Emergence of New Political Parties

Canadian History 1201
Emergence of New Parties

• Some Canadians felt that traditional political parties, Conservatives and Liberals, were unable to deal effectively with the depression

• When attempts to get appropriate actions from government failed, many people turned their attentions to new political parties
Federal Election Results 1935

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Party</th>
<th>Seats Won</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Liberal</td>
<td>173 (45% of popular vote)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conservative</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Social Credit</strong></td>
<td>17 (new parties 26% of PV)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>CCF</strong></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reconstruction</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- New national political parties appeared as a result of the Great Depression and would have great impacts on the future of politics in Canada.
Why Did They Emerge?

• Why did new parties appeal to some of the population?
  • Well if the old parties were not living up to their expectations, they thought maybe these new groups will
  • “Out with the old in with the new”

• Often though, voters were disillusioned with the new parties, voting for them in the hopes of change without actually understanding their platforms
Emergence of New Parties

• Some of these new parties platforms were very radical, others only focused on minor changes to social policy

• All would have some effect on the government

• But not all the new parties would survive the depression

• In the end, these parties emerged because there was a strong dissatisfaction and frustration by the people, with regards to their current government’s actions
Social Credit Party

• In 1935 the Social Credit Party swept to power as the government of Alberta

• Its leader was William Aberhart, a school principal who had a reputation as a solid and responsible citizen
  • Aberhart was also deeply religious and was well known in Alberta as a popular radio preacher
Social Credit Party

• The theory of social credit stemmed from the writings of Major C.H. Douglas

• According to Douglas, the basic problem with the economy was that people did not have enough money to spend on the goods that were being produced. Douglas suggested a simple solution; every citizen should be given a “social credit” or cash payment. With this extra money, people would spend more and therefore improve the overall condition of the economy
Social Credit Party

- Aberhart promised to give a “social credit” of $25 per month to every adult in Alberta.
- To the farmers whose fields were blowing away and whose cattle were dying of thirst, the money seemed like a windfall.
- The Social Credit party remained in power in Alberta for 35 years.
Cooperative Commonwealth Federation (CCF)

- The CCF formed in 1932 through an ambulation of farmers, labour groups, university professors and Members of Parliament.
- The founders wanted social and economic reforms to end the human suffering caused by the Great Depression.
  - “Cooperative” represented the farmers’ belief in joint action.
  - “Commonwealth” stood for the hope of a new social order where wealth would be shared equally.
  - “Federation” meant that the party was made up of a loose connection of various economic and social groups.
Cooperative Commonwealth Federation (CCF)

- The party’s first leader was James S. Woodsworth; a passionate social reformer and labour leader
- The CCF was a democratic socialist party
  - Socialists believed that government should own and control of the economy, but the manifesto of the party specifically rejected revolution and stated that it intended to bring about changes through free elections and the parliamentary system
Cooperative Commonwealth Federation (CCF)

- CCF members were accused of being communists by their opponents, yet Mackenzie King and the Liberals adopted some CCF ideas
  - Welfare insurance, family allowances, unemployment insurance and compensation for injured workers
Union Nationale

- Quebec society changed during the 1920s
  - Many people left farms to work in the large hydroelectric, mining and pulp and paper industries
- The leader was Maurice Duplessis
  - He claimed English speaking minority and the federal government were the cause of Quebec’s economic and social problems
Union Nationale

• Duplessis vowed to defend the French language, Roman Catholic religion and culture against English-speaking businesspeople, the federal government and communists

• Union Nationale swept to power in the provincial election of 1936
Communist Party of Canada

- During the Great Depression, the spread of communist ideas in Canada represented damnation to some Canadians and salvation to others.
- Like many Canadian politicians at the time, Prime Minister R.B. Bennett feared a communist revolution on home soil.
Communist

• A depiction of relief camps from the Communist Party paper, *The Worker*, 11 November 1932