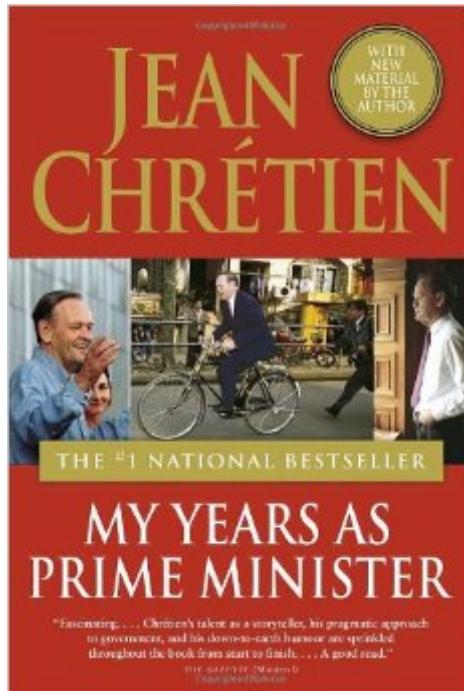


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My Years As Prime Minister (Ron Graham Books)



Synopsis

My Years as Prime Minister is Jean Chrétien's own story, told with insight and humour, of his ten years at 24 Sussex Drive as Canada's twentieth prime minister. By the time he left office, Jean Chrétien had been in politics for forty years – and his experience is evident on every page of his important, engaging memoir. Chrétien loves to tell a good tale – and he does so here in the same honest, plain-spoken style of *Straight from the Heart*, his earlier bestselling account of his years as a Cabinet minister. He gives us a self-portrait of a working prime minister – the passionate Canadian renowned for finishing every speech with *Vive le Canada!* Chrétien knows how government works, and his political instincts are sharp. Through the decade 1993 to 2003 we watch as he wins three majority elections as leader of the Liberal Party of Canada. Finding the country in a dreadful state, dangerously in debt and bitterly divided, he describes how his government wiped out the deficit in just four years, helped to defeat the separatists in the cliffhanger Quebec referendum, passed the Clarity Act, and set out to fulfill the economic and social promises his party made in its famous Red Books. He reveals how and why he kept the country out of the war in Iraq – a defining moment for many Canadians; led Team Canada on whirlwind trade missions around the world; and participated in a host of major international summits. Along with his astute comments on politics and government, he gives candid portraits of a broad cast of characters. Over a beer, Tony Blair confides his hesitation about taking Britain into the Iraq War; in the corridors of the United Nations, Bill Clinton offers to speak to Quebecers on behalf of Canadian unity; while at home, Chrétien reveals the events leading up to the departure of his finance minister, Paul Martin. He recounts the dramatic night in which his quick-thinking wife, Aline, saved him from an assassination attempt at 24 Sussex Drive; and, with lively humour, he describes how he and Clinton successfully escaped from their own bodyguards – to the consternation of all. Even in the highest office in the land, Jean Chrétien never lost his connection with ordinary Canadians. He is as warm and funny in his recollections as in person, at once combative and cool-headed, a man full of vitality and charm. Above all, from start to finish, his love for his country and his passion to keep it united run clear and deep. From the Hardcover edition.

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Customer Reviews

I received this book as a gift, but didn't crack it for 18 months. I've had a private debate with myself about who was the worst Prime Minister Canada ever had. I narrowed it to Brian Mulroney or Jean Chretien. I based the evaluation on who had most squandered Canada's great wealth of natural and human resources to the mania of economic liberalism and the other fads of post national and post structural culture. Both administrations had the taint of corruption, but I came to the conclusion that Chretien even outdid Mulroney in the sell out of our national potential and identity, only in part by lying to us about his intention to reject NAFTA. Free Trade, Monetarism, Deregulation and Privatization profoundly contravened the National economic policies which had built Canada from Confederation. Here we are 17 years after Chretien's first election. The revolutionary paradigm set in place by him and his predecessor is still in effect. The country is increasingly de-industrialized, its scientific and technological infrastructure being dismantled. We have the first generation in perhaps its history that is substantially poorer than that of their parents. Single income families, lifetime employment, pensions and benefits have become things of the past (MP's excepted!). The empty aphorisms of the 'knowledge economy' have replaced that of the integrated industrial economy. The latter's high wages and high expectations have been replaced with transient, dead end, low paying service jobs for all except a small segment of highly trained specialists in abstract disciplines.. perhaps 20% of the workforce, leaving millions in the dustbin of the New Economy.

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