

'Do What You Must': Selected Editorials from Le Devoir under Henri Bourassa, 1910–1932

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Le Devoir was founded in 1910 by Henri Bourassa (1868–1952), one of the foremost political minds of twentieth-century Canada. Grandson of Louis-Joseph Papineau and heir to a long tradition of community involvement, Bourassa was first elected to the House of Commons in 1896, just as Wilfrid Laurier was forming his first government. Disagreements over the part played by Canada in the Boer Wars, and the country's uncritical allegiance to British imperialism, led Bourassa to leave the Liberal Party and openly promote his own ideas, centring on Canadian and French-Canadian nationalism. Very rapidly, *Le Devoir* became an influential French-language paper. Its popularity culminated in 1917, when Bourassa denounced conscription for service in Europe.

Based on a study of the 6,700 editorials published in *Le Devoir* during the Henri Bourassa years (1910–32), *'Do What You Must'* seeks to outline the ideological positions defended by Bourassa as French-Canadian nationalism was emerging for the first time in full force. During these two decades, *Le Devoir* was instrumental in defining the place of French speakers in Canada and in spelling out their aspirations as a separate people within the federation. The book is an anthology of sixty of the most significant editorials, translated into English, each situated in its historical context by the editor. Examined together, the editorials offer a global picture of the evolution of French Canada at a crucial time in its history. They also paint a clear image of the tensions that emerged between Francophone and Anglophone Canada shortly after the signing of Confederation and at the turn of the twentieth century.

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