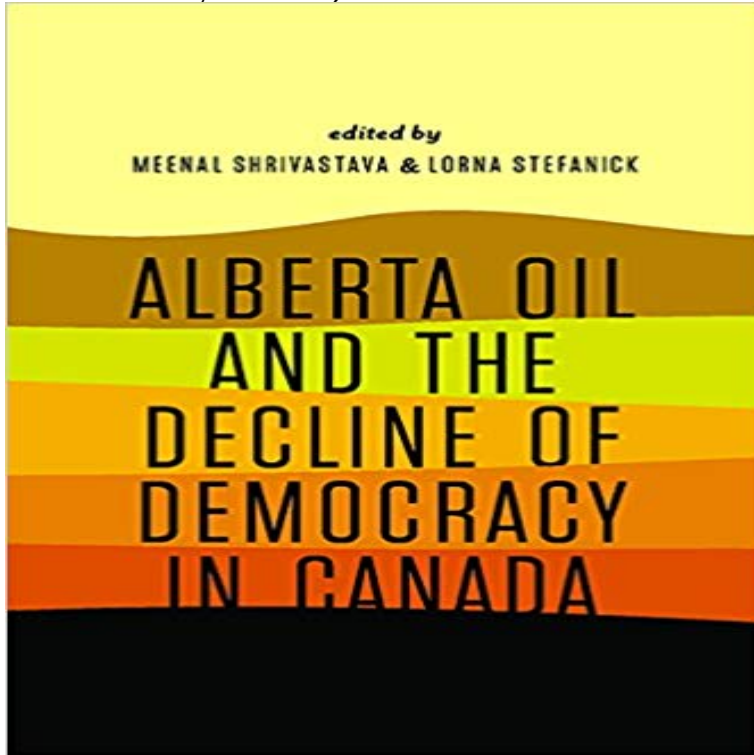


# Alberta Oil and the Decline of Democracy in Canada (Athabasca University Press)



In *Democracy in Alberta: The Theory and Practice of a Quasi-Party System*, published in 1953, C. B. Macpherson explored the nature of democracy in a province that was dominated by a single class of producers. At the time, Macpherson was talking about Alberta farmers, but today the province can still be seen as a one-industry economy?the 1947 discovery of oil in Leduc having inaugurated a new era. For all practical purposes, the oil-rich jurisdiction of Alberta also remains a one-party state. Not only has there been little opposition to a government that has been in power for over forty years, but Alberta ranks behind other provinces in terms of voter turnout, while also boasting some of the lowest scores on a variety of social welfare indicators. The contributors to *Alberta Oil and the Decline of Democracy* critically assess the political peculiarities of Alberta and the impact of the governments relationship to the oil industry on the lives of the provinces most vulnerable citizens. They also examine the public policy environment and the entrenchment of neoliberal political ideology in the province. In probing the relationship between oil dependency and democracy in the context of an industrialized nation, *Alberta Oil and the Decline of Democracy* offers a crucial test of the oil inhibits democracy thesis that has hitherto been advanced in relation to oil-producing countries in the Global South. If reliance on oil production appears to undermine democratic participation and governance in Alberta, then what does the Alberta case suggest for the future of democracy in industrialized nations such as the United States and Australia, which are now in the process of exploiting their own substantial shale oil reserves? The environmental consequences of oil production have, for example, been the subject of much attention. Little is likely to change, however, if citizens of oil-rich

countries cannot effectively intervene to influence government policy.

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