3

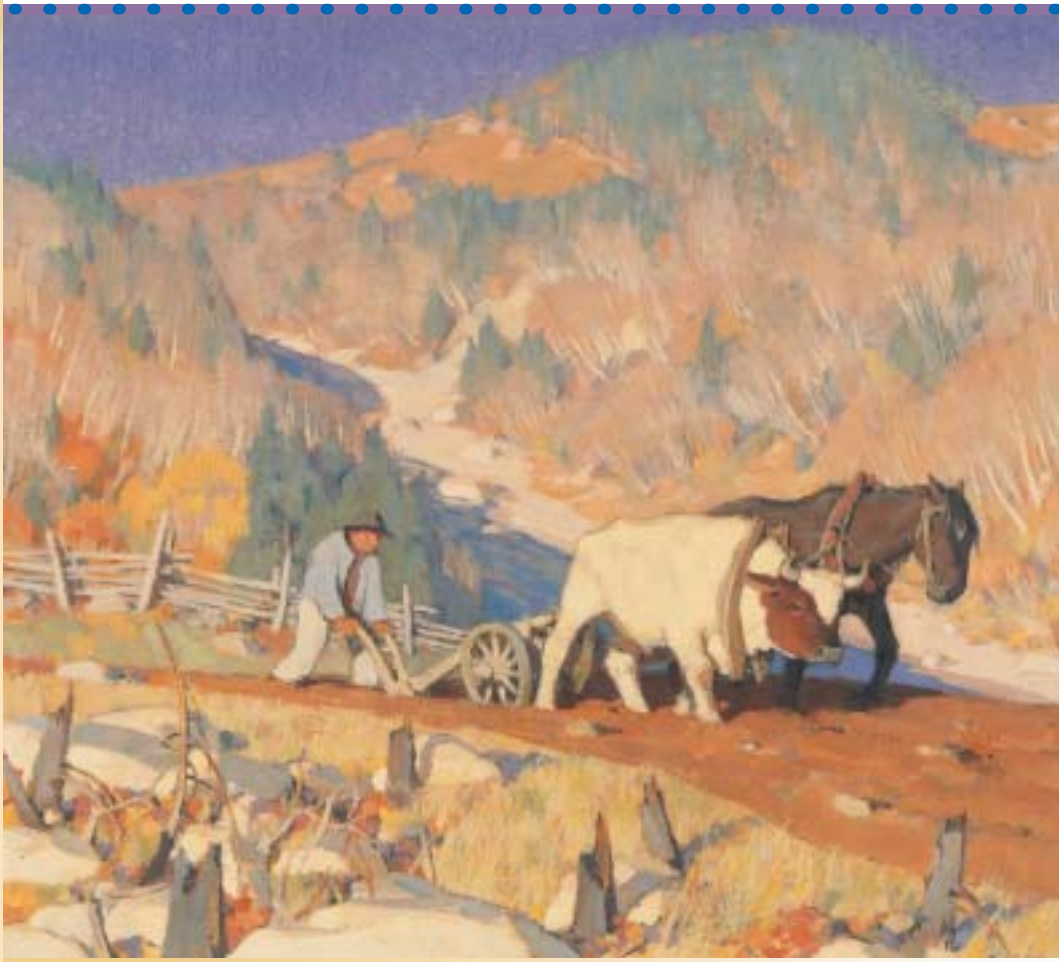
Canada and the Twenties

FOCUS ON

- Why was there labour unrest after World War I, and how did workers try to improve their working conditions?
- What is regionalism, and how was it expressed in the 1920s?
- How did Canada become more independent from Britain?
- What was the impact of U.S. investment on the Canadian economy?
- How did the growth in Canadian industry affect life in the cities?
- How did new technology influence lifestyles in the 1920s?

Counterpoints Issue

- Did Canada become more or less independent in the 1920s?



October by Clarence Gagnon. This painting was one of a series of Quebec scenes that Gagnon started in the late 1920s to capture a way of life that was rapidly disappearing.

Expressing ideas What does this painting tell you about the way of life in rural Quebec at this time? How might it have been different in other parts of Canada? What aspects of this scene do you think were about to change?

Introduction

The 1920s are generally thought of as a decade of prosperity, fun, and wild living. To some extent this was true. The end of the war released an emotional flood of relief. Prompted by the horror and exhaustion of war, young people in particular tried to sweep away the remnants of the old world. This was the "Jazz Age." Bold new music, shocking fashions, and crazy fads spread quickly across the United States and into Canada. This 1927 editorial from *Canadian Homes and Gardens* may give a false picture of what life was really like for most women, but it certainly catches the optimism of the age:

> There is a certain magic to housekeeping these days—the magic of electricity—over which I confess I never cease to marvel. Your modern housewife leaves the dishes within a machine, pops the dinner into an oven, laundry into a washer, and jumps into a roadster [car] with never a thought except for … the round of golf which she is away to enjoy for an afternoon. She returns to find the washing done, her china and crystal sparkle, a six course dinner is ready for serving.
>
> Source: Quoted in V. Strong-Boag, *The New Day Recalled* (Toronto: Copp Clark, 1988), 134.

Life did improve for many people. For many more, however, the prosperity of the twenties was merely an illusion. Life continued as before, filled with discrimination, poverty, and lack of political power.

An Uneasy Adjustment

In November 1918, Canadians celebrated the end of World War I. After four long years of fighting, Canadian soldiers were finally on their way home. Most returned to Canada early in 1919 only to find that there were no steady pensions for veterans, no special medical services for those wounded in the war, and above all, few jobs. To make matters worse, many employers had grown rich during the war. The veterans had made the sacrifices, but it seemed that others were reaping the rewards.

- 1919 Winnipeg General Strike gives voice to post-war dissatisfaction.
- 1920 League of Nations established, with Canada as a full member.

  British Columbia becomes first province to end Prohibition.
- 1921 Minority government elected.

  Agnes Macphail becomes first woman elected to Parliament.

  Frederick Banting and Charles Best discover insulin.
- 1926 King–Byng crisis focusses on Canada's push for autonomy from Britain.

  Imperial Conference leads to publication of the Balfour Report.
- 1927 Federal government allows for old age pensions, introducing government-run social assistance for the first time in Canada.
- 1928 Allied Tribes of British Columbia goes to Ottawa to argue for land treaty negotiations.
- 1929 Persons Case opens the way for Canadian women to be appointed to the Senate.

  Stock market crashes.

Many Canadians who had jobs were also dissatisfied. During the war, labour unions had reluctantly agreed to reduced pay as their patriotic duty to the war effort. After the war, the cost of goods soared, and workers suffered. For many families, wages no longer covered the cost of rent and food. Confrontation between workers and employers was inevitable.

Workers Respond

Workers' demands for higher wages, better working conditions, and in some cases, the right to join unions, resulted in numerous strikes in Canada. Many strikes were long and bitter disputes. The coal and steel workers on Cape Breton Island, for example, were hit hard by the closing of wartime industries after the war. Many workers lost their jobs or were forced to accept lower wages. Most communities in the Maritimes, and in Cape Breton in particular, depended on a single employer for jobs, the British Empire Steel Corporation. Unemployment and long strikes

Figure 3-1 One response of business to labour unrest was strike insurance. Businesses could take out a policy that would insure them against damages during strikes.

Identifying viewpoint Who would have placed this advertisement? At whom was it aimed? What attitudes does it reveal?

meant economic hardship for everyone in these single-industry communities. For four years, the union and the steel corporation confronted each other in what became known as the labour wars. When the strikes turned violent, the company called in the provincial police and federal troops to break them up. In 1926, a Royal Commission criticized the labour practices of the British Empire Steel Corporation, but the commission's findings did little to ease the suffering and poverty in the Maritimes.

In western Canada there were also many strikes over wages and working conditions. Western union leaders were more **socialist** in their policies than union leaders on the East Coast, believing ordinary people should have more involvement in government. Some western union leaders were influenced by the 1917 revolution in Russia, where the Bolsheviks had set up a communist regime. Under **communism**, all the means of production (such as factories and farms) and distribution (railways) were publicly owned. There was no private or individual ownership of businesses or land. Unions in eastern Canada didn't always agree with the goals of union leaders in western Canada.

Nevertheless, at the Western Labour Conference in March 1919, union leaders from western Canada succeeded in founding One Big Union (OBU), which would represent all Canadian workers in one organization. The OBU's goal was to help workers establish more control of industry and government through peaceful means. The main weapon would be the *general strike*, a walkout by all employed workers.

The Winnipeg General Strike

All these tensions came together in Winnipeg, the financial centre of western Canada at that time and its largest city. In May 1919, Winnipeg's metal and building workers walked off their jobs. They were demanding higher wages, a shorter working week, and the right to **collective bargaining**. This would allow the union leadership to negotiate with employers on behalf of the union members. The Winnipeg Trades and Labour Council voted for a general strike in support of these principles. Thirty thousand people went out on strike, even though over half were not union members.

Winnipeg was paralyzed. There were no firefighters or postal workers and no telephone or telegraph services. There were no newspapers, streetcars, or deliveries of bread or milk. The union leaders urged strikers to avoid violent confrontations:

> The only thing the workers have to do to win this strike is to do nothing. Just eat, sleep, play, love, laugh and look at the sun. There are those anxious for the workers to do something which would provide an excuse for putting the city under martial [military] law. Therefore, once more, do nothing.
>
> Source: *Western Labour News Strike Bulletin*, May 20, 1919.

Figure 3-2 Strikers attacked this streetcar as it moved through the crowd because it was operated by the Citizens' Committee of One Thousand.

Gathering information
What does this photograph tell you about the Winnipeg General Strike? How does the information in the photograph compare with the bulletin circulated by the strike committee?

Not everyone sympathized with the strikers. Business leaders, politicians, and industrialists formed the **Citizens' Committee of One Thousand**. The committee saw the union leaders as part of a communist conspiracy to overthrow the government. The federal government, fearing that this kind of disruption and protest could spread to other cities, decided to intervene. The Immigration Act was amended to allow foreign-born union leaders to be deported. The mayor of Winnipeg appointed special police, fired many civic workers, and had the strike leaders arrested. On June 21, strikers held a parade to protest the mayor's actions. The parade turned violent when the Royal North West Mounted Police and special police, armed with clubs and pistols, charged into the crowd. The resulting clash became known as Bloody Saturday. One striker died, thirty were injured, and scores were arrested. Defeated, the strikers returned to work. Their protest had lasted forty-three days.

What did the strike achieve? In the short run, there is no doubt that the union movement suffered a setback. Seven of the arrested leaders were convicted of conspiracy to overthrow the government and served between two months and two years in prison. Many striking workers were not rehired; others were taken back only if they signed contracts vowing not to join a union. Distrust and divisions between the working class and businesses grew deeper.

In the long run, the verdict is less clear. A Royal Commission set up to examine the strike found that the workers' grievances were valid. Gradually, much of what they fought for was achieved. Some of those involved in the strike took up political positions in which they could work towards social reform. For example, J.S. Woodsworth, a minister and well-known social reformer who was arrested during the strike, went on to found the Cooperative Commonwealth Federation (CCF), which later became the New Democratic Party (NDP).

ACTIVITIES

1. Explain the following terms: communism; general strike; collective bargaining.
2. **a)** What was the effect of the 1917 Communist (Bolshevik) Revolution in Russia on Canada?
   b) Why was the One Big Union seen as a threat?
3. Write a paragraph to explain the reaction of the Citizens' Committee of One Thousand to the Winnipeg General Strike. Remember the attitudes and values of the time.
4. Write a letter to the editor of a newspaper to explain why you think the Winnipeg strikers were, or were not, justified in their actions.

building your skills

Developing a Thesis for a Research Essay

A common way to present historical information is in the form of a research essay. In a research essay, you formulate and support a particular point of view about past events. Your point of view is called the *thesis*. Information you gather should help defend your thesis. The thesis also guides you in developing the questions you ask about your topic. Developing an effective and workable thesis, therefore, is an important first step to a successful research essay.

Steps in Developing a Thesis Statement

1. Select a topic that is manageable. For instance, the 1920s as an essay topic is too broad, while something like an event in your community in that period may be too narrow.
2. Discover the basic facts about the topic you have chosen by answering the questions: who, what, where, when, why, and how.
3. Use this information to develop the essential question you want to answer about your topic.
4. Refine the question into a thesis statement. Your statement should tell the reader, in one clear sentence, the topic and the viewpoint you will defend in your essay. In your defence, you will have to respond to arguments against your thesis.

Statements on the Winnipeg General Strike

Source 1

> … this is not a strike at all, in the ordinary sense of the term—it is a revolution. It is a serious attempt to overturn British institutions in this western country and to supplant them with the Russian Bolshevik system of Soviet rule….
>
> Source: Winnipeg *Citizen*, May 17, 1919.

Source 2

> [The] strike has been entirely misrepresented. I know the … details intimately. Without hesitation I say that there was not a single foreigner in a position of leadership, though foreigners were falsely arrested to give colour to this charge…. In short, it was the biggest hoax that was ever "put over" any people! Government officials and the press were largely responsible….
>
> Source: J.S. Woodsworth, August 25, 1921.

Source 3

> It must be remembered that [Winnipeg] is a city of only 200 000, and that 35 000 persons are on strike. Thus it will be seen that the strikers and their relatives must represent at least 50 per cent of the population. In the numerical sense, therefore, it cannot be said that the average citizen is against the strike … there is no soviet [revolutionary council]. There is little or no terrorism.
>
> Source: W.R. Plewman, journalist, *Toronto Star*, May 23, 1919.

Source 4

> … If Capital [business] does not provide enough to assure Labour [workers] a contented existence with full enjoyment of the opportunities of the time for human improvement, then the Government might find it necessary [to step] in and let the state do these things at the expense of Capital.
>
> Source: H.A. Robson, Head of the Royal Commission set up to investigate the strike.

Applying the Skill

1. The sources above provide a number of different views of the Winnipeg General Strike. State each

point of view as a thesis regarding the strike. For each statement, make notes to support the thesis. You may want to read some other accounts of the strike to do this.

2. Using these sources and the information in the text, develop a question you have about the Winnipeg General Strike and formulate a thesis statement that reflects your viewpoint on it.
3. Support your thesis in a short essay using the following format:
   a) Introductory paragraph: State your thesis and give the readers enough information to acquaint them with the topic.
   b) Body of the essay: Include three paragraphs organized so that each one deals with a significant area of your research. A handy way to organize an analysis of a historical topic is by cause, events, and effects.
   c) Conclusion: Summarize the key points in support of your thesis.
4. Share your thesis with others in the class.

New Challenges to Federalism

After the war, Canadian federal politicians were forced to face a growing development in Canadian politics—**regionalism**, or the concern of the various regions of the country with their own local problems.

Regional Protest

During the 1920s, the maritime provinces found their influence in national politics was declining. The population in the Maritimes was small, which meant this region had fewer seats in Parliament. Some businesses and banks were moving to Ontario and Quebec, while others were suffering because their products were no longer in demand.

ARTS FOCUS

Figure 3-3 This drawing, entitled *Woman in Mining Town, Glace Bay* by Lauren Harris, was done in 1925.

Thinking critically What does this drawing tell us about life for some people in the 1920s?

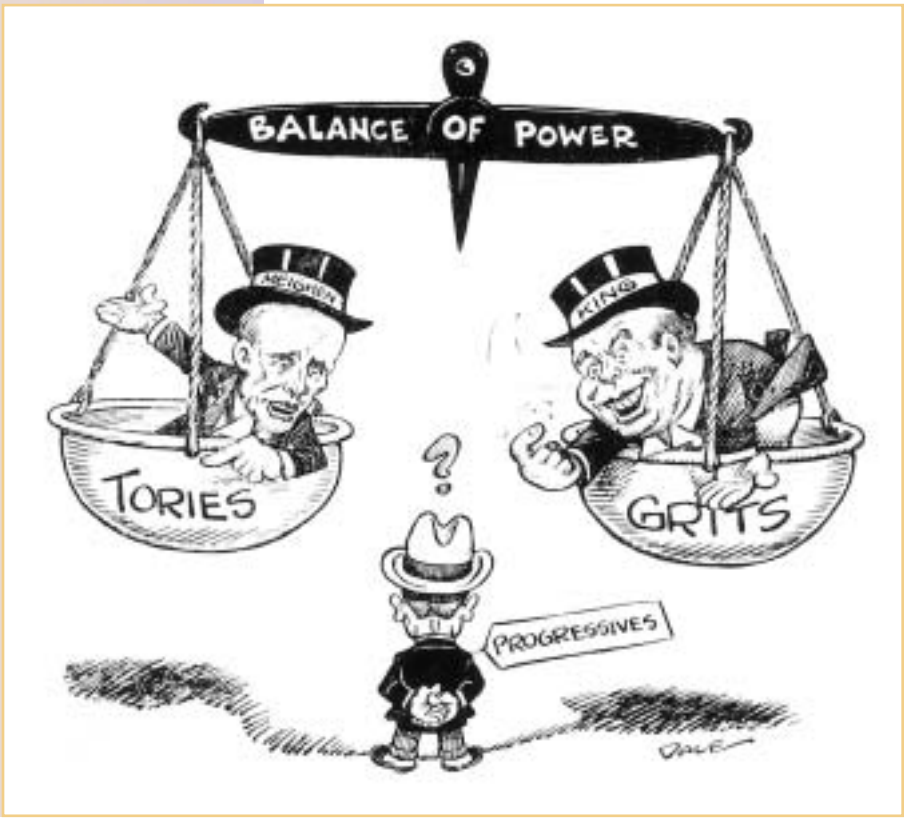


Figure 3-4 Although it gained fewer seats in the 1925 election than in the previous one, the Progressive Party held the balance of power, as neither the Liberals (Grits) nor the Conservatives (Tories) won enough seats to form a majority government. The Liberals won 101 seats, the Conservatives 117, and the Progressive Party 24 seats.

Interpreting a cartoon Is this cartoon effective in representing the situation? Why or why not?

Oil, for example, was gradually replacing coal as the most used fuel for heating and power. The maritime provinces had plenty of coal but no oil. Prominent business and political leaders formed the Maritime Rights Movement, which urged all politicians seeking office to promote policies that would benefit the Maritimes. Soon, however, the movement died away, without having accomplished much.

Other regional challenges came from farmers on the Prairies and in Ontario. Farmers, particularly those in the Prairies, were frustrated by the National Policy, in place since 1878. Under the National Policy, tariffs or duties were placed on foreign goods imported into Canada. Tariffs protected Canadian industries by making foreign goods so expensive that Canadians would choose to buy goods produced in Canada; hence, the Canadian economy would be strengthened. Western farmers felt alienated by this policy because it benefited the manufacturers in central Canada while forcing farmers to buy Canadian-made machinery. Farmers had no such protection, as their agricultural products were sold on the open world market. Farmers wanted free trade, which would abolish tariffs and allow farmers to buy cheaper, U.S.-made machinery. They also wanted lower freight rates and storage fees.

When neither the Liberals nor the Conservatives met their demands, farmers formed their own political parties. By the early 1920s, Ontario and the prairie provinces had all elected members of United Farmers' Parties to their legislatures. In some provinces these parties formed the government. In 1919, the federal Progressive Party was created, led by Thomas Crerar, a former minister of agriculture in Robert Borden's Union Government. The Progressive Party wanted a new National Policy based on free trade and public ownership of the railways. The party contested the 1921 election.

Canadians Choose a New Government

In the 1921 federal election, there were two new leaders as well as a new party in the race. William Lyon Mackenzie King was chosen to lead the Liberals in 1919. King had a reputation as a reformer and was an authority on social and economic issues. Arthur Meighen, a brilliant debater and long-standing Member of Parliament, was chosen to replace Borden as the leader of the Conservatives.

King and Meighen despised each other personally and had very different approaches to politics. King was conciliatory, always seeking the middle path that would offend the least number of people. Meighen believed in principles over compromise, and didn't care who might be offended by his stand on issues.

In the 1921 federal election, the Liberals elected 117 members, the Conservatives elected fifty members, and the Progressives elected an astonishing sixty-four members, mostly in western Canada. The Conservatives didn't win a single seat in western Canada; the Liberals won six. The Independent Labour Party won two seats, and the Labour–Liberals and Independent Liberals each won a seat. This meant that the Liberals were a **minority government** and needed the support of some of the opposition members to pass legislation.

Despite its initial success, the Progressive Party did not last very long. However, it was influential in bringing about changes to Canada's social policy. In 1926, for example, Mackenzie King was challenged by the Progressives to set up an old age pension. The Old Age Pension Act was passed in 1927. The basic pension was not generous, just $240 per year. Nevertheless, the act was an acknowledgement that government had a role to play in providing a network of social services for its citizens.

Canada's Growing Independence

After World War I, Prime Minister Borden had taken a number of important steps that raised Canada's profile internationally. Mackenzie King, once he became prime minister, continued to push for greater independence. In 1922, King refused to support Britain when it announced plans to invade Turkey. The following year, he insisted that Canada be allowed to sign an international treaty without the signature of a British representative. In 1926, he publicly challenged Britain over its influence on Canada's internal politics in what became known as the King–Byng crisis, and he participated in the Imperial Conference that led to the Balfour Report.

The King–Byng Crisis

Following the 1925 election, the Liberals held 101 seats, the Conservatives 116, and the Progressives twenty-four. This meant that the Liberals were forced to seek the support of the Progressive Party in order to stay in power. The following year, however, the Liberals lost the support of the Progressive Party as a result of a liquor-smuggling scandal in the Customs Department. The Conservatives called for a motion of censure—a vote of strong disapproval—against King's government. If the motion of censure had passed, King would have had to resign as prime minister. King immediately asked Governor General Viscount Byng to call another election. Byng refused King's request on the grounds that, constitutionally, the vote of censure had to be completed first. King was furious. Byng was eventually forced to call an election. During the campaign, King appealed to nationalist sentiments by claiming it was undemocratic for an official appointed by Britain to refuse to take the advice of the prime minister, who was elected by Canadians. King won the election. No governor general since has acted against the wishes of an elected prime minister.

The Balfour Report

It was at the Imperial Conference of 1926 that Canada made the greatest progress towards changing Canada's legal dependence on Britain. At this conference, the dominions of the British Empire (Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and South Africa) requested formal recognition of their **autonomy**, the freedom to govern themselves. A

Figure 3-5
Canada's delegation to the League of Nations in Geneva in 1928. Prime Minister King is third from the right.

special committee under the leadership of Lord Balfour, a respected British politician, examined the request. Its findings, published as the Balfour Report, supported the dominions' position:

> … We refer to the group of self-governing communities composed of Great Britain and the Dominions. Their position and mutual relation may be readily defined. They are autonomous communities within the British Empire, equal in status, in no way subordinate one to another in any aspect of their domestic or external affairs, though united by a common allegiance to the Crown….

The recommendations of the Balfour Report became law in 1931, when the Statute of Westminster was passed by the British government. This statute formally turned the British Empire into the **British Commonwealth**. Canada was now a country equal in status with Britain, entitled to make its own laws. There were, however, two remaining restrictions on Canada's independence. Canada's constitution, the British North America Act (BNA Act), remained in Britain because the Canadian federal and provincial governments could not agree on an **amending formula**—the procedure for changing the act. As well, the judicial court of appeal for Canadians resided in Britain until 1949.

ACTIVITIES

1. What were the reasons for the rise of:
   - **a)** the Maritime Rights Movement?
   - **b)** the Progressive Party?
2. Prior to the 1921 federal election there were two parties (Liberals and Conservatives) represented in Parliament. Since then, three or more parties have arisen. From what you have learned, why do you think this happened?
3. What was the significance of the Old Age Pension Act?
4. You are a Canadian historian writing a biography of Prime Minister Mackenzie King.
   - **a)** Write a paragraph describing how Canada's relationship with Britain changed during the 1920s, and the part King played in this change.
   - **b)** Rewrite this paragraph as an election campaign speech for King.

The Economy Improves

Canada began the 1920s in a state of economic depression. By the middle of the decade, however, the economy started to improve. Wheat remained an important export for Canada, but there was also enormous growth in the exploitation of natural resources and in manufacturing. The demand for Canadian pulp and paper increased, and new mills were built in several provinces. Mining also boomed during these years. Record amounts of lead, zinc, silver, and copper were produced for export. These minerals were being used in the production of consumer goods such as radios and home appliances. The expansion of the forest and mining industries increased demand for hydroelectric power. Several new hydro-generating stations were constructed, providing cheap energy for Canadian industries.

The United States Invests in Canada's Economy

Prior to the war, Canada traded mainly with Britain. After the war, however, Britain was deeply in debt, and the United States emerged as the world's economic leader. During the 1920s, U.S. investment in Canada increased.

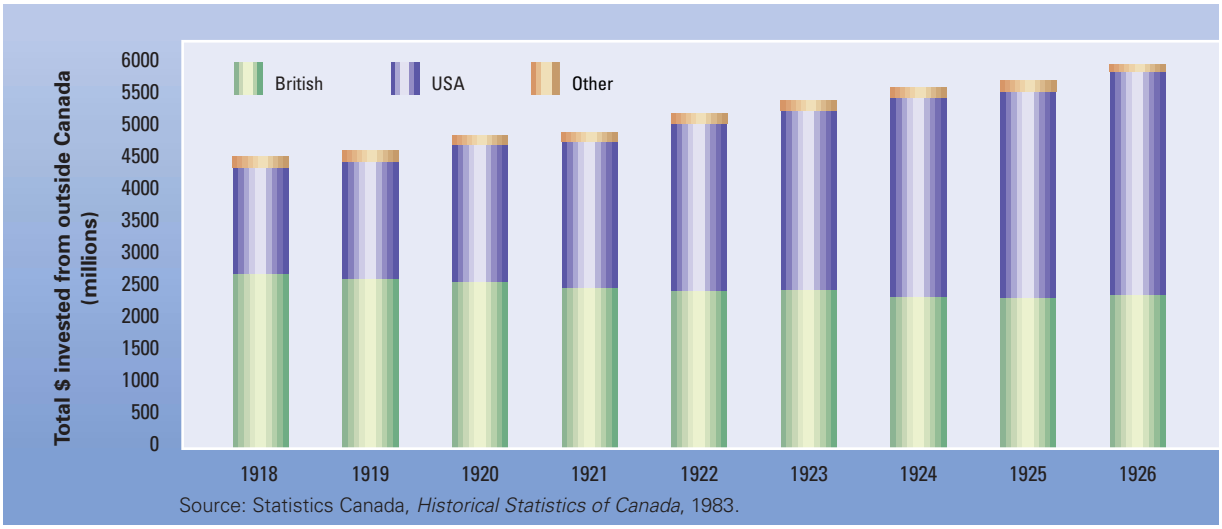
U.S. companies invested in pulp and paper mills and mines across Canada. The majority of these resources were then exported to the United States. For example, almost 75 per cent of the newsprint produced in Canada was exported to the United States, and most of the metals mined in Canada were used in U.S.-made products such as automobiles and radios.

Rather than lend money to Canadian businesses the way the British had, most U.S. investors preferred to set up **branch plants**—businesses owned and controlled by companies in the United States, but which operated in Canada. For example, by manufacturing cars in Canada for the Canadian market, U.S. car makers avoided having to pay Canadian tariffs.

By the end of the 1920s, the Canadian auto industry had been taken over by the "Big Three" U.S. automobile companies—General Motors, Ford, and Chrysler. Even the most successful Canadian company, McLaughlin, based in Oshawa, Ontario, had disappeared. U.S. companies also owned a high proportion of Canada's oil business, nearly half the machinery and chemical industries, and over half the rubber and electrical companies.

Figure 3-6 Foreign investment in Canada, 1919–1926.

Reading a graph How much did U.S. investment in Canada increase during the period shown in this bar graph? How much greater was U.S. investment than British investment?



Source: Statistics Canada, *Historical Statistics of Canada*, 1983.

Many Canadians were so pleased with U.S. investment that they did not question what the long-term consequences might be. It was true that the United States enriched Canada's economy by extracting or harvesting raw materials (**primary industries**), but these materials were all transported to the United States for processing and manufacturing (**secondary industries**). It was the U.S. economy that benefited most from this development.

Bootlegging Across the Border

There was one manufacturing product that Canada exported in large quantities to the United States: illegal alcohol. During World War I, the Woman's Christian Temperance Union and similar organizations succeeded in bringing about Prohibition, which banned the manufacture and sale of alcoholic beverages in Canada. Alcohol, however, was still available for those with money, whether obtained as a "tonic" from a doctor, or from a "bootlegger"—someone who sold alcohol illegally, or who made "bathtub gin," homemade alcohol.

By 1920, the provincial governments had to admit that Prohibition was not working: it was too unpopular with most Canadians. War veterans, who were familiar with more relaxed European drinking habits, complained bitterly about the law. From 1921 on, most provincial governments decided to regulate sales of alcohol rather than ban the product. In a series of **plebiscites** (votes on a public issue), Canadians eventually adopted government-controlled liquor outlets.

In the United States, Prohibition continued until 1933. Canadians now had a golden opportunity to supply the United States with illegal liquor. Rum-running—smuggling alcohol into the United States—became a fact of everyday life. Ships from ports in the Maritimes and Quebec, speedboats from Ontario, cars and trucks from the prairie provinces, and salmon trawlers from British Columbia transported alcohol to the United States as fast as they could. There were thousands of tales of daring and wily tricks as the smugglers outwitted the U.S. Customs Bureau.

Rum-running was extremely profitable, and Canadians looked on the rum-runners with tolerance and even admiration for the way they flouted the U.S. authorities. Canadian governments seemed content to close their eyes to the practice. In fact, not all rum-runners were successful. Many got caught or perished during their great adventure.

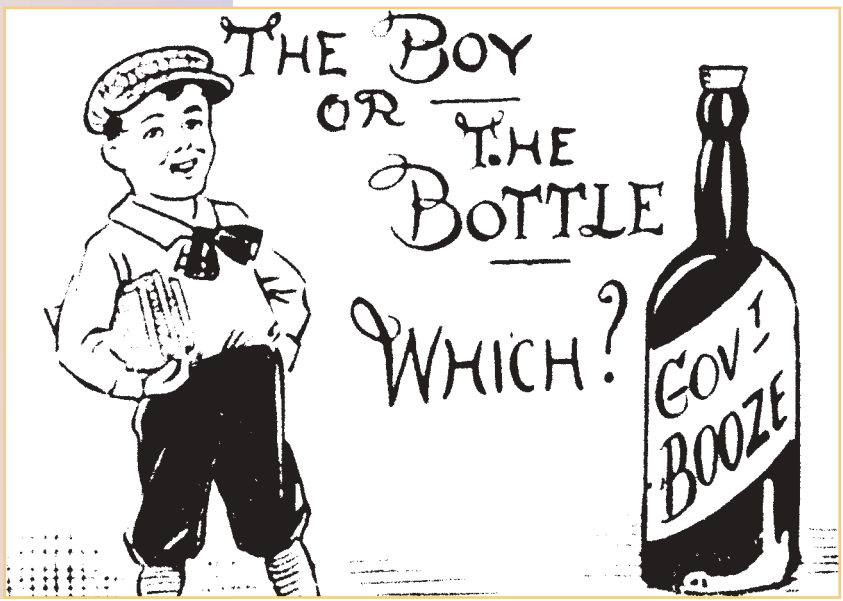


Figure 3-7 Prohibitionists did not accept the opening of government liquor stores without protest. This ad appeared in British Columbia in 1925. It claimed that, in the previous year, British Columbia had spent just over $9 million on education while the people of the province had spent over $21 million on liquor. "Somebody's boy is required to keep the liquor business operating," it stated. "Shall it be yours?"

Urbanization

Canada's growing manufacturing sector brought more and more people to the cities in search of work in factories. In rural areas, farms were becoming more mechanized, which meant fewer family members and workers were needed to run the farms. This trend towards **urbanization**, which had started at the turn of the century, continued through the 1920s. By 1931, city dwellers outnumbered the rural population for the first time.

It was during this period that the modern Canadian city began to take shape. Businesses and industry often located in the city centre, making this area an undesirable place to live. It was the poor and working-class people who mostly lived in this part of the city, where conditions were crowded and unsanitary. Slums, already an urban problem, became an even bigger one. Smoke from nearby smokestacks polluted the air and contributed to health problems of workers and their families. More affluent families moved to tree-lined residential areas. Automobiles and streetcars made it feasible for them to do so, since they could get from their homes to the business district without difficulty.

Figure 3-8 These photos show the sharp contrast between rural and urban Canada. The gas station at Robson and Seymour streets in Vancouver reflects the growing urban population of Canada. Small farming communities, like this one in Saskatchewan, were still a major part of the Canadian economy.

Thinking critically Identify four differences between rural and urban life, based on these photographs.

The Role of Women

The 1920s was to be a new era for women in Canada. Hopes were high for reforms in health, education, and women's and children's working conditions. The reality, however, did not measure up to the expectations. In the 1921 federal election, only five women ran for office, and only one, Agnes Macphail, won her seat. Macphail was the only woman in the House of Commons until 1935. The four western provinces elected nine women to their legislatures, but the federal and provincial governments remained firmly male dominated.

Figure 3-9 As the first woman elected to the House of Commons, Agnes Macphail was under tremendous pressure. Her every move and word were scrutinized. She eventually started eating away from Parliament rather than face the stares in the House of Commons.

The principal role of women was as wives and mothers. New labour-saving devices—such as the refrigerator, vacuum cleaner, washing machine, and electric iron—became more affordable to middle-class women, but this often meant that women were expected to maintain higher standards of cleanliness in the home. Many families still couldn't afford these modern consumer goods. Married women were expected to stay at home and raise a family. Those who weren't married had limited opportunities in careers. The professions of nursing and teaching were open to women, but these paid very poorly. A few women became doctors, lawyers, professors, or engineers, but most women who worked in business or industry held jobs as secretaries, telephone operators, or sales clerks.

The Persons Case

The Persons Case of 1929 brought the issue of female political participation to a head. Emily Murphy, a well-known suffragist, was appointed a magistrate in Alberta. Her appointment was challenged on the basis that only "persons" could hold this office under the BNA Act, and that women were not "persons" in the eyes of the law. The Supreme Court of Alberta ruled that Murphy did, indeed, have the right to be a judge, but the matter did not stop there. Emily Murphy and four other women activists challenged Prime Minister Mackenzie King to appoint a woman senator and to clarify the definition of "persons." In April 1928, the Supreme Court of Canada decided that women were not "persons" under the Constitution. Murphy and her associates, nicknamed the "Famous Five," appealed to the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council in Britain. On October 18, 1929, the Judicial Committee declared its support for the women:

> The exclusion of women from all public offices is a relic of days more barbaric than ours.... To those who ask why the word ["person"] should include females the obvious answer is why should it not?

ACTIVITIES

1. What was the difference between U.S. and British investment in Canada?
2. **a)** Explain how tariffs imposed by the Canadian government on imported manufactured goods encouraged U.S. branch plants to locate in Canada.
   b) Most of the manufacturing branch plants were set up in Ontario and Quebec, as these provinces were closest to the manufacturing centres in the United States. How do you think this affected the trend towards regionalism in Canada? Explain your answer.
3. What have you learned about the attitude towards women in positions of authority in Canada during the 1920s?

A New Prosperity

The upswing in the economy meant that many Canadians had enough income to participate in the style of life that caused the decade to be known as the "Roaring Twenties." People bought cars and radios and went to the movies. Fads from the United States spread quickly to Canada. College students took to swallowing live goldfish, and six-day bicycle races were all the rage. Songs like "Happy Days Are Here Again" and "I'm Sitting on Top of the World" flooded the airwaves. Young people scandalized their parents with dances such as the Charleston, the Shimmy, and the Turkey Trot. American tourists drove to Canada in their newly acquired cars, and the tourism industry flourished. Jobs increased as people found work in services such as railways, hotels, and holiday resorts. Merchants welcomed affluent Americans. In 1929, four million Americans spent $300 million vacationing in Canada.

Tourists from the United States brought more than their money to Canada. Canadians were influenced by the newest fashions these tourists were wearing. For men, straw hats, form-fitting double-breasted suits, bell-bottom pants, bow ties, and slicked-down hair (in imitation of screen idols such as Rudolph Valentino) were popular. The "flapper" look dominated women's fashion. "Bobbed" hair, hemlines above the knees, silk stockings, and dresses that promoted the flat-chested look outraged the older generations.

Figure 3-10 These flappers were right in style and were considered the "bee's knees" by other young people.

Thinking critically Compare this photo with Figure 1-2 on page 6. How would you explain the drastic change in women's fashion from 1910 to 1925? Is fashion a valid indicator of social change?

Increased Mobility

In the 1920s, the automobile was beginning to change the landscape of the country, much as the railway had done earlier. The invention of the assembly line in 1913 by Henry Ford meant that cars could be mass produced inexpensively and quickly. The most popular automobile was the Model T Ford. One came off the assembly line every three minutes; all were identical and cost less than $300. As Henry Ford said, "You can have any colour you like, as long as it's black." Ford paid his workers five dollars a day, far above the average for those days. In return he wanted no unions in his factories.

In 1920, Canada had only 1600 km of top-rated highways, a figure that increased tenfold by the end of the decade. The Canadian Shield and the Rocky Mountains were physical barriers that delayed the construction of the Trans-Canada Highway. As a result, most of the better roads ran south to the United States. These closer north–south connections led British Columbia to change from driving on the left-hand side of the road (the British system) to the right-hand side (the U.S. system) in 1927. Another U.S. innovation linked to the automobile arrived in Vancouver in 1928 when the hamburger chain White Spot opened the first drive-in restaurant in Canada.

Aviation also expanded in the years after the war. Many veteran pilots became "bush pilots" who flew geologists and prospectors into remote areas to explore mining opportunities. The first aerial mineral exploration in Canada was in the Telegraph Creek area of northwestern British Columbia in 1925. Bush pilots helped make the rugged coast of British Columbia more accessible. Many pilots started businesses flying supplies to lumber camps up the coast.

One daring mission was made by Wilfrid "Wop" May, the World War I Canadian flying ace. May and fellow pilot Vic Horner volunteered to deliver an antitoxin to treat a diphtheria outbreak in a northern Alberta community. It was New Year's Day, 1929. After a harrowing flight through a blizzard in an open cockpit, they landed without skis on a snow-covered lake. The engine had to be thawed with a blowtorch before they could take off again. They returned to a heroes' welcome in Edmonton.

May also assisted the RCMP in one of the greatest manhunts in Canadian history, the hunt for Albert Johnson. Johnson, nicknamed the Mad Trapper of Rat River, was suspected of wounding an RCMP constable who was investigating trap lines. Following a shoot-out in the northern Yukon that left Johnson and one Mountie dead, May flew another seriously wounded Mountie to Aklavik.

Figure 3-11 Traffic accident in Toronto, 1929.

Thinking critically Give three possible causes of this traffic accident.

Improved Communications

By the 1920s, the telephone had become a standard household appliance. Telephone lines were shared by many neighbours, which meant anyone could eavesdrop—listen in on everyone else's conversations. Eavesdropping became daily entertainment.

Widespread use of the radio began to break down the isolation between far-flung communities. It soon became a necessity, bringing popular culture and entertainment into Canadian homes across the country. For farm families and other isolated communities, this was a revolutionary development. Smaller Canadian stations, however, soon found it difficult to compete with bigger, more powerful U.S. ones. By the end of the twenties, nearly 300 000 Canadians were tuning into U.S. stations for their entertainment.

Soon radio entertainment was rivalled by moving pictures—the movies. At first, movies were silent. An orchestra or piano player would provide sound effects to accompany the silent screen, while subtitles conveyed the messages and dialogue. The "talkies" arrived in 1927 with comedians such as Laurel and Hardy and the Marx Brothers.

Movies about Canada were made here during the early days, but Canadian-made films could not compete with productions from the big U.S. studios. Eventually Hollywood came to dominate the industry. In the absence of a home-grown industry, many Canadian actors, writers, and technicians were drawn to the glitter and glamour of Hollywood. Many were very successful. Movie star Mary Pickford, born in Toronto, became known as "America's Sweetheart."

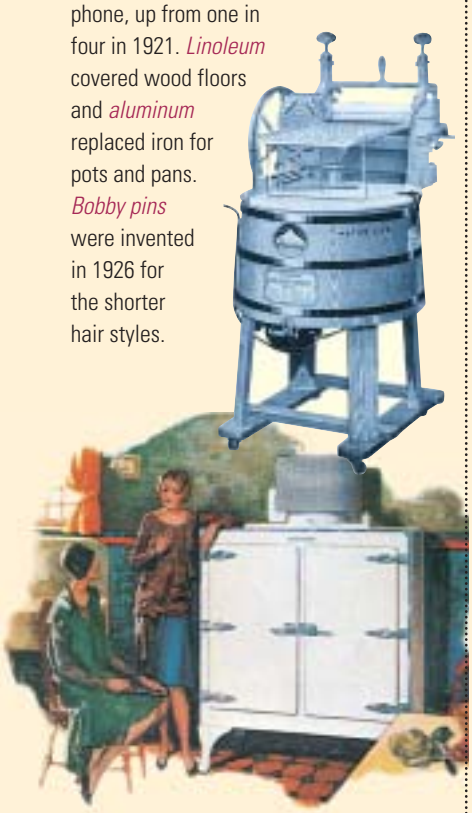
Figure 3-12 The Mounties were a favourite topic with Hollywood. Mounties always caught the villain and got the girl.

Using evidence What stereotypes are used in this photo to portray the RCMP?

Innovations

Canadian Inventions, Innovations, and Inventors

During the 1920s, Canadians witnessed rapid changes in technology that had an effect on everyday life. *Electric washing machines*, *refrigerators*, and *neon signs* began to appear in Canadian cities. *Telephones* came into widespread use, with links to Europe in place by 1927. By 1929, three out of four families had a telephone, up from one in four in 1921. *Linoleum* covered wood floors and *aluminum* replaced iron for pots and pans. *Bobby pins* were invented in 1926 for the shorter hair styles.



U.S. automobiles came to dominate the Canadian market during these years. However, Canadian cars such as the *Durant*, a low-cost, four-cylinder "Star," managed to survive until 1928.

Frederick Banting was a medical doctor in London, Ontario. At the University of Western Ontario he developed a technique that eventually led to the isolation of the antidiabetic component of the pancreas. In the winter of 1921–1922, he and Charles Best were part of a team of scientists who discovered *insulin*. The discovery helped millions of people suffering from diabetes. In 1923, Banting won the Nobel Prize for medicine. ▼

In 1925, Ted Rogers from Toronto created the alternating-current *radio tube* which replaced the noisy, battery-operated model. In 1928, Morse Robb of Ontario invented the first electronic church organ. A more significant discovery, perhaps, given Canada's harsh climate, was the invention of the first *snowblower* by Arthur Sicard of Montreal, in 1927.

Early radios were crude. Listeners used earphones and strained to hear broadcasts made only 150 km away. Before long, radios were encased in handsome cabinets with speakers, so that earphones were not needed.

Armand Bombardier of Valcourt, Quebec, developed the *snowmobile* in 1922, when he was just sixteen. From 1926 to 1935, he improved on the first machine, designing vehicles that could travel on snow-covered roads, helping people in rural and remote areas to overcome the isolation of winter. ▼

Reginald Fessenden has been called "Canada's great forgotten inventor." He made the first public broadcast of music and voice in 1906. He redesigned Thomas Edison's light bulb, giving it the shape and material we use today. Fessenden also invented the *depth sounder*, which was used by sea vessels in the 1920s to indicate the depth of the ocean floor. The depth finder emitted a short burst of sound underwater. The time it took the echo to come back indicated the depth of the bottom of the ocean.

A New Canadian Art

The increased U.S. influence on Canada's culture coincided with the development of a new Canadian art movement. In 1920, the **Group of Seven** held an exhibition in Toronto that broke with traditional Canadian art. These painters were in tune with the new post-war national confidence. Rather than imitate realistic classical styles, members of the group sought to interpret Canada's rugged landscape as they saw it, using broad, bold strokes and brilliant colours. Although criticized by some critics in the early years as the school of "hot mush painting," they had gained wide acceptance by the end of the 1920s.

Emily Carr

On the Pacific coast, the best-known painter was Emily Carr of Victoria. She painted scenes of West Coast forests and Aboriginal life. At first, she gained little recognition for her work. She had almost abandoned hope of making a living from her painting when the National Museum in Ottawa organized a showing of West Coast art built around her work.

While she was in Ottawa, Emily Carr first saw the work of the Group of Seven. She was immediately moved by their bright, powerful images. Carr eventually had a show at the Vancouver Art Gallery and in eastern Canada. She also wrote, winning a Governor-General's Literary Award for *Klee Wyck*, a collection of stories of her life with British Columbia Aboriginal people.

Of the reaction to her painting, Carr said:

> Local people hated and ridiculed my newer work.... Whenever I could afford it I went up to the North, among the ... woods and forgot all about everything in the joy of those lonely wonderful places. I decided to try and get as good a representative collection of those old villages and wonderful totem poles as I could.... Whether anybody liked them or not I did not care a bean. I painted them to please myself in my own way.... Of course nobody wanted to buy my pictures.
>
> Source: Quoted in J. Russell Harper, *Three Centuries of Canadian Painting* (Toronto: Oxford, 1973), 29.

Sports as Popular Entertainment

The thirst for entertainment led to tremendous interest in spectator sports. Baseball became important to Canadians who were delighted to spend Saturday afternoon listening to the radio, following their favourite players. Professional boxing and rugby football were also popular, as were curling and golf. Hockey came into Canadian homes across the country when sportswriter Foster Hewitt made the first hockey radio broadcast in 1923.

Canadian athletes also excelled on the international stage. Vancouver's Percy Williams won two gold medals at the 1928 Olympics in sprinting events, and Ethel Catherwood, nicknamed "the Saskatoon Lily," won the gold medal in the women's high jump event, clearing 1.59 m. Canadian hockey teams won gold medals by lopsided scores at every Olympics, with the exception of 1936, during the inter-war period. Charles Gorman held seven world speed skating records before he retired in 1928, and John Myles set a new record for the Boston Marathon in 1926.

ACTIVITIES

1. Our economy is fuelled by consumers spending money on various items. What evidence is there in this chapter that the 1920s were the beginning of the modern "consumer age"?
2. **a)** List the technological developments that made the 1920s a period of great change in communications.
   b) Beside each development, make short notes on how the change affected society.
3. What does the interest in professional sports tell you about leisure time and the standard of living for Canadians in this period?
4. Go to the library and find a painting you like by Emily Carr or one of the Group of Seven. Explain why you think the painting you chose is "Canadian."

Did Canada Become More or Less Independent in the 1920s?

After World War I, Canada took a number of steps to lessen its political dependence on Britain. At the Imperial Conference in 1923, Prime Minister Mackenzie King reflected the growing support for Canadian autonomy when he said:

> The decision of Canada on any important issue, domestic or foreign, we believe should be made by the people of Canada, their representatives in Parliament, and the Government responsible to that Parliament.

In the arts as well, there was a growing sense of independence. The Group of Seven painted Canadian scenes that celebrated Canada's wilderness. In a review in the *Mail and Empire,* art critic Fred Jacob wrote of an exhibition by the Group of Seven, "In their work the spirit of young Canada has found itself."

Canadian magazines and literature also reflected a growing sense of national identity. The political magazine, *Canadian Forum*, first appeared in 1920. Political debates and works of Canadian poets and writers appeared regularly on its pages. As well, *Maclean's* magazine published Canadian stories and articles from across the country, being careful to use only Canadian spelling. Canadian novelists such as R.J.C. Stead, F.P. Grove, Martha Ostenso, and Morley Callaghan wrote novels about Canadians and their experiences. And poets such as A.J. Smith and Frank Scott wrote passionately about Canada and Canadian issues.

But while Canada had gained greater political independence from Britain, it was developing much closer ties to the United States economically. In 1922, U.S. investment in Canada topped that of Britain's investment for the first time. By 1929, nearly 60 per cent of foreign investment in Canada was from the United States. During the same period, close to a million Canadians moved to the United States in search of better jobs and higher pay.

Despite a developing Canadian cultural industry, most Canadians listened to U.S. radio stations, read U.S. magazines, watched the latest films from Hollywood at their cinemas, and drove home in their American-designed Model T Fords. Fashion from the United States became Canadian fashion. American service clubs, such as the Rotary, the Lions, and the Kiwanis also became popular in Canada. Even Canadian sports teams were being bought up by U.S. interests. The National Hockey League became Americanized as smaller Canadian cities were unable to compete following the inclusion of U.S. teams.

One historian described the close ties that developed between Canada and the United States in the 1920s:

> … in the immediate aftermath of the war, the United States had a … depression and Canada had a … depression too. Coal strikes broke out in the United States; coal strikes broke out in Canada. The United States embarked on prohibition; so … did almost all the provinces of Canada. The United States spawned the prohibition gangster; Canada spawned the prohibition rum-runner to keep him supplied.
>
> Source: Ralph Allen, *Ordeal By Fire: Canada, 1910–1945* (Toronto: Doubleday Canada, 1961), 221–222.

So, was Canada more or less independent by the end of the 1920s? Had the United States simply replaced Britain as the country that controlled Canada's development? On the one hand, Canada's economy was very dependent on that of the United States. Canada was also awash in U.S. popular culture. How much the exposure to U.S. entertainment diminished a sense of Canadian identity during those years is difficult to measure. For example, the people of Quebec remained relatively untouched by the increase in U.S. culture in Canada. A different language and a fiercely protective church helped to ensure that most *Canadiens* remained outside the sphere of U.S. influence.

On the other hand, concern about U.S. cultural and economic domination made some Canadians even more determined to protect their identity. A Royal Commission in 1928 recommended that the Canadian government regulate private radio to ensure that Canadian content

Figure 3-13 *Solemn Land* (sketch), ca. 1918–1919, by J.E.H. MacDonald.

ARTS FOCUS

Expressing ideas In what ways does this painting represent a landscape that is distinctly Canadian?

remained on the airwaves. Although Canadians benefited from having a larger, more prosperous neighbour to the south, they never showed interest in becoming part of the United States. A British correspondent in Canada during the 1920s, J.A. Stephenson, observed:

> The people of Canada are imbued with … a passion to maintain their own separate identity. They cherish the rooted belief that they enjoy in their existing political and social order certain manifest advantages over their neighbours.
>
> Source: Quoted in J.H. Thompson & A. Seager, *Canada 1922–1939* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1985), 191.

Analysing the Issue

1. How did new technology contribute to the spread of American popular culture in Canada?
2. In a speech in Vancouver in 1923, U.S. President Warren Harding made the following statement about the interdependence of Canada and the United States: "We think the same thoughts, live the same lives, and cherish the same aspirations…." Why do you think many Canadians listening to this speech would have agreed with Harding?
3. In a letter to the editor of a Vancouver newspaper, explain why you agree or disagree with President Harding's statement. Give examples of Canada's dependence or independence to support your argument.

up close

Two Canadian Sports Heroes

Lionel Conacher grew up in a deprived area of Toronto, one of ten children. He began his sporting career as a wrestler, but went on to become a baseball player, a star at lacrosse, a football player, and an NHL all-star.

Nicknamed the "Big Train," Conacher was known for his power, stamina, and speed. In the 1921 Grey Cup, he led the Toronto Argonauts to victory with a score of 23–0 over Edmonton. Conacher had scored fifteen of the points himself! On occasion, Conacher played in more than one championship game a day. One day in 1922, he hit a triple in the last inning of a baseball game, winning the championship for his team. Later the same day, he scored four times and assisted once in lacrosse, bringing victory to that team as well. As a hockey professional, Conacher played for several U.S. teams, as well as for the Montreal Maroons. In 1950, he was named the best Canadian male athlete for the first half-century.

Bobbie Rosenfeld was born in Russia, but came to Canada as a baby and grew up in Ontario. At the age of thirteen, she beat the reigning Canadian champion in the 100-yard sprint. Later, she worked in a chocolate factory, but spent her spare time practising various sports. Rosenfeld went on to become a star at basketball, softball, hockey, and tennis, as well as track and field. In the 1928 Olympic Games in Amsterdam, she won a gold and a silver medal for Canada, becoming a national hero and the best-known Canadian woman of her time. Rosenfeld went on to become a sportswriter. In 1949, she was elected to Canada's Sports Hall of Fame. A year later, a poll of sportswriters named her the best Canadian female athlete for the first half-century.

Questions

1. What is the role of the sports hero in society? Give examples from this chapter and your own experience to support your opinion.
2. Compare and contrast Bobbie Rosenfeld's and Lionel Conacher's achievements as athletes with those of popular sports heroes of today. How would you account for the differences?

Figure 3-14 Bobbie Rosenfeld (No. 677). At the Amsterdam Olympics she won a silver medal for the 100-m dash and was lead runner for the women's relay team that won gold. Rosenfeld was also joint holder of the world record for the 100-yard dash, which she ran in eleven seconds.

Missing the Roar

While economic and social conditions generally improved during the 1920s, many Canadians still battled discrimination, lack of political representation, and poverty.

Aboriginal Nations

Aboriginal nations saw little of the good life in the twenties. Veterans returning from the battlefields of Europe found that their contribution to the war effort did little to change their situation at home. Aboriginal people were still not classified as "persons" under the law. They could not vote in provincial or federal elections. In British Columbia, Aboriginal people didn't win the right to vote in provincial elections until 1949. It wasn't until 1960 that Aboriginal people across Canada could vote in federal elections.

Social and economic conditions on reserves were poor, and many who sought employment in the cities faced discrimination and hostility. Residential schools were a particularly difficult experience for many young Aboriginal students and their families. Although the people running the schools were often well-meaning, many students were traumatized by the separation from their families, the foreign surroundings, and—in some cases—the physical and emotional abuse they suffered in these schools. Some students adapted to the new way of life they were taught, but many more were unsuccessful in finding work or being accepted into Canada's European-based culture. Villages were also instructed by the government to replace traditional or family leaders with graduates of residential schools. This practice often divided the community between those who supported traditional leaders and those who sought to replace them.

In the early 1920s, the Aboriginal people in British Columbia challenged the federal and provincial governments on three issues: the *potlatch ceremony*, *cut-off lands*, and *Aboriginal title*.

The potlatch was an important cultural ceremony among certain peoples of the Pacific coast. At this ceremony, births, deaths, marriages, and other significant events were recorded in an oral tradition. The potlatch was a carefully planned event that involved families and even entire villages. It was also a way of establishing status in tribes.

Figure 3-15 Stoney Indians line up in 1929 to receive their first royalties on oil found on reserve lands. When oil was discovered on reserves, bands were legally entitled to a portion of the oil revenue, but few bands actually benefited. On the Stoney reserve, for example, each member received ten dollars. In total, the Stoney nation received just 12 per cent of the net profits per year.

Missionaries and the government saw it as an obstacle to assimilation, and the practice was forbidden in 1884. The following newspaper article shows a common attitude towards the potlatch ceremony at that time:

> The feasts were followed by wild rites, and devil-dances, at which the demon-scaring masks, huge helmets of cedar sculpture with grotesque carvings were worn.... The dark influences of the medicine men is still stronger than that of the missionaries. The ancient fetishism [reverence for objects believed to have magic powers] is still stronger than the gentle religion taught by the missionaries.
>
> Source: Vancouver *Sun*, August 29, 1913.

However, the government began to enforce the ban vigorously only after World War I. When the Kwagiulth people decided to hold several potlatch ceremonies in 1920, the provincial government arrested the chiefs responsible, and many were sentenced to jail terms.

Land claims, or **Aboriginal title**, was another major issue for Aboriginal people. British Columbia was unique in Canada in that only a few First Nations on Vancouver Island had negotiated land treaties. This meant that most of the land in the province had not been signed away to the government. Although large tracts of land had been set aside as reserves for Aboriginal people, the federal government had been taking land from reserves without the consent of the Aboriginal bands involved. These were known as **cut-off lands**. Aboriginal leaders wanted their claims to the land recognized by the federal government. In 1906, for example, Joe Capilano, a chief of the Squamish people, made the long journey to London, England, to present a land claim petition to King Edward VII. Several years later, the Allied Tribes of British Columbia, an organization made up of several tribes, appealed the federal government's actions. They claimed the removal of this land was contrary to the Indian Act, which regulated relations between the federal government and the Aboriginal peoples. The federal government responded by changing the Indian Act so that Aboriginal consent was not required for the transfer of reserve lands.

Under the leadership of Andrew Paull and Peter Kelly, the Allied Tribes of British Columbia continued to petition the government to begin treaty negotiations. It appeared before a joint committee of the House of Commons and Senate in 1927 and argued that the government should engage in treaty negotiations as they had with Indians in the rest of Canada. The Department of Indian Affairs defended the government's actions, stating that money spent on Aboriginal people had compensated them for the land they lost. The parliamentary committee agreed with the government and recommended that there was no need for treaties in British Columbia. The Indian Act was amended to forbid the raising or acceptance of money to pursue land claims.

For the governments of Canada and British Columbia, these issues were closed. For the Native peoples of British Columbia, however, they were far from resolved.

African-Canadians: Undisguised Racism

The entry of African-Americans into Canada had been discouraged during the heyday of immigration before World War I. Those who managed to move to Canada found that discrimination against minority groups was blatant. In Nova Scotia, the Education Act of 1918 provided for separate schools for "blacks" and "Europeans," a policy that remained unchanged until 1954. Racial segregation was openly practised and, in some instances, supported by the courts. In 1921, the Superior Court of Quebec ruled in favour of racially segregated seating in Montreal theatres, and in 1929, a black delegation to a World Baptist Convention in Toronto was denied hotel rooms.

There were also instances of tolerance. In 1924, Edmonton City Council refused to support an attempt to ban African-Canadians from public parks and swimming pools. In 1919, the Brotherhood of Railway Workers accepted black porters as members, becoming the first Canadian union to abolish racial discrimination.

Figure 3-16 The Ku Klux Klan, a secret fraternity founded in the United States, promoted fanatical racial and religious hatred against non-Protestants and non-whites. In the 1920s, the Klan established short-lived local branches in Canada, like this one in Vancouver in 1925.

Thinking critically What does the existence of this group in Canada say about attitudes at this time?

Immigrants

The war had increased tensions among various groups of Canadians. Immigrants from Russia and Eastern Europe were often accused of being socialist revolutionaries, and the government was constantly petitioned to deport them. The government adopted immigration restrictions, giving preference to applicants from Britain and the United States. Some Canadians didn't want restrictions on immigration for selfish reasons. Farmers, railway owners, and some other businesses welcomed immigrants because they would work for low wages in jobs that Canadian workers didn't want. Labour groups, however, supported the restrictions because unions saw the willingness of some immigrants to work long hours for low wages as "unfair competition."

Restrictions on Asian immigrants were particularly severe. In 1923, the federal government passed a law that virtually excluded Chinese immigrants to Canada until 1947 (see Counterpoints, Chapter 1). A Canada–Japan agreement in 1922 restricted immigration from Japan to 150 servants and labourers a year.

In 1925, when the economy improved, the government relaxed restrictions on immigration from many countries. The goal was to increase the population so that businesses would have a larger domestic market for their goods. Thousands of immigrants landed monthly at Canada's ports looking for jobs. Many found themselves in company towns or city slums, where they were forced to work in terrible conditions for pitiful wages.

Read It in the Morning While It Is News

The Globe.

VOL. LXXXVI. NUMBER 24,904 TORONTO, FRIDAY, OCTOBER 25, 1929 24 PAGES

Stock Speculators Shaken in Wild Day of Panic

Erratic Wheat Prices Churn Market

Record for All Time Is Set by Wall Street In Frenzy of Selling

CRASH IN NEW YORK ROCKS SHARE PRICES IN TORONTO MARKETS

Your Paper

BODIES AND FLOTSAM MUTELY TELL OF FATE MET BY 50 ON FERRY

New Records Set

MAELSTROM OF PANIC AS VALUES PLUNGE, THEN LEAP UP AGAIN

SLANDER CAMPAIGN IN SOUTH ONTARIO CHARGED BY SINCLAIR

CANADIAN SITUATION ECONOMICALLY SOUND, SAY FINANCIAL CHIEFS

FINANCIAL LEADERS IN CONFERENCE ISSUE REASSURING STATEMENT

Figure 3-17 Front page of the Toronto *Globe* just days before the stock market crash.

Using evidence How does this front page show the different opinions on the state of the stock market prior to the crash? What words express concern? Confidence?

The Stock Market Crash

In the latter half of the 1920s, the North American economy was booming. In 1929, the president of the Vancouver Board of Trade, Robert McKee, reflected the sense of optimism in the financial community when he told a business audience that "prosperity was so broad, so sound, [and] so hopeful" that it inspired confidence in the future. And Canada's richest man at the time, Sir Herbert Holt, was calling for unending economic growth.

The prosperity, however, soon came crashing to an end. On Tuesday, October 29, 1929, the New York Stock Exchange collapsed. On that day, prices of all stocks fell quickly. The order to traders was to "Sell, sell, sell!" More than twenty-three million shares changed hands, but prices continued to fall. Everyone knew a disaster had occurred. As you will see in the next chapter, the stock market crash marked a shift from the prosperity of the 1920s to the crushing poverty of the **Depression** of the 1930s.

ACTIVITIES

1. Give examples to show that the federal government was pursuing a policy of cultural assimilation of Aboriginal peoples.
2. What responses from the Aboriginal peoples show that they were prepared to defend their rights?
3. What do the immigration policy, Aboriginal policy, and treatment of African-Canadians reveal about the attitudes and values of Canadian authorities in the 1920s?
4. Many immigrants and families from non–English-speaking areas "anglicized" their names in this period. From what you have learned, why do you think they did this?

LOOKING BACK

Develop an Understanding

1. Discuss why the decade of the 1920s is described as the "Roaring Twenties." Do you agree with this name? Explain your answer. If you do not agree, decide on another name.
2. Write a paragraph to explain how these events showed discontent with the situation in Canada after World War I:
   a. the Winnipeg General Strike
   b. rise of the Progressive Party.
3. List the advantages and disadvantages of foreign investment and branch plants in Canada. Use your list to create an illustration (e.g., a flow chart) showing the positive and negative impacts of foreign investment and a branch-plant economy.
4. Make a two-column organizer. In the first column, list the steps towards equality of women during this decade. In the second column, list the areas in which women still lacked equality.
5. Describe the effects of the new technology of the 1920s on the lives of Canadians.

Explore the Issues

6. Organize a class debate on the following topic: *Resolved—The 1920s "roared" for only the few.*
7. With a partner, write and record a number of thirty-second radio commercials designed to acquaint Canadians with the policies and grievances of the Progressive Party.
8. Imagine you are Agnes Macphail. Write a speech she might give in the House of Commons supporting the cause of women's rights. Include her experiences as the only woman in Parliament.
9. Your group has been hired by the Liberal government of the 1920s to report to them in confidence on the extent and impact of U.S. investment in Canada. Prime Minister King wishes you to conclude the report with three recommendations on how the government should deal with the issue.

Research and Communicate

10. Research one Canadian athlete or team of the 1920s and design a poster to show their accomplishments. Make a case for why Canadians should be more aware of their sports heroes.
11. A film is organized around a storyboard that illustrates and describes scenes in the order in which they will be seen. Construct a storyboard of five to ten scenes for a film about the Persons Case.
12. In a poll of historians in 1999, Mackenzie King was declared to be the best Canadian prime minister. Research the life of Mackenzie King and evaluate his position as "number one."
13. Research the dances, fashions, and behaviour of young people in the 1920s and the reaction of the older generations. Act out a scene in which a group of "flappers" and escorts is confronted by older people who are not amused by their dress or by their antics.
14. Research the role of J.S. Woodsworth in the Winnipeg General Strike. Include an account of his ideas for change for workers and society.
15. Imagine you are a soldier who was a factory worker before the war, or a nurse returning to Canada in 1919 after four years of war. Write a journal entry that expresses your hopes for a better life, and your reactions to the situation in Canada in 1919. Mention any changes you see.