The Great Depression

“The Dirty Thirties” and how people responded

Reasons for Depression

1. Overproduction of wheat
   * eventually leads to being unable to pay off loans
   * Overproduction of other goods as well
2. USA imposes high tariffs to protect US goods
   * that leads to less buying of Canadian goods = less business
   * Protectionism: others raise their tariffs to not buy US goods, cycle continues

* Reasons for Depression

3. War debt made countries weak

* + Germany had to pay reparations

Example: I’m in debt, I want to build roads but my government can’t afford to pay workers.

* + Great Britain, Canada, France borrowed money from America

4. Canada depended on export of primary resources

* + now US isn’t buying because they’re not producing
  + primary industries cut back
  + people don’t have money to buy luxuries like cars and radios
    - car and radio industries lay people off, cycle continues
* Reasons for Depression

5. Stock Market Crash October 29,1929 (Black Tuesday)

* + People bought stocks on speculation (assumption that it would rise)
    - buy low, sell high – short term investments
  + 13million shares sold on Oct 24
  + Prices fall for the next 4 days
  + 16million shares sold on Oct 29
  + Buying on a Margin meant that many were forced to sell their shares

What the Depression Looked Like

Effects of the Great Depression

* Those affected most were working class – couldn’t pay rent or mortgages
* Monetary relief was given but difficult process
  + “Pogey” for those with no other source of income
  + Relief given to families
  + Municipalities offered relief work but made the pay lower than a “real” job’s wage
  + No unemployment insurance until 1940 (Federal)
  + Immigrants were deported

Effects of the Great Depression

* Suicides, infanticides, etc resulted to save money
* Result was a country filled with homeless unemployed
* Worse for immigrants who were discriminated against even more so (jobs, food) – immigration stopped
  + 169 000 in 1929 to fewer than 12 000 in 1935
  + 28,000 deported
* Aboriginals given less relief than non-Aboriginals
  + Lands cut off to create jobs (Lions Gate bridge)

“Riding the Rods”

Prairies suffer more

* Droughts - Prairie Farm Rehabilitation Act built irrigation (1935)
* Dust storms 1930s – top soil blown away
* Plague of grasshoppers

Responses to the Depression

* King thought it was temporary (economy goes through cycles and can rebound)
* “Five Cent Speech”

R.B. (Richard Bedford) Bennett

* Elected 1930 - why?
* Bennett’s New Deal:
  + $20 million to provinces for work creation
  + Progressive tax
  + Gov’t regulated work conditions (min wage, work hours, etc)
  + Raise tariffs 50%
  + Canadian Wheat Board to regulate wheat prices
* Bennett became associated with the Depression (like Hoovervilles) – Bennett Barnyards/ shantytowns
* 1931 ban of the Communist party (“Red Scare”)
* 1932 Relief Act for single men – building roads, clearing land, digging drainage
  + Pumps money into the hands of the people so they can buy again
* Bennett’s government fell apart
  + In-fighting and Bennett held foreign affairs and finance portfolios
* Bennett Buggies
* Bennett Barnyard
* Letters to Bennett

Relief Camps

* Northern Ontario and BC’s interior
* Lived on war surplus clothing, bunked in tar-paper shacks, ate army rations and were forced to work six and a half days a week for 20 cents a day
* Temporary Housing Conditions at Relief Camp in Ontario  
  *Canada Dept of National Defence / Library and Archives Canada / PA-034666*

On to Ottawa Trek 1935

* Unemployed mass protest taking their protest from BC to Ottawa
  + Protesting work camp conditions
* Most were stopped in Regina, leaders went on to Ottawa
* Trekkers were ordered to disband but fought the RCMP – one man killed

Vancouver during the Depression

* 1936 relief camps closed and workers flood to the cities
* Men were destitute and protested

Saskatchewan: CCF – Cooperative Commonwealth Federation (later NDP)

* Becomes more popular in the west to fight for labourer rights
* Socialist party
  + Supported programs to help elderly, sick, and unable
* Regina Manifesto: government to spend more money on social programs and public works

Alberta: Social Credit Party

* William Aberhart of Social Credit Party wins in Alberta
* Theory of not saving/ hoarding money – release the money into the economy
* Promised $25 a month for basic needs to everyone

Ontario

* Ontario votes for Mitch Hepburn (Liberal) who claimed to want to help the “little man” but put down numerous union strikes

Quebec

* Maurice Duplessis Union Nationale was a nationalistic French Canadian party
  + Blamed the English for the problems
  + French nationalism grows
  + Nationalizes power production
  + Union Nationale does not fix unemployment issues

BC

* Dufferin Pattullo (Premier from 1933-41) promised more provincial spending
  + Shortened the work day, increased minimum wage, built Pattullo Bridge, new (current) Vancouver City Hall
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King back again!

* Fed up with Bennett’s attempts that didn’t solve the Depression (1935)
* National Employment Commission (1938) finds that unemployment is a national problem
  + Recommends that fed gov’t spend on job creation
  + King responds haphazardly
* Rowell-Sirois Commission
  + Fed gov’t to be responsible for the country’s unemployment
  + Equalization payments to provinces for social services
  + Provide UI (EI, 1940) and pensions

Distracting the Public

* Radio shows
  + Mainly American (The Shadow, [War of the Worlds 1938](http://videosift.com/video/Original-War-of-the-Worlds-Radio-Broadcast-Audio-only), Sherlock Holmes)
* CBC created! (1936) to promote [Canadian media](http://www.cbc.ca/archives/categories/arts-entertainment/media/75-years-of-cbc-milestones/cbc-radio-takes-to-the-air.html)

Grey` Owl – First Conservationist?

* From England (Archibald Belaney) and adopts the life of Canadian Aboriginal people
  + Darkens skin, wears aboriginal clothes
* Devoted his life to preserving forests and Canadian animals ([beaver](http://nfb.ca/film/Beaver_People) – made a video about it)
* When it was discovered he was a fake, a lot of his work was discredited