POLITICAL RESPONSES TO THE GREAT DEPRESSION:

THE POLITICAL SPECTRUM

Inadequate solutions (and a loss of popular support) resulted in an eventual loss for Bennett in 1935

*Trekkers* clearly were a key segment of the population that were unhappy with the current leadership

The Canadian public clearly wanted other options and sought out some alternatives to the two major political parties within Canada.

In order to fully appreciate what the political arena was like during this period, one must first attain some basic understanding of the *political spectrum*.

LEFT

**(Reformist or Communist)**

A political party that favours social, economic, and political policies that are aimed at the equal distribution of rights and wealth within a state or nation.

# CENTRE

**(Liberal)**

Political parties that favour moderate views that are neither right (conservative) nor left (radical or reformist).

**RIGHT**

**(Conservative)**

Political parties that generally support capitalism and are opposed to socialism or government regulation of business.

**THE POLITICAL RESPONSES TO THE GREAT DEPRESSION**

Party: Liberal Party of Canada Leader: William Lyon Mackenzie King

Spectrum Placement: Centre-Left (Right)

Policies/ Ideas:

* Canadian business needed to find its own "place"
* The government should not get too involved in the affairs of private business (allow economy

to "run its course")

* Considered "relief" a provincial responsibility
* By 1937 however, he was forced to formally outline federal and provincial responsibilities

concerning assistance

Party: Conservative Party of Canada Leader: Richard Bedford (R.B.) Bennett

Spectrum Placement: Centre-Right (Left)

Policies/ Ideas:

* Raise protective tariffs
* Introduced measures (relief camps, "voucher payments")
* Few policies were felt by Canadians
* Introduced "New Deal" for 1935 election platform (included ideas like an 8 hour work day,

Unemployment insurance, price controls, etc...)

* In five years, he had achieved very little success

Party: The Co-operative Commonwealth Federation Leader: J. S. Woodsworth

Spectrum Placement: Left

Policies/ Ideas:

* Believed in socialism (government control of business and industry)
* Thought such changes to the system could be achieved democratically
* An individuals' rights and the vote were important

Support: workers, immigrants, elderly, unionists

Party: The Social Credit Party Leader: William "Bible Bill" Aberhart

Spectrum Placement: Left

Policies/ Ideas:

* Believed the Depression occurred because people didn't have enough money to buy the

goods being produced

* Proposed to give each Albertan $25/month to purchase needed goods

Issues encountered: (a) only the federal government could print money (b) where would the

money come from?

Party: The Union Nationale Leader: Maurice Duplessis

Spectrum Placement: Right

Policies/ Ideas:

* Focused primarily on keeping conservative elements strong within Quebec
* Was premier from 1936-1959 (except '39-'44)
* Encouraged increasing provincial powers/ controls

Believed French-Canadians should retain control of their own resources, culture, and exclude

“aliens"

Party: The Communist Party of Canada Leader: Tim Buck

Spectrum Placement: Left

Policies/ Ideas:

* Encouraged revolt against current economic/ political system
* Served time in custody

Failed to receive mass support (too extreme for the majority of the Canadian public)