

## GAME PROFILE/CRITIQUE

# CANADIAN CIVIL WAR

## ... Writing from the Country in Question

by Norman S. Howe

CCW is one of the most unusual games SPI has ever wrought in terms of subject, system, and physical design. Most US gamers said "Canadian What?" and many Canadian gamers said "Typical US brass." The game does deserve serious attention (which it has gotten in Canada) if for no other reason than its innovative system. Mr. Howe offers some comment on the accuracy of the simulation as well as a consoling word or two to us well-meaning Americans adrift in our ignorance of the real Canada — RAS

*Canadian "Civil War"* is a multi-player simulation of political conflict in modern Canada. The game's subject matter has given rise to a very abstract treatment, compared to the more conventional simulations published by SPI. In terms of the concepts and interactions encountered in play, the game is very realistic indeed. This article examines the concepts represented in *Canadian "Civil War"* and interprets them as they apply to real politics.

The **Movement System** is perhaps the most abstract aspect of the game. As the playing area represents degrees of political control, rather than geography, it is difficult to understand why counters are given movement allowances: What exactly is moving, and where is it going? If one considers the movement points as representing rates of change of political opinion, or the speed at which a given type reacts to a situation, the meanings of the numbers become clear. Higher movement allowances represent greater flexibility and faster reaction time. The Civil Servant pieces, representing entire bureaucratic networks, are the slowest to react to change, while the Interest Groups are positively flighty.

The **Contest Strengths** represent relative political effectiveness. Strongest is the Prime Minister piece, which represents the entire Federal Government, while the Constituencies, representing unorganized voting blocks, are the weakest.

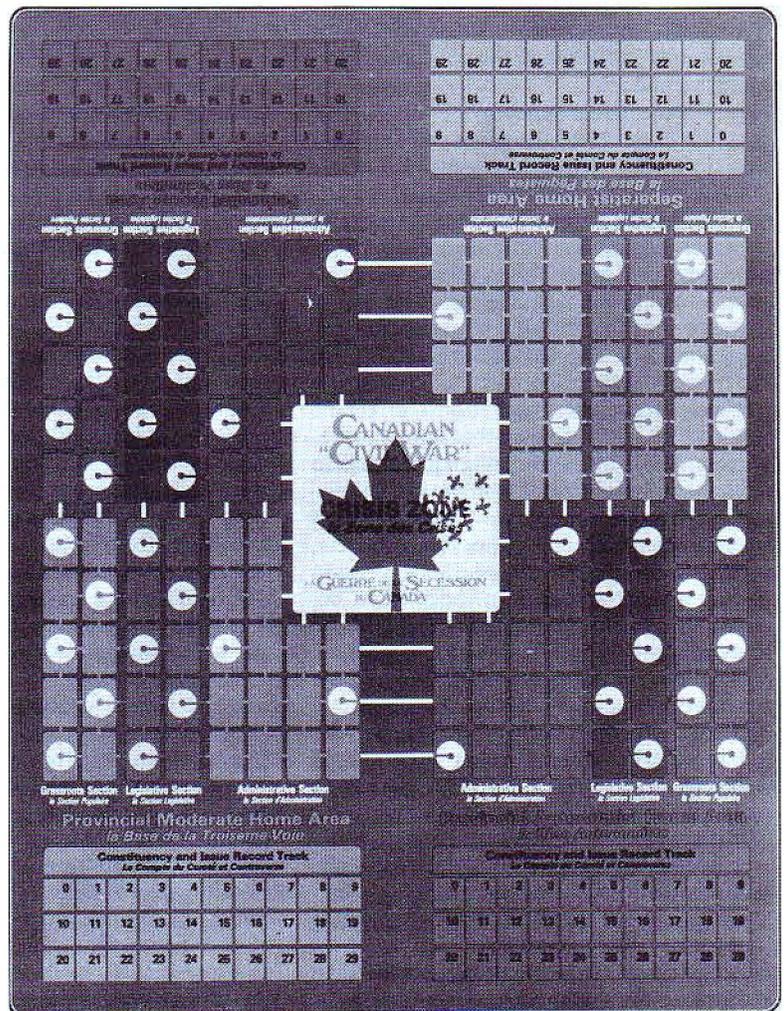
The **Political Viewpoints** of the various players represent the platforms of Canadian political parties, though the party lines do not correspond exactly with the game's Players. The Federalist (Red) player is best identified as the Liberal Party, which favors a more centralized government. At least, it does *now*. The Provincial Moderates (Orange) are the Conservative Party, which favors the status quo; not wishing to change the relationships between Federal and Pro-

vincial power. The Provincial Autonomists (Green) represent various small parties, each concerned with improving the lot of individual provinces. The Green player should consider the Federal government a servant of the provinces. Only in recent years has the Separatist (Blue) player been directly represented in Canadian politics, through the *Partie Quebecois*. Blue represents that portion of the Canadian population which holds no confidence in the dominion as it presently exists. This group contains not only the most alienated French-Canadians, but also other minorities, such as the Indians and Inuit, which consider themselves better off outside Canada than within it.

The *Victory Conditions* are stated in terms of Issues controlled by each player. There are 25 Issue counters, in 10 different

categories. These represent matters of concern to the Canadian public. The Language Issue, for example, may represent a proposed Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism; Transport may mean changes in subsidies to railways; and Foreign Affairs may mean Canada's contribution to NATO's peacekeeping forces. As the game progresses, Issues will change hands often; each time this occurs, the Issue may be considered to have a new "meaning." It may actually be possible to examine Canadian history and assign Issue designations to important bills and laws, for demonstration purposes.

The **Political Opportunity** cards represent events which the players can use to further their own aims, or to confound their opponents. Crisis Cards are used to draw Issues into the Conflict Zone on the playing area.



This represents the introduction of a new bill to the House of Commons, or an injudicious statement made by a Cabinet member, or a "leak" to the media. As there are only as many Crisis cards as there are Issues, a player may withhold certain cards to keep them out of the hands of his opponents. This is similar to a "cover-up." Election Cards induce changes in the political alignments of Constituencies. These must be used with caution, as a player may actually lose more constituencies than he gains by playing such cards. Event Cards cause drastic alterations in the allegiances of Interest Groups and Civil Servants, as well as having short-term effects on the Contest Strengths of certain units. These cards are the easiest to use, as they have no hidden side-effects.

Each player has a full set of 68 **Active Pieces**, including 39 Constituencies, 10 Provincial Premiers, 6 Civil Servants, 12 Interest Groups, and the Prime Minister. Only one complete set is in action at any time in the game, though it may be composed of pieces controlled by each of the players in the game. The Constituencies represent the voters of Canada. Each of the 10 provinces is assigned constituencies in proportion to their populations; thus Ontario has 14 Constituencies, Quebec 10, and so on. As there are about 264 constituencies which elect Members of Canada's parliament, each Constituency counter in the game may be considered to affect 7 MPs. When Contesting for Issues, at least one Constituency must participate in the contest; and only Constituencies may control Issues for movement purposes. As the number of Constituencies controlled is also important in deciding National Debates, the Constituency is easily the most important piece in the game.

The Premiers and the Prime Minister represent the Provincial and Federal governments of Canada. These pieces change color (allegiance) only during Elections, thus making them more secure than the other pieces in the game, but they may only be used in Contesting for Issues. This is quite realistic: a parliamentary body's powers are limited by law; the only way they can attract supporters to their cause is through lawmaking, which is covered in the Issues.

The Civil Servants represent Government Bureaucracies, including the Federal Cabinet Ministers. These are extremely slow-moving, and are most useful in defensive positions where they cannot escape on changing allegiance (which can happen through Event Cards or contesting). As the Civil Servants are Federally appointed, they may be arbitrarily reappointed by the Player controlling the most Constituencies during a National Election.

The Interest Groups represent the best organized non-political pressure groups in Canada. Issue-oriented groups such as Greenpeace would be represented by a Constituency stacked with an Issue; the Interest Group counters are more commercialized. As they are not particularly loyal to any party, they are susceptible to allegiance changes through several different Event Cards. Their

high movement allowances ensure that they can reach the Home Areas of their new colors with ease.

Victory in *Canadian "Civil War"* is difficult to achieve. There is constant competition for control of Issues; only the Orange and Blue players can achieve their objectives without interfering with each other. A player must hold as few unwanted Issues as possible, to prevent other players from declaring National Emergencies and ending the game. A careful balance must be maintained at all times, often through overt collaboration with other players. For example, one player may cede an issue to another, in exchange for the play of a particular Political Opportunity card at the right time. In the case of the National Election, players *must* co-operate or end the game.

The political dealings which occur within the game framework provide the most realistic factor in *Canadian "Civil War"*: compromise. In politics, one cannot be unyielding; this is a means of ensuring defeat in a real election. The opinions of each player must be considered, in order to find a solution wherein at least one player can win.

This brings me to the least realistic facet of the game: the **National Emergency**. A player may call a National Emergency if he controls three or fewer issues, and all other players have the same number or more. Whether or not the player is successful in creating the Emergency, the Political game ends. Nothing in Canadian history has ever occurred which resembles the National Emergency. The only example I can think of is the American Civil War. On the two occasions I have seen the National Emergency played, it appears to be a full-scale insurrection of the general populace. The way the rules are organized, I cannot conceive of a situation in which the Federal forces could win, save that the Rebel only had 2 or 3 constituencies to start with. I must conclude that the National Emergency rule is not intended for use, but is a "spoiler" rule, like the Nuclear Holocaust rules in *World War 3*. The intent of the National Emergency rule is to say, "don't pick on one player too much; he'll pack up his marbles and go home." It forces each player to be careful not to alienate the other players: even if one player could create an Emergency, he could be persuaded to stay in the game by bribery.

*Canadian "Civil War"* is an interesting political game, but it somewhat exaggerates the power of the minor parties in Canadian politics. Parliament is normally controlled by a clear majority of one party, i.e., 20 Constituencies controlled; coalition governments are very rare. However, this would prove rather uninteresting as a multi-player game, as the Green and Blue players would only have about five pieces between them. A two-player scenario could be constructed where Blue and Green are non-players; Red and Orange controlling all the pieces at the start of the game. One interesting rule change would be to make the color-changes transitive; i.e., a piece could change directly from Red to Blue, or Blue to Red. Blue and Green

pieces could not contest or vote (except to Veto), but would only attempt to move towards their own Grassroots areas. Victory conditions would be for Red or Orange to control at least 3/5 of the Issues, or 15 of certain types.

The Military rules for the National Emergency are too vague. In order to clarify certain problems, I offer the following extra rules governing Combat:

**Retreats:** Whenever a counter is forced to retreat, leaving an empty space, one of the attacking units may advance into the square. This only applies to Dr results, not Ar.

**Crisis Zone:** Any units left in the Crisis Zone at the end of the first Emergency turn are eliminated. Any counters remaining overstacked at the end of the first Emergency turn are completely eliminated (i.e., the whole stack).

**Militia:** When raising militia, the Federal Player should not be plagued by Militia units joining the Rebels. If a Constituency proves Disloyal to the Federal Player, he receives no militia from that Constituency. This rule replaces rule 10.23, wherein Militia from a Disloyal Constituency join the Rebels; neither side will receive the militia unit. This rule is intended to make it possible for the Federal player to win in a National Emergency situation.

**Militia Deployment Schedule:** There is an error in the listing for Ontario in Table 10.84. There are only 27 Ontario Militia counters; the table should read: "2(-1)," not "2(+1)." The counter mix is correct; this just happens to be the number of Militia units in the province, and the designer didn't want to write "1(+13)" because one player will almost never control the entire province.

Historically, many other scenarios are possible. As the unit distributions are rather esoteric, and the historical background of interest only to Canadians, I will not attempt to detail them here, except to list the dates at which various Provinces entered Confederation.

Ontario, Quebec, Nova Scotia, and New Brunswick entered Confederation in 1867. NvS and Nbr should be given 2 Constituencies each until 1874. Manitoba entered in 1870, British Columbia in 1871, and Prince Edward Island in 1873. Alberta and Saskatchewan entered in 1905, and Newfoundland in 1949. Quebec and the Western Provinces (Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta, and British Columbia) tend to elect more experimental governments (Blue and Green) than do the other provinces, but not more than half the total constituencies from these areas should be assigned those colors.

From my Canadian viewpoint, *Canadian "Civil War"* is an extremely interesting game, though one with a very limited popular appeal. Unless one is able to identify with the issues involved, the game is essentially meaningless. I suspect that many American gamers would be bored to tears without the historical article accompanying the rule book.