

THE GREAT DEPRESSION

The Dirty Thirties.

Few countries were affected as severely as Canada during the Great Depression of the 1930s. One in five Canadian's



became dependent on the government for relief. Unemployment never declined below 12% and the Depression's severity was due to a poor welfare structure and misguided government policy. Saskatchewan was plagued by crop failures and the lowest price for wheat in recorded history, farmers, young people, small businessmen and the unemployed bore the burden of economic hardship. Conservative **R.B. Bennett** and W.L. Mackenzie King refused to provide work for the jobless insisting that care should come provincially. The depression spawned political reform movements such as the democratic socialism of **J.S. Woodsworth** and **T.C. Douglas**.

R.B. Bennett's New Deal In the mid-1930s, at the height of the GREAT

The Lyrics

The dirty 30' were the great depression years
We road the rails in search of work
Our destinies unclear
Arrested for vagrancy with no clemency

CHORUS

Union folk come along
And sing those union songs
Unions be strong
Our time is not long

Dust and debt destroy our prairie long
And do nothing politicians carry on
While we can't make our loans
And the banks foreclose

CHORUS

R.B. Bennet is afraid of Western
Socialists
Woodsworth and Douglas are no
communists
Communist, Socialist who cares
All we want are jobs and health care

CHORUS

Douglas, Thomas Clement, Tommy, baptist minister, politician, premier of Saskatchewan (b at Falkirk, Scot 20 Oct 1904; d Ottawa 24 Feb 1986). Douglas led the first socialist government elected in Canada and is recognized as the father of socialized

DEPRESSION, Prime Minister R.B. BENNETT'S political demise seemed inevitable. Seeking to reverse the tide running against his Conservative Party, on 2 Jan 1935 he began a series of live radio speeches outlining a "New Deal" for Canada. It promised a more progressive taxation system, a maximum work week, a minimum wage, closer regulation of working conditions, unemployment insurance, health and accident insurance, a revised old-age pension and agricultural support programs. Nevertheless, Bennett lost the Oct 1935 general election, and in Jan 1937 the JUDICIAL COMMITTEE OF THE PRIVY COUNCIL declared most of the "New Deal" ULTRA VIVRES.

John English, The Canadian Encyclopedia, p.204.

Woodsworth, James Shaver, Methodist minister, social worker, politician (b at Etobicoke, Ont 29 July 1874; d at Vancouver 21 Mar 1942). First leader of the CO-OPERATIVE COMMONWEALTH FEDERATION (CCF), he was the best known of the reformed-minded SOCIAL GOSPEL ministers and led many of them into the politics of democratic socialism.

Kenneth McNaught, The Canadian Encyclopedia, p. 2333.

medicine. He also helped establish democratic socialism in the mainstream of Canadian politics. His proudly working-class and religious family provided a strong background for both his politics and his faith.

L.D. Lovick, The Canadian Encyclopedia, pp. 615-616.

Books:

Douglas, T.C. Making of a Socialist.

MacInnis, G. J.S. Woodsworth, A Man to Remember.

Horn M. ed, The Dirty Thirties: Canadians in the Great Depression.

Questions:

1. What is democratic socialism?
2. What caused the Great Depression?
3. What social services were implemented in Canada after the Great Depression?