. 5); Victor Ross to G.H. Smith, 3 Apr 1932 (Attachment No. 6); Victor Ross, “Newfoundland Exclusive Rights” [re: Amulree Commission report], 28 Nov 1933 (Attachment No. 12). Imperial Oil Ltd. Vertical File: History, Misc. Glenbow Archive. See Peter Neary, *Newfoundland in the North Atlantic World 1929–1949* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1988), 12–28, on the background to this episode. Newfoundland joined Canada in 1948.
 - 20 Ewing, ch. 15, 31–2, 36.

- 21 G.A. Purdy, *Petroleum: Prehistoric to Petrochemical* (Toronto: Copp Clark, 1957), 125–30, 153–5; Hugh M. Grant, “The Petroleum Industry and Canadian Economic Development: An Economic History 1900–1960” (PhD diss., University of Toronto, 1987), ch. 3.
- 22 Gibb and Knowlton, 141–52, 575–77; Howard M. Gitelman, *The Legacy of the Ludlow Massacre: A Chapter in American Industrial Relations* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1988); Paul Craven, *An Impartial Umpire: Industrial Relations and the Canadian State 1900–1911* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1980).
- 23 “The Industrial Representation Plan,” *Imperial Oil Review* (January 1919); H.M. Grant, “Solving the Labour Problem at Imperial Oil: Welfare Capitalism in the Canadian Petroleum Industry 1919–1929,” *Labour/Le Travail* 41 (Spring 1998): 81–3; Ewing, ch. 8, 72–3.
- 24 “In Quebec,” *Imperial Oil Review* 4 (1971); East Montreal Refinery, IOL Vertical File.
- 25 Grant, “Solving the Labour Problem,” 79–81.
- 26 All references are from the Montreal East Refinery Joint Industrial Council Minutes. IOL Archives, Series 18, Human Relations Acc 80002, Box 02.
- 27 “Pacific Pioneer,” *Imperial Oil Review* 5 (1971).
- 28 All references are from the Ioco Refinery Joint Industrial Council Minutes, IOL Archives, Series 18, Human Resources, Box 2, Acc. 90-0001.
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- 30 IOL Exec. Cte. Minutes, 29 May 1969; 6 Oct 1969.
- 31 “Joint Industrial Councils and Committees in I.O.L.,” 11 Jan 1977. IOL Archive, Vertical Files, Industrial Relations.

CHAPTER 6

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- 2 David H. Breen, *Alberta’s Petroleum Industry and the Conservation Board* (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 1993), 8–15; F.K. Beach and J.L. Irwin, “The History of Alberta Oil,” (Edmonton: Alberta Department of Lands and Mines, 1939), 8–13.
- 3 David H. Breen “Anglo-American Rivalry and the Evolution of Canadian Petroleum Policy to 1930,” *Canadian Historical Review* 62, no. 3 (1981): 283–6.
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- 6 "Claim Biggest Oilfield Soon Opens in North," *Globe & Mail*, 20 Oct 1920, 2.
- 7 Ewing, ch. 12, 8–22; De Mille, *Oil in Canada West*, 151–5, 185–99; John Ness, "The Story That Can Never Be Told," IOL Archive, Vertical Files, IOL History 1948–55; Gray, *Great Canadian Oil Patch*, 119–20.
- 8 Sarah Lawley, "The Link of History," *Imperial Oil Review* (Spring 1989): 17–19; Frank H. Ellis, "Bold Venture into Northern Winter," *Imperial Oil Review* (April 1971): 130–3; J.M. Smallwood, "Oil in the Frozen North," *American Review of Reviews* (1921): 639–44. IOL Archives, Vertical Files, Industry & Trade: Canadian North File.
- 9 J.H. McLeod, "A Factual Memorandum Concerning the History of the Incorporation and Development of Royalite Oil Company Limited," 13 Dec 1938. Royalite Archives, Glenbow Museum and Archives, Series 9: M6891/File 197, 5–6; Ewing, ch. 12, 28–30; Finch, 25–6; Gibb and Knowlton, 659; Timothy Le Riche, *Alberta's Oil Patch* (Calgary: Folklore Publishing, 2006), 46–7. McLeod had also headed the Dalhousie Company in 1925–28.
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Index

Page numbers in italics refer to figures.

A

- Abasand Oils Ltd., 217
- Abercrombie, James, 282
- Aberhart, William, 129
- Aboriginal Pipeline Group (APG), 243, 244
- Absher, Jacob Owen, 228
- advertising campaigns, 189, 190
- Ajax pipeline, 85
- Alaskan strategic oil reserve, 214, 233–34
- Alberta: conference of oil companies in, 217–18; control of Crown lands, 129; farmers' concern over effects of oil drilling, 151; gas export from, 199; land reclamation of the oil sands sites, 289; map of oil and gas fields in, 145, 150; McGillvray Commission, 131; natural gas deposits, 118, 144; Oil and Gas Conservation Act, 130; oil exploration in, 9, 11, 15, 117–18, 120, 144; oil production cuts, 262, 263; oil transportation from, 16, 17; pipelines construction in, 11; refineries in, 161; regulations on petroleum industry, 129–30, 151; Right of Arbitration Entry Act, 151; sale of mining rights in, 118–19; “Western Accord” with, 263; *See also* Leduc; oil sands
- Alberta Conservation Board, 282
- Alberta Gas Pipeline Ltd., 237
- Alberta Oil and Gas Conservation Board, 195
- Alberta Oil Sands Technology Research Agency, 231
- Alberta Southern Oils Ltd., 126
- Alcan highway project, 15
- Alderdice, Frederick, 105
- Allen, Robert, 130
- American Oil Workers International Union, 115
- Amoco, 232, 255, 265, 305, 316
- Amulree, William W. Mackenzie, 105
- Anderson, Robert, 225
- Andian National Corporation, 79, 81
- Andrews, Samuel, 38
- Anglo-American Oil Company, 49
- Anglo-Persian Petroleum Company, 93
- Antisell, Thomas, 23
- Arab-Israeli war of 1967, 251
- Aramco consortium, 301
- Archbold, James, 54
- Archbold, John D., 41, 54, 62
- Arctic Gas consortium, 240, 241
- Arctic region: aerial view of oil rig in, 234; companies engaged in exploration of, 232, 233, 234, 244; consortiums in, 236–37, 238; encounters with First Nations peoples, 238–39, 242–43; environmental concerns, 240–41, 244; gas field discoveries in, 243; geological surveys of, 232; government

- regulations of, 232; Imperial Oil's exploration program in, 235–36, 241–42; infrastructure development, 243; investments in, 234, 238; land disputes, 239; petroleum industry in, 215, 231–32; pipeline projects, 236–38, 239, 240, 241, 242–43, 245; technical challenges of exploration of, 237–38; US strategic oil reserve in, 233–34; wildcat drillers in, 232
- Armstrong, Jack: as advocate of Imperial Oil, 270; career of, 214, 226, 275; meeting with Lalonde, 262; on oil sands exploration, 289; opinion on government economic policy, 259–60; photograph of, 259; rejection of Bertrand's report, 267
- Arnold, Ralph, 215
- Arnold, Thurman, 175
- Asian Tigers, 255, 305
- "As Is" Agreement, 95
- asphaltum discovery, 22–23
- Athabasca region, 117, 214, 228
- Atlantic No. 3 disaster, 151–52, 195, 283, 284
- Atlantic Oil Company, 283
- Atomic Energy Board of Canada, 220
- Atwood, Luther, 22
- Austin, Jack, 287
- automobile industry: emission regulations, 287; growth of, 60, 97
- Auto Pact, 287
- ## B
- Badische Anilin und Soda Fabrik (BASF), 174
- Ball, Max, 217
- Barrett, J.F., 286
- Barstow, Frank Q., 48, 54, 55, 56
- Bayonne refinery, 108–9
- Beamer, Clay, 181, 182
- Bechtel Corporation, 167, 169, 218, 236
- Bedford, Alfred Cotton, 91, 108
- Bell, George, 103, 129
- Bell, Joel, 260
- Bell, Robert, 117, 216
- Benedum, Mike, 76, 78
- Bennett, Richard B., 119, 123, 126–27, 129
- Bennett, W.A.C., 196, 197
- Benson, Edgar, 210
- Berger, Thomas, 240
- Bertrand, Robert, 267
- Betancourt, Romulo, 204
- bitumen extraction process, 217
- Bituminous Sand Extraction Company, 228
- Blair, Bob, 237, 239
- Blair, Sidney, 218
- Bonaparte, Charles, 58
- Borden, Henry, 200
- Bosworth, T.O., 14, 121–22, 215
- Bothwell oil boom, 25
- Boyd, David, 288
- Brainerd, Alfred, 54
- Brent Crude, 256
- British-American Oil Company, 103, 106, 316
- British Columbia Royal Commission, 197–98
- British Columbia's electric power industry, 197
- British Commonwealth Air Training Program (BCATP), 132–33
- British Petroleum (BP), 185, 234, 255
- Broadbent, Ed, 270
- Brown, Robert, 103, 129
- Brown, Robert A., Jr., 201
- Brownlee, John, 127, 129
- Building Products Ltd., 183
- Bullock, Joseph, 46
- Burton, William, 97, 171
- Bush, George W., 290
- Bushnell, Joseph, 48
- Bushnell, Thomas, 48
- Bushnell Company, 48, 51, 54, 60
- butadiene production, 176
- Butler, Roger, 229, 230, 231, 303

C

- Calder, William, 128, 129
- Calgary Development & Producers Ltd., 126
- Calgary Natural Gas Company, 118, 119
- Calgary Petroleum Products Company, 119, 123
- Cameron, Harry, 282
- Canada: chemical companies, 178; Clean Air Act, 287–88; demand for fertilizer, 182; Department of Energy, Mines and Resources (EMR), 257; gross national product, 298; Interprovincial Pipeline system, 257; kerosene export, 298; National Energy Program (NEP), 5, 230, 261, 304; National Oil Policy, 203, 204, 257, 298, 303; Oil and Gas Resources Conservation Act, 195; Oil Import Compensation Program, 261; participation in Marshall Plan, 302; Petroleum and Gas Revenue Tax (PGRT), 261; Pipe Line Act, 195; protectionism, 298; tax laws, 66, 72, 257–58; Western Accord, 256
- Canada's Bank Act (1871), 34
- Canada's War Bonds, 65–66
- Canada-United States Free Trade Agreement, 288
- Canada-US International Joint Commission, 284, 285
- Canadian Arctic Gas project, 238
- Canadian Arctic Resources Committee (CARC), 240
- Canadian Congress of Labour, 115
- Canadian crude oil: distillation process, 27, 44–45; domestic reserves, 143; export of, 27; problem of sulphur, 13, 27, 43; transportation of, 31, 169
- Canadian Natural Resources Inc., 289
- Canadian Oil Company, 24, 36
- Canadian oil industry: cartel arrangements, 29; challenges to, 192; companies in, 1, 186, 270–71, 316; depletion allowances, 210, 260–61; export market of, 30, 202–3; history of, 5–6; post-Second World War, 143; price regulation in, 255–56, 258, 267; protectionism of, 13, 27, 32–33, 46, 50, 261; regulatory system, 195; rise of oil production, 30; “Rockefeller plan” for, 34; taxation of, 205, 206–10, 264
- Canadian Pacific Railway, 43, 117–18
- Canadian Polysar, 94, 134
- Canadian Victory Loan Bond, 65
- Canadian Western company, 125–26
- Canadian Western Natural Gas, Light, Heat & Power Company, 118
- Canol Project, 134, 137–38, 140, 160
- carbon emissions, 5–6, 289–90, 291
- Carbon Oil Company, 29, 30, 32
- Carling, John, 26
- Carney, Patricia, 263
- Carpenter, A.A., 127
- Carson, C.E., 161, 177
- Carson, Rachel, 285
- Carter, John H., 71
- Carter, Kenneth, 208, 210
- Carter Oil, 106, 144
- Caspian Sea oil fields, 47
- Chamberlain, Horace, 54, 56, 60, 63
- Champlain Oil Company, 158, 330n12
- Chandler, Alfred, Jr., 95
- Charles Pratt Company, 38
- Charlton, W.G., 241
- China National Petroleum Company, 2
- China's economic growth, 253
- Cities Service consortium, 220, 221, 223, 224, 226
- Clark, Edgar M., 171
- Clark, Joe, 261
- Clark, Karl, 216, 218, 220
- climate change, 291–92, 295–96
- Clinton, Bill, 290
- Coakley, George, 11
- coal hydrogenation process, 174
- Cochrane, Thomas, 22
- Cogan, J.A., 274–75
- Cold Lake oil fields, 229–30, 265, 289, 292

Colombia: Cartagena pipeline, 79, 81;
 economic growth, 88; foreign
 concessions in, 82–83; Infantas oil
 fields, 79, 81; map of oil fields in, 77; oil
 resources development, 76, 78, 85
 Colonial Development Corporation, 51
 Colorado Fuel & Iron, 108
 conservation, definition of, 282
 Consumer Gas Supply Agency, 99
 Convention on Climate Change, 290
 Cooperative Investment Trust, 112
 Coste, Eugene, 118, 119
 Cote, Michel, 269
 “cracking” technique, 37
 Creole Petroleum, 156, 204
 Creole Syndicate, 82
 Crerar, Thomas, 130
 Cross, A.E., 119
 crude oil: Canadian import of, 155;
 conversion into gasoline, 175;
 distillation process, 26; drilling
 operations, 23–25; impurities of, 25;
 prices, 25, 26, 249, 250, 251, 252, 253,
 255–56; South American export of,
 85–86; transportation of, 26; types of,
 256; *See also* Canadian crude oil
 Cullinan, Joseph, 60
 cyclic steam stimulation (CSS) process (a.k.a.
 “huff and puff”), 228–29
 Cygnet pipeline, 12, 85

D

Dalhousie Oil Co. Ltd., 126
 Delano, Frederic, 136
 De Mares, Robert, 76, 78, 81
 Deterding, Henri, 61, 62, 93, 95, 120
 Devon, town of, 151
 Diefenbaker, John, 200, 202, 203, 213–14,
 302–3
 Dingman, Archibald W., 118, 119, 123
 Dingman well, 119
 Dodd, Samuel, 41, 57
 Dolomite Oils Ltd., 126
 Dome Canada, 262

Dome Petroleum, 232, 233, 262, 263
 Dominion War Exchange Conservation Act,
 143, 205
 Dow Chemical, 284
 Drake, Edwin, 24
 Draper, Thomas, 216
 drilling operations, 24, 144, 146, 281
 Dryfoos, Abraham, 30
 Duplessis, Maurice, 114
 DuPont, 96, 175, 271

E

Eastern Oil Company, 48, 51
 Edmonton-Montreal pipeline, 200
 Edmonton-Regina pipeline, 164, 167
 Eisenhower, Dwight, 203, 218
 Ells, Sidney, 216, 217
 Ellsworth, Albert L., 103
 El Paso Gas, 237
 Empire Transportation Company, 40
 Enbridge pipeline, 294
 energy crises of the 1970s, 204, 226, 260, 269
 Englehart, Jacob, 27–29, 28, 30–31, 32, 34–36,
 54
 English, William, 31, 32, 35
 Enjay Co., 180
 Enniskillen Township: asphaltum discovery
 in, 22–23; drilling operations in, 23,
 24–25
 environmental issues, 7, 239–40, 282–83, 285
 “Environmental Protection Activities
 Review,” 288
 Erie & Huron railway group, 31
 Esso Chemical Canada, 182–83
 Esso Resources Canada Ltd., 242
 Esso service stations, 12, 100, 101
 Ethyl Gasoline Corporation, 133
 Ewing, John, 13, 87
 Exxon Corporation: access to crude oil,
 254; agricultural chemicals division,
 265; business strategy, 305; Canadian
 operations, 265, 307; competitors,
 305–6; diversification strategy, 291–92;
 executives, 274; impact of oil prices on,

254; merger with Humble Oil, 271–72; offshore drilling, 255; organizational structure, 271; programs for managers, 275; relations with Imperial Oil, 270, 278–79; reorganization of, 306; research on global warming trends, 291, 292; revenue, 276; search for new oil fields, 305; *See also* Jersey Standard; Standard Oil Company

Exxon Mobil: affiliates, 2–3; creation of, 6–7, 279, 306; global operations, 2, 89; oil sands exploration, 227; ownership of Imperial Oil, 17; studies of, 6; *See also* Jersey Standard; Standard Oil Company

Exxon Valdez disaster, 255, 287

F

Fairbank, John H., 25, 29, 31, 36, 51

Fall, Albert B., 80

Fallows, Joseph, 35

Farish, William, 175

Fischer-Tropsch process, 15

Fisher, William, 228

Fitzgerald, Frederick A., 31, 34, 35, 35–36, 48, 54, 56

Fitzsimmons, Robert, 216, 217, 221

Flagler, Henry, 38

Flanagan, James, 79, 80

flash test, 33

Fluid Iron Ore Reduction (FIOR), 114, 183

Folger, Henry, 56

Foothills Oil & Gas Ltd., 126

Ford, Henry, 97

Fordson Tractor, 97

Fort McMurray, 120, 215, 216–17, 218, 226

Fort Norman, 14–15, 121, 122–23

Foster, Peter, 264, 265, 272

“fracking” technology, 254

Frasch, Herman, 43, 44, 44, 45, 97–98, 171, 297

Frontenac Oil, 103

Frost, Leslie, 169

G

Gallagher, Jack, 232, 233

“Gallagher allowance,” 261

Garvin, Clifford, 292, 305

Gas-Arctic Northwest Project Study Group, 237

Gas Arctic Study Group, 241

gasoline: advertising, 189; demand for, 97; import duties on, 99; lead-free, 287, 288; market for, 98–99, 101, 191; price wars, 196; production of high-octane, 133

Geary, John, 31, 35

General Motors of Canada, 97

Geological Survey of Canada, 118

Gesner, Abraham, 21, 22

Getty, Don, 226, 230

Gilliland, E.R., 179

“Global Climate Coalition,” 291, 292

globalization, 297–98

global oil companies, 251, 255

Gordon, Walter, 199, 260

Gordon Commission report, 201

Gould, Jay, 39

Graham, James, 136–37

Grand Trunk Railway, 31

Grattan Oil, 120

Great Canadian Oil Sands (GCOS), 218, 223–24, 289

Great Depression: impact on petroleum industry, 86, 104–5, 128

Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement, 285

Great Western Railway, 25, 31

Green, Howard, 221

Greenfield, Herbert, 127

Gretna-Superior pipeline, 166, 167

Guggenheim, Isaac, 32, 34

Gulf Canada, 236

Gulf Oil Corporation, 82, 95, 186

Gulf Refining Company in Texas, 61

Guthrie, H.J., 56, 63

H

Haider, Michael, 144, 274, 275
 Hale, William, 6
 Halifax Gas Company, 22
 Hall, Frank G., 163
 Halvorsen, A.E., 101, 163
 Hamilton, J.W., 165
 Hanna, William J., 54, 63, 74, 79, 92, 120
 Harkness, Samuel, 38
 Heard, S.F., 157
 Hearn, Thomas, 295
 Hearst, William Randolph, 57
 Herrera, Enrique, 82
 Herron, William S., 119, 123, 128, 129, 157
 Hewetson, Henry, 11, 15, 16, 142–43, 144, 154, 165, 273, 301
 Hewitt, Edward, 111
 Hicks, Clarence, 108, 109
 Higgins, Ebenezer, 29
 Hodgins, Edward, 31, 35
 Hodgins, Thomas, 31, 35, 36
 Holman, Eugene, 136, 137
 Holt, Herbert, 79, 85
 Home Oil, 206–7
 Hopkins, O.B., 15, 121, 122, 144, 163, 165, 274
 Hopper, Wilbert, 260
 Houdry, Eugene, 175
 Howard, Frank, 171, 174, 180
 Howe, C.D., 137, 163, 166, 176–77, 178, 199
 Hubbert, M. King, 214
 Hudson's Bay Company, 117
 Humble Oil, 93, 96, 172, 233, 236
 Humphreys, Claude, 217
 Humphreys, R.E., 97
 Hunt, Thomas Sterry, 22
 Hunter, Vern, 9
 Husky Oil, 230
 Husky Refining Company, 186

I

Ickes, Harold, 140
 I.G. Farben, 94, 132, 134, 143, 174, 175

Imperial Acadia (tanker), 286
 Imperial Oil Company: access to oil reserve, 72, 214–15; acquisitions, 51, 123–24, 126; advertising, 102, 189, 190; affiliate companies, 162; Alberta operations, 87, 94, 146, 149, 196; archival materials on, 5; Arctic exploration, 235–36; assets, 141; bank loans, 46, 154; Bertrand investigation of, 267–68, 269; board of directors, 36; branches, 43; business strategy, 183; in Canada's petroleum industry, role of, 1, 3, 270–71; Canadian war effort and, 65; Canol Project, 134, 137–38; capitalization, 63, 300; capital spending cut, 263; centralization of, 191; challenges of, 12–13, 46, 48; chemical production plant, 181; chief executives, 275; climate change strategy, 292; Cold Lake operations, 230, 265; competitors, 1, 2–3, 101, 103, 143, 186–87; control over distributors, 157–58; cracking process license, 98; creation of, 6, 12, 34–35, 107, 297; criticism of, 304; debt of, 55; decentralization of, 194; diversification of, 183–84; dividends, 42, 46, 51, 86–87, 153, 276–77, 314–15; drilling operations, 14, 153; employee stock purchase program, 112; energy crisis of 1973–74 and, 260; “enhanced oil recovery” project, 263; environmental challenges, 282–83; expansion of, 1–2, 6, 11, 154, 163–64; expedition to Fort Norman, 215; Exxon's relations with, 6–7, 270–71, 272, 276, 278–79; fertilizer operation, 182; financial restructuring, 153–59; financial statements of, 311; fleet of ships, 285; full service gas stations, 100, 100, 191–92; gasoline production, 98, 99, 100; golden age for, 169–70; governments' relations with, 6, 194–95, 198–99; during Great Depression, 103–4; headquarter relocation, 295; heavy water

project, 184; infrastructure, 160–70; international business operations, 180, 300; International Petroleum Company and, 90, 302; investments, 85, 129, 169–70, 184; Judy Creek operations, 263, 265; labour relations in, 64, 107, 114–15, 115–16; leadership, 141; lease of mineral rights on Crown lands by, 124; management of, 13, 273; marketing strategy, 99, 188, 191; motor oil production, 187–88; National Energy Program and, 262–63; Newfoundland operations, 105–6; oil exploration, 14–15, 17, 120, 143, 153–54; oil sands development, 228–29, 293, 294, 307; oil transportation, 16; operating capital, 156; parent company, 13–14, 17, 154–55, 299; patents, 1, 174, 270; pipelines, 2, 12; pricing policy, 192, 193; profit, 42, 46, 66, 153, 312, 314–15; public relations, 190–91; recapitalization of, 104; refineries, 12, 16, 42, 107, 124, 140, 153, 161, 272; reorganization of, 13, 91–92, 142, 207–8; research operations, 171–72, 175, 178; revenue, 1, 2, 43, 46, 51, 260, 264; royalties, 152, 260; sales operations, 56, 64, 104, 196–97, 312; during Second World War, 132–33, 134, 137–38, 139–41, 140; shareholders, 35, 43, 272; size of, 12; South American investments, 72, 74, 86, 87, 155–56; spending on drilling, 205–6; staff cuts, 276; Standard Oil's control of, 51–52, 53–54, 106; stocks, 53, 141, 277, 278; subsidiary companies, 16–17, 134; support of professional hockey, 190; surplus inventory problem, 99; taxation of, 206–7, 264; Teagle's tenure at, 60–68, 91–92; technological developments, 55–56, 171, 244; Texaco Canada takeover, 6, 277–78; "The High Costs of Kyoto" memo, 293; value of, 104, 106; vulnerability of, 186–87;

wages at, 114–15; weaknesses of, 43; western market, 48; women in, 275

Imperial Oil Ltd., 63, 313

Imperial Oil Resources Ventures Ltd., 227

Imperial Oil Review, 64, 85, 92, 109, 110, 114

Imperial Pipe Line Company in Alberta, 164

Imperial Quebec (tanker), 285

Indigenous people, 238–39

Industrial Estates Ltd., 184

Industry and Humanity (King), 108

Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, 289

International Bitumen Co., 216

International Mining and Manufacturing Company, 23

International Petroleum Company (IPC): acquisition of Tropical Oil, 80–81; Canadian press on, 84–85; capital, 74, 80; concessions, 76, 81, 89; connection to Imperial Oil, 90, 156; construction of pipelines, 162; creation of, 67, 72, 74, 88; dividends, 86–87; Jersey Standard's control of, 83, 87–88, 156; labour relations, 85; loans, 76; oil production, 81, 86; opportunity for Imperial's employees in, 301; South American operations, 13, 16, 74–76, 78–79, 81–84, 85, 88–89, 90, 156; training ground for managers, 275; transportation issues, 81

Interprovincial Pipeline Company (Enbridge), 16, 163, 165, 167

Loco refinery, 109–10, 113, 114, 115

Iraq oil fields, 94

Irving, Kenneth C., 158–59

Irving Oil, 158, 159, 186

J

Jamieson, Don, 287

Jamieson, J. Kenneth, 181, 254, 274, 274, 303

Jersey Standard (Standard Oil Company of New Jersey): access to oil reserve, 72, 214; antitrust investigation of, 158; Board of Directors, 273; budgeting, 271;

business strategy, 90, 180; challenges of, 93; competitors, 61, 93–94; control of International Petroleum, 87–88; creation of, 58, 59; criticism of, 204; diversification, 183; dividend payments, 273; expansion of, 6; forty-hour work week, adoption of, 64; in the global oil markets, 92–94; lawsuit against, 95; management of, 54, 273; mergers, 59; oil exploration in Alberta, 119; overseas expansion, 301; patents, 175, 177; pipeline construction, 85, 162; production of aviation fuel, 133; profits, 300–301; relations with Imperial Oil, 12, 16, 303; renaming, 304; reorganization of, 49, 57, 96, 271, 273; research and development, 144, 179; South American operations, 71–72, 82, 85, 204; stock ownership plan, 65; subsidiaries of, 60, 180; synthetic rubber development, 134, 176, 180; Teagle's tenure at, 83; *See also* Exxon Corporation; Exxon Mobil; Standard Oil Company

Johnson, Lyndon, 257

Joint American Study Committee (Jasco), 174

joint industrial councils, 109, 110, 110–12, 113, 116

Jones, Jesse, 176

Joseph Bullock & Sons, 48; *See also* Eastern Oil Company

K

Kearl project, 293, 294

kerosene: commercial production of, 22, 97; demand for, 30; import of, 27, 29, 32; market for, 60; price for, 32; quality of, 43; use of, 97

Kerwin, Patrick Grandcourt, 207

Keswick, William, 71

Kevin-Sunburst oilfield, 125

Keystone XL pipeline, 294, 295

Kheraj, Sean, 288

King, Benjamin, 25

King, William Lyon Mackenzie, 108, 137, 166

King, William R., 54

King-Hicks program, 109–10

Kinley, Myron, 283

Klein, Ralph, 227

Knode, William, 130

Knox, Frank, 140

Kruger, Richard, 279, 294

Kyoto accord, 290–91, 292, 293

L

labour relations, 107, 109–10, 114; *See also* strikes

La Brea y Parinas oil fields, 71, 74, 76

Lalonde, Marc, 262, 270

Lambton County: drilling operations in, 24

Lambton Crude Oil Partnership, 29

Lantz, F.C., 177

Laurier, Wilfrid, 50, 299

Leaver, Charles, 174

Leduc Number One site, 9, 10, 11

Leduc Number Two site, 151

Leduc oil fields: competition in, 185;

exploration of, 146; explosion and fire in, 283–84; oil discovery in, 87, 89, 144, 149, 302; strike, 67

Lee, Ivy, 166

Leguia, Augusto, 76, 82

LeSueur, R.V., 68, 83, 92, 96, 137, 139, 140, 141, 142

Levy, Walter, 201

Lewis, W.K., 179

Li, Ka-sheng, 277

Limits to Growth, The (report), 240

Link, Theodore, 14, 15, 121, 122, 135, 136, 138, 144

liquefied natural gas (LGN) technology, 244

Livingstone, J.R., 179, 262, 268

Lloyd, Henry Demarest, 49

Lloyd Champion, 217, 218

Lodge, Henry Cabot, 80

London & Pacific Petroleum Company, 71, 89
 London Refining Company, 30–31, 32, 34, 281
 London Union Oils Ltd., 126
 Loranger, Diane, 275, 276
 Lougheed, James, 119, 124, 225
 Lougheed, Peter, 225, 263
 Lougheed Terminal, 115
 Loughney, Ed, 208
 Lowery Petroleum Ltd., 126
 Ludlow Massacre, 108

M

MacDonald, Donald, 226, 258, 260, 269
 Macdonald, John A., 33
 Mackenzie, Alexander, 33, 117, 216
 Mackenzie Valley Gas Project, 243, 244
 Mackenzie Valley highway, 243
 Mackenzie Valley pipeline, 240, 241, 244, 245
 Mackenzie Valley Pipe Line Research Ltd., 236
 MacKinnon, Ronald, 136
 MacMahon, Frank, 283
 Manning, Ernest, 130, 152, 169, 195, 201, 225, 284
 Marcus Hook refinery, 218
 Marsh, Bruce, 279, 294
 Marshall, George, 136
 Mathieson, Kenneth, 71
 Maximum Permissible Rate of Recovery (MPR), 196
 Mayer, G.W., 64, 68, 92, 273
 Mayland Oil Co., 126
 McClave, James, 217
 McCloskey, Leo, 177
 McColl Brothers Ltd., 103
 McColl Frontenac, 103, 151, 161, 316
 McCollum, L.F., 274
 McGillvray, A.A., 131
 McGregor, Duncan, 97
 McKinley, William, 57, 58
 McLaughlin, Robert, 97
 McLeod, John H., 123, 130
 McMahon, Frank, 163, 237
 McMurray Oil & Asphaltum Co., 216
 McQueen, Alexander, 68, 83, 120, 123, 124, 127
 Mechin, G.C., 112, 113, 114
 Mellons family, 60–61
 Mene Grande Oil Company, 82
 Menzies, Merrill, 213
 Mexican oil industry, 82, 93, 203, 303
 Midwest Petroleums Ltd., 126
 Midwest Refining Co., 67
 Mildred Lake mine site, 221
 Minhinnick, John, 31, 35, 43, 44
 Mining Association of Canada, 209
 Mitchell, George, 254
 Monnett, Frank, 57
 Montalvo, José Antonio, 82
 Montreal East refinery, 111, 112–13, 114
 Montreal Pipeline, 201, 203, 204, 205
 Moroney, Tip, 152, 195, 284
 Morrow, Charles W., 198
 Moyer, John, 129
 Mulroney, Brian, 263
 Murchison, Clint, 199
 Murray, Alexander, 23
 Mutual Oil Company, 32

N

National Energy Board, 203, 240, 241, 242, 244, 245, 257, 263
 Natland, Manfred, 220
 natural gas: prices of, 244; problem of wastage of, 127–28, 130
 Nesbitt Thomson, 103
 Newfoundland's "Prosperity Loan," 105
 New Jersey's corporate reform act, 72
 New York Life Insurance Company, 76
 Nickle, C.J., 152, 206
 Nixon, Richard, 257
 Nobel group, 93

Norman Wells: establishment of, 231;
 expansion of, 136, 138; Imperial
 operations at, 136, 245; oil production
 capacity, 137–38, 140, 242; pipeline
 from, 139, 140; during wartime, 137
 North American Free Trade Agreement
 (NAFTA), 264
 North American Gas Light Company, 22
 North Atlantic: oil exploration in, 235–36;
 specialized vessels in, 236
 Northern Border Pipeline Agreement, 241
Northern Frontier, Northern Homeland
 (report), 241
 Northwest Company, 120, 121–22
 North West Company, 117
 Northwest Pipeline Corporation, 237
 Northwest Territories: oil exploration in,
 14, 117
 Nova Corporation, 265, 277, 316

O

Obama, Barack, 290
 Ohio oil fields, 45
 Oil, Chemical and Atomic Workers Union
 (OCAW), 115
 Oil and Gas Wells Act, 127
 Oil Creek well explosion, 281
 oil prices: global politics and, 278; impact
 on oil industry, 254; volatility of, 227,
 242–43, 255, 276, 305, 306
 oil producing countries, 253, 303
 oil sands: Cold Lake venture, 229–30;
 companies involved in exploration of,
 223–24, 227; environmental challenges
 of, 289; history of discovery of, 215–16;
 Imperial's venture in, 293; location
 of, 16; map of, 219; Mildred Lake
 project, 224; mining technology, 223,
 224–25; oil extraction from, 220; Peace
 River and a Japanese group (JACOS)
 project, 230; pilot plant, 221–22, 222;
 profitability of, 307; public perception
 of, 294–95; refining technology, 231,
 292; terminology, 336n4; transportation
 problem, 230
 oil spills, 281, 285, 287
 Oil Springs, 24–25
 Okalta Oils Ltd., 128
 Onassis, Aristotle, 285
 “Operation Franklin” geological survey, 232
 “Operation Oil Sands,” 220–21
 Organization of Petroleum Exporting
 Countries (OPEC), 95, 251–52, 253
 ozone layer, 290

P

Panamanian “revolution,” 78–79
 Panarctic Oils Ltd., 233
 Pardo y Barreda, José, 75
 Paris accord, 291
 Parsons, Silas, 103
 Pearson & Son company, 78
 Pennsylvania crude, 27
 Pennsylvania oil fields, 30, 37, 281
 Pennsylvania Railroad, 40
 Pennzoil oil company, 277
 Perez Alfonso, Juan, 204
 Peru: internal oil consumption in, 89; oil
 exports from, 86, 88; oil fields in, 71, 73;
 policy toward foreign companies, 75,
 76, 82; political turmoil in, 75, 76, 82;
 taxation system in, 75
 Peters, William, 27
 Peterson, Robert, 278, 293
 Petro Canada, 260, 262, 316
 petroleum conservation legislation, 130–31
 petroleum industry: Asian market, 305;
 boom and bust cycles, 249; era of
 optimism, 38; expansion of, 98–99,
 250; global politics and, 251–52,
 253; government regulations of, 124;
 marketing organizations, 158; military
 and, 93; new producers in, 250; price
 wars, 192–93, 194; reaction to climate
 change, 291–92, 295–96; system of
 transportation, 50; technological

changes and, 282; in the US and Canada, map of, 39; *See also* refining industry

Petrolia fields in Ontario, 12–13, 25–26, 55, 56, 143, 281–82

Petrolia-London pipeline, 42

Petro Peru, 88

Pew, J. Howard, 60, 218, 224

Phillips, Lazarus, 207, 210

Pierce, Frank W., 273

Pipe Line Act, 163

pipelines: construction of, 31–32, 161–62, 164, 165–67, 169; incidents at, 294; interprovincial, 164–66, 200; leaks of, 288–89; map of, 168; opposition to, 294, 295; technological changes and, 282; *See also* individual pipelines

pollution, 281, 284, 287, 288

Polymer Corporation, 177, 178, 181, 284

Pond, Peter, 117, 216

Port Arthur city, 165, 166

Portland-Montreal pipeline, 142, 155, 162

Practical Treatise on Petroleum, Coal and Other Distilled Oils, A (Gesner), 22

Pratt, Joseph, 6

Pratt, Wallace, 233

Pratt, William, 54

Premier Oil Company, 48

Project Plowshare, 218

Pulitzer, Joseph, 57

Pure Oil, 78

Q

Qaddafi, Muammar, 251

Queen City Oil Company, 51, 55

R

railways, 31, 32, 39–40

Rawl, Lawrence, 276, 292, 305, 306

Raymond, Lee, 255, 276, 278, 292, 293, 295, 305, 306

Redwater oil field, 11, 155, 163, 164, 182, 195

refining industry: centres of, 26–27, 29, 38, 66; competition in, 111; consolidation of, 26, 29, 34; expansion of, 63–64, 161; hazards of, 26, 33, 281–82; labour relations in, 108–10, 111–12; pollution emission, 281, 288; safety problems, 282; technological processes, 37–38, 97–98, 107, 133, 171, 175–76, 178–79

Regina-Gretna pipeline, 169

Restrictive Trade Practices Commission, 268, 269

Review of Environmental Protection Activities, 293

Reyes Prieto, Rafael, 78

Richfield Oil Company, 220, 225, 234

Ritchie, Ronald, 198

Robinson, C.O., 166

Rockefeller, John D., 12, 33, 38–39, 40–41, 57, 58, 297

Rockefeller, John D., Jr., 108–9, 166

Rockefeller Foundation, 108

Rogers, Henry H., 41, 58

Rogers, Samuel, 46, 47, 51, 55

Romanian oil fields, 185

Roosevelt, Theodore, 58

Ross, Victor, 92, 101, 105, 142

Royal Commission on Canada's Economic Prospects, 199

Royal Commission on Energy (Borden Commission), 200

Royal Commission on Taxation (Carter Commission), 208–11

Royal Commission on the Economic Union and Development Prospects for Canada, 268–69

Royal Dutch Shell: competitors of, 2, 13; early history of, 61; as international power, 93; oil sands exploration, 227; penetration into Canadian market, 14, 67, 101, 103, 120, 121, 300

Royalite Number 4 site, 124, 125

Royalite Oil Co.: acquisition of CPPL, 128; business operations in Alberta, 17, 125–26, 301; business strategy, 130;

- capitalization of, 123; management of, 123; natural gas production, 124; oil exploration, 124, 157; shareholders of, 126; stock market, 124, 126, 157; wastage of natural gas by, 127
- Royalite tank wagon, 47
- Royal Oil Co., 47
- Russia's oil diplomacy, 255

S

- Sadler, Everitt, 14
- Saint Clair Processing Corporation, 134, 177–78, 207
- Saint Clair River clean up, 283, 284
- St. Clair River Research Committee, 284
- Samuel, Marcus, 49, 61, 93
- Sarnia refinery: Bushnell's acquisition of, 51; expansion of, 63; Joint Industrial Council at, 110; net earnings, 66; oil supply for, 85; photograph of, 55; processing capacity, 107, 164, 169; union organizations at, 109
- Saudi Arabia, 94, 252–53
- Scott, Thomas, 39, 40
- Second World War: Canada's role in, 132; Japan in, 133–34, 136; oil industry during, 132–33, 134
- shale revolution, 254
- Sharp, Mitchell, 209, 210
- Shelford, Cyril, 198
- Shell Canada, 61, 186, 227, 232, 243, 265, 277, 284, 316
- Shell Transport Company, 49, 50, 61, 93
- Sierra Club, 240
- Silent Spring* (Carson), 285
- Silver Star refinery, 32, 34, 42
- Sinclair Oil, 78, 99, 234
- Sise, Charles, 34
- Smallwood, Joey, 235
- Smallwood, Thomas, 35
- Smith, G. Harrison: career, 68, 74, 80, 83, 92, 99, 106, 273; photograph, 84; retirement, 105, 141
- Smythe, Conn, 190
- Social Credit party, 129, 130, 152, 203, 225
- Solar Refining Company, 45
- Somervell, Brehon, 136, 137, 138, 139
- Sonneborn, Carrie, 32
- Sonneborn, Jonas, 30
- Sonneborn, Solomon, 28, 30
- Southern Lowery Oils, 126
- South Improvement Company, 40
- Southwest Petroleum, 126
- Spencer, William, 26, 27, 31, 43
- Spindletop oil strike, 60
- Spragins, Frank, 224, 225
- Sproule, John C., 232, 233
- Squires, Richard, 105
- SS *Arrow* disaster, 285, 286, 286–87
- Standard Development Company, 98
- Standard-IG Company, 174
- Standard of Indiana, 95
- Standard Oil Company: acquisitions, 51–52, 61; affiliates, 57; board of directors, 54; business alliances, 41; in Canadian market, 47, 50, 104; Colombian investments, 78–79; competitors, 61, 299; dissolution of, 49, 59; domestic problems, 48–49; expansion of, 33, 40, 95–96; formation of, 6, 297; gasoline production, 99–101; investigations of, 49; as joint stock company, 40; labour relations, 107; lawsuits against, 57, 58–59; lobbyist efforts, 50; management of, 41–42; press coverage of activities of, 57–58; relations with Imperial Oil, 4–5, 13, 95, 106; reorganization of, 2, 57, 299; research operations, 45, 172; *See also* Exxon Corporation; Exxon Mobil; Jersey Standard
- Standard Oil Development Co., 171, 172, 174
- Standard Oil of California, 231
- Standard Oil of Louisiana, 95, 301
- Standard Oil of New Jersey. *See* Jersey Standard
- Standard Oil of New York, 59, 60, 299
- Standard Oil Trust, 34, 41, 42

State of Competition in the Canadian Petroleum Industry, The (report), 267
 steam assisted gravity drainage (SAGD) process, 231
 Stefansson, Vilhjalmur, 136
 Stelco, 163
 Sterling Pacific Co., 126
 Stewart, Charles, 124
 Stewart, George, B., 157, 160
 Stillman, Charles, 54, 63, 81, 85, 86, 98, 106, 110, 122
 St. Laurent, Louis Stephen, 200
 Stratford, Richard K., 98, 172, 173
 Strathcona refinery, 161, 272
 strikes, 108–10, 111, 115
 styrene production, 177
 subsidiary companies, 3–4
 Suncor, 186, 227
 Sun Oil, 143, 185–86, 218, 224
 Supertest Petroleum, 158
 Syncrude consortium, 2, 224–25, 226, 227, 265, 289
 synthetic fuel development, 94, 144
 synthetic rubber industry, 174, 175–76

T

Tanner, Nathan, 9, 11, 130, 195, 218
 Tapley, J.L., 215
 Tarbell, Ida M., 58
 tar sands. *See* oil sands
 Taylor, Charles, 120, 121, 122
 Taylor, Vernon, 11, 149, 224
 Taylor, Walker, 9, 11
 Teagle, Walter Clark: Achnacarry meeting, 95; attitude toward minority shareholders, 64–65; business strategy, 300; career, 6, 60, 61–62, 63, 67–68, 74, 84; connection to Canada, 92; critique of Imperial Oil Company, 141; education, 61; interests in Alberta oil, 119; labour relations, 64, 65, 107, 109; photograph, 62; as president of Jersey Standard, 91, 92, 94, 96; reorganization of Imperial Oil by, 13, 14; resignation from the Imperial board, 67–68; search for new oil sources, 66–67; South American investments, 71–72, 78, 79, 93
 Teamsters union, 115
 Texaco, 103, 151, 161, 169, 180
 Texaco-Canada, 5, 115, 186, 187, 265, 277–78, 316
 Texas Company, 99
 Texas Fuel Co., 60
 Texas Railroad Commission, 94
 thermal cracking technology, 1, 94, 98, 107, 171, 282, 300
 Thompson, Malcolm, 119
 Three Rivers Oil & Gas, 103
 Tiedje, John, 179
 Tillerson, Rex, 254, 292, 306
 Tod, Jim, 284
 Toronto-Montreal pipeline, 258
Torrey Canyon (tanker), 285
 trade union movement, 107, 109, 115
 Trans Alaska Pipeline, 236, 239, 240
 Trans-Arab Pipeline (Tapline), 167
 Trans-Canada Pipeline, 202, 243, 302
 Trans Canada Pipeline Co., 199–200
 Transit & Storage Company, 162
 Trans Mountain Pipeline, 169, 197, 236, 264, 294
 Trees, Joe, 76, 78, 80–81
 Tripp, Charles, 23
 Tripp, Henry, 23
 Tropical Oil, 76, 80, 88
 Trudeau, Charley, 330n12
 Trudeau, Pierre, 225, 240, 242, 257, 258–59, 261
 Truman, Harry, 140, 160
 Trump, Donald, 291
 Tulsa consulting company, 164, 167
 Turner Valley: decline of, 143; discovery of gas in, 301; oil exploration in, 1, 123–25, 126, 129; oil rig workers in, 125; wildcat drilling operations, 201
 Turner Valley Gas Conservation Board, 129

Turner Valley Royalties, 103, 129

Twait, Bill: career, 187; on government tax policy, 206, 208, 210, 211; meetings with government officials, 197, 201; personality, 197; photograph, 188; public relations, 190

U

Ultramar, 185

Union Oil Company of California, 101, 113, 285

Union Oil of Canada, 143

United Farmers of Alberta (UFA), 123–24, 127, 129

United States: antitrust legislation, 49, 58, 74, 299; “Big Stick” diplomacy, 75, 300; Clean Air Act, 287, 288; corporate income tax, 72; depression in, 49; economic policy, 257; foreign affairs, 78–79, 257, 300; foreign investments in, 298; Mandatory Oil Import Program, 202, 203; oil industry, 30, 205, 251, 300; Oil Pollution Act, 282; Panamanian “revolution” and, 78; real-estate bubble, 253; strategic petroleum reserve, 233; Trans Alaska Pipeline Act, 236–37; Wagner Act, 116; Webb-Pomerene Act, 92

Urrutia, Carlos, 79

Urrutia-Thomson Treaty, 79, 80

US Atomic Energy Commission, 220

US-Canada relations, 160, 299, 302

US Environmental Protection Agency, 291

V

Vacuum Oil Company, 42

Venezuela’s oil industry, 82, 204–5

Victor refinery, 34, 42

Viking-Kinsella field, 120, 144

Visser, Charlie, 284

Voluntary Oil Import Program, 202

W

Walker, John, 35, 36

wars and revolutions: impact on oil market, 252, 253, 278

Waterman, Herman, 29, 35

Waterman, Isaac, 29, 35, 36

Wealth against Commonwealth (Lloyd), 49

Weeks, L.G., 144, 273–74

welfare capitalism, 109

Western Select Crude (WSC), 256

West Texas Intermediate (WTI) light crude, 256

whale oil: utilitarian use of, 21–22

White, Edward D., 59

White, Frederick, 51

White, Jack, 181, 270

White, John R., 163, 274

White, T.H., 72

Whitehorse refinery, 15, 16, 137, 138–39, 140, 161

White Paper on Carter Commission recommendation, 209, 210, 211

Wilhelm, Robert, 278

Williams, Charles James, 36

Williams, James Miller, 23, 24, 26, 36

Williamson, Archibald, 71

Wilson, Woodrow, 72, 79

Winnipeg General Strike, 107

Woods, Darren, 307

W.W. Barnes, 161

Y

Yost, Raymond, 119

Young, James, 22, 23

Yukon geological surveys, 231

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— DAVID BREEN, Emeritus Professor, Department of History, University of British Columbia

For over 130 years, Imperial Oil dominated Canada's oil industry. Their 1947 discovery of crude oil in Leduc, Alberta transformed the industry and the country. But from 1899 onwards, two-thirds of the company was owned by an American giant, making Imperial Oil one of the largest foreign-controlled multinationals in Canada.

Imperial Standard is the first full-scale history of Imperial Oil. It illuminates Imperial's longstanding connections to Standard Oil of New Jersey, also known as Exxon Mobil. Although this relationship was often beneficial to Imperial, allowing them access to technology and capital, it also came at a cost, causing Imperial to be assailed as the embodiment of foreign control of Canada's natural resources.

Graham D. Taylor draws on an extensive collection of primary sources to explore the complex relationship between the two companies. This groundbreaking history provides unprecedented insight into one of Canada's most influential oil companies as it has grown and evolved with the industry itself.

GRAHAM D. TAYLOR is Professor Emeritus in the Department of History at Trent University. He is the author of *Du Pont and the International Chemical Industry* and *The Rise of Canadian Business*, and winner of the 2015 Petroleum History Society Best Article Prize.



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