



# Canadian Founding: John Locke and Parliament (McGill-Queen's Studies in the History of Ideas)

*Janet Ajzenstat*

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Convinced that rights are inalienable and that legitimate government requires the consent of the governed, the Fathers of Confederation - whether liberal or conservative - looked to the European enlightenment and John Locke. Janet Ajzenstat analyzes the legislative debates in the colonial parliaments and the Constitution Act (1867) in a provocative reinterpretation of Canadian political history from 1864 to 1873.

Ajzenstat contends that the debt to Locke is most evident in the debates on the making of Canada's Parliament: though the anti-confederates maintained that the existing provincial parliaments offered superior protection for individual rights, the confederates insisted that the union's general legislature, the Parliament of Canada, would prove equal to the task and that the promise of "life and liberty" would bring the scattered populations of British North America together as a free nation.

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