

In the meantime, some Canadians, disillusioned with the vagaries of the free enterprise system, were turning to other economic philosophies: The Co-operative Commonwealth Federation (CCF) was founded in 1932 and the new Social Credit party won the Alberta provincial election of 1935. R.B. Bennett, in desperation, launched his own version of Roosevelt's "New Deal" early in 1935. It did not save him or his party; they crashed to defeat in the October 1935 election, winning only 40 seats. "King or Chaos" had been the Liberal election slogan; the voters may not have wanted King that much but they wanted R.B. Bennett even less and the depression so unhappily associated with his government.

2.4.3 The Second World War

Canada's entry into World War II came at a time when the government and a considerable section of the Canadian population had been slowly weaned away from Europe and to a degree from Britain too. Mackenzie King's government had cultivated the development of Canada as a separate Dominion within the British Commonwealth and equal status with Britain had been officially recognized in the Statute of Westminster in 1931. Mackenzie King disliked European commitments of any kind and was prone to regard the foreign policies of Britain and France as old-fashioned balance-of-power diplomacy. He was confirmed in these views by an interview with Hitler in 1937 which convinced him of the sincerity of what he believed were Hitler's peaceful intentions. King also cultivated cordial relations with the United States through his friend Franklin D. Roosevelt.

The Canadian government declared war on Germany on September 10, 1939, nine days after Britain. At first there was only a limited commitment to overseas service but within nine months all was changed; by June 1940 the war was vastly different and profoundly disturbing. Between Hitler and the complete mastery of Europe stood only Britain, Canada, and the three other Commonwealth countries, Australia, New Zealand and South Africa. Canada's war effort now became total.

The Canadian Navy, with a more substantial base to begin from than in 1914, expanded rapidly, taking on virtually all convoy duty in the northwest Atlantic. Canada also administered the British Commonwealth Air Training Plan under which air crews from all Commonwealth countries were trained. Division after division of Canadian troops crossed to England. Their restlessness there — one can only train for so long — helped persuade the British and Canadian commands to test the German defences on the north coast of France and the disastrous Dieppe raid of August 1942 was the result. While the lessons of Dieppe proved invaluable for the great Allied invasion of June 1944, Canadians paid a terrible price for the experience.

Japan forced the United States into the war in December 1941 by the raid on Pearl Harbor and United States troops landed with the British in North Africa in the autumn of 1942. The Canadians joined in the assault on Sicily the following summer, crossed the Italian mainland and fought in the long and bitter Allied campaign against tenacious and skilful German resistance in Italy throughout 1943-44.

The campaigns of 1944 in Italy and in northwest Europe were fraught with heavy casualties for Canadian troops and by the early autumn of 1944 reinforcements were badly needed. In the October 1939 Quebec general election, when they sought the reinstatement of a Liberal government in that province. Ministers of the King government — most notably Ernest Lapointe (1876-1941) and P.J.A. Cardin (1879-1946) — had promised no conscription for overseas service. In 1942, by means of a plebiscite, the government sought release from this pledge. The result of the vote, however, was not clear: 64% of the voters were willing to release the government from their promise but in Quebec the vote was only 28% while in the rest of Canada it was 80%. There was already conscription for home defence, but should conscripted troops be sent overseas? The question nearly broke the King government in 1944. After a three-week crisis and the resignations (although for opposite reasons) of J.L. Ralston (1881-1948), Minister of Defence, and C.G. Power (1888-1970), Minister for Air, the Canadian government ordered the home defence troops overseas on November 23, 1944.

A general election was held in June 1945 shortly after the end of the European conflict. Mackenzie King was re-elected but with a narrow majority of only five seats. He retired in 1948 having held office longer than any previous Prime Minister in the British Commonwealth. He was succeeded by Louis St. Laurent (1882-1973).

Mr. St. Laurent presided over the entrance of Newfoundland into Canada on March 31,