

The incredible shrinking Canada

The worst disaster in Canadian history is only 24 days away. Incredibly, people here have been so busy flapjawing over election nonsense that nobody at all seems to have noticed the monstrous calamity rushing down on us like an avalanche of doom. On Dec. 1, the National Geographic Society will send out its revised world map to the four corners of the globe. It uses a brand new format called the Robinson projection which will change the relative sizes of many nations — among them, dear old Canada.

Readers, fasten your seatbelts. Canada is going to be 34% smaller on the new map. That means *one-third* of this fair nation is going to be gonzo. Kaput. Finis.

I've got a mural-sized National Geographic world map on the wall of my office. It's the old version known as the Van der Grinten projection, which is familiar to just about everybody in the civilized world. Canada looms down over me, vast, titanic and endless.

On this projection, the distance from Toronto to Base Alert up on Ellesmere Island, looks exactly the same as the distance from Toronto to rather more jolly Rio de Janeiro. We're talking big.

Well, no more. On the new Robinson projection, Canada is being shrunk down like a prune. Particularly the NWT and Arctic. To add insult to injury, the National Geographic has the gall to say that on the new map Canada is *still* 21% larger than in reality! My God, how much can a proud nation be asked to bear?

On Nov. 30 we're still mighty Canada, the world's second-largest nation. The next morning, we're the amazing shrinking country. I mean, what's the point of spending zillions on submarines to guard our holy Arctic



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from those wicked Yankees when it isn't even there any more? What looked like vast expanses of really upscale real estate are now going to be downgraded into some little snow-covered islets not much bigger than the Thousand Islands.

Seething with righteous fury, I called the National Geographic in Washington to get their map co-ordinates (on the new Robinson projection, of course,) so we could organize an air strike against their headquarters before they erase another third of Canada.

Come to think of it, why couldn't they have lopped off the Maritimes instead of the Arctic? Anyway, I was told that the new Robinson projection gives a more accurate view of the world than the Van der Grinten — and much more so than the older Mercator projection which many of us grew up with. On this oldest version, Canada is even bigger than on the Van der Grinten.

The problem, I was apologetically informed, is that you just can't take a round object like our globe and squish it flat on paper without producing distortions. These distortions are worst at the polar latitudes. In order to keep lower latitude areas like the U.S., Europe or Africa in reasonable proportion, it's necessary to vastly inflate the size of the Arctic and Antarctica.

As a result, on older maps, Greenland is 554% larger than life-size. It looks bigger than Africa but is really only the size of Mexico. Russia is too big by 223%, a fact that should make its neighbors feel a lot better. And, alas, Canada was also blown up quite out of proportion.

So the northern nations are going to shrink while the southern ones will get larger. This is grossly unfair since they already have sun and no snow. And here we are getting eczema over the Yanks using devilish free trade to steal our culture, women and icebergs when horrors — a third of the True North simply vanishes without a trace into cold, thin air.

The top part, at that, the heartland of real Canadian culture — like wigwam and canoe building. One third less Canada means one third less social programs. I guess John Turner was right. Could this map of doom be the cutting edge of the Free Trade plot? Suddenly, we're poor, weak and tiny. Even Sri Lankans won't want to come here anymore.

Claustrophobia will now probably replace bulemia and anorexia as the malady of choice among jittery yuppies. Africa and South America are slated to grow larger on the new maps. Can you imagine, we'll even have to put up with Tanzanians or Bolivians yelling at us, "Hey, you Canadian shrimps." It's intolerable.

There's one last hope. A Toronto *Sun* map of the world that would give Canada its rightful size — enormous. We could shrink down those pesky Americans by a third to see how they like it, and make Puerto Rico the same size as Australia to rub it in. Maybe we could even inch our borders a bit south while we're at it, like sort of toward Florida, eh?