

R. B. BENNETT AND THE CHARGE
OF ONE-MAN GOVERNMENT:
AN ANALYSIS OF HIS RELATIONSHIP
WITH POTENTIAL RIVALS

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this paper is to study R. B. Bennett's style of government from 1930 to 1935, a period in which Bennett has been labelled the Prime Minister of a "one-man government". An attempt will be made to assess the validity of this accusation by analysing the nature of the relationship between R. B. Bennett and several of his cabinet members: Arthur Meighen, Minister without Portfolio, C. H. Cahan, Secretary of State of Canada, Harry Stevens, Minister of Trade and Commerce, and R. J. Manion, Minister of Railways and Canals. There has been no attempt to analyse Bennett's relationship with every cabinet colleague. Stevens, the M.P. who bolted from the Conservative party in 1935 and R. J. Manion, Bennett's successor to the Conservative leadership receive more detailed attention than Meighen or Cahan in the analysis. From this study it is hoped that a meaningful assessment can be made of the charge that Bennett ran a "one-man government". This forms the major theme of the paper.

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I

OUT OF THE POLITICAL WILDERNESS

The fortunes of the federal Liberal-Conservative party in the 1920's were very disappointing to its partisan supporters. On three different occasions the party failed to get a majority under the leader, and many felt that a new and strong leadership was necessary to achieve victory for the party.

In the 1921 election, Arthur Meighen, the successor to Robert Borden, led the government to a crushing defeat. The Liberal-Conservative Party descended to a new low in its history; it became the third largest party represented in the House of Commons. The reasons for the electoral defeat were numerous and certainly the results were not entirely the fault of Arthur Meighen. The Unionist government had been under severe attack throughout the war years for its conduct of the war and conscription. The dislocation and unrest after the war also were factors fostering a strong protest vote against the government. Another prime factor was the natural disintegration of a Unionist or coalition form of government and the return to two party politics after the crisis was over. Meighen could not stem the tide within the government or the party itself and

consequently the new Prime Minister and his government suffered an early defeat at the polls. It was a humiliating defeat because his party was only represented in three provinces: Ontario, British Columbia and New Brunswick. The Yukon also contributed one member.¹

The 1925 election clearly indicated a certain revitalization within the Liberal-Conservative ranks for the party won the most seats of any party in the election. The election, however, was in no way decisive for it produced a minority government and Mackenzie King remained prime minister with the support of the Progressive Party. Meighen was able to gain the prime ministership when King resigned in 1925 but the Meighen government was soon defeated in a nonconfidence vote and another election followed.

The 1926 election was an extremely embarrassing one for Arthur Meighen. Mackenzie King swept to electoral success by changing the electoral issue from a defense of the Customs scandal to a constitutional issue where he himself could take the offensive. As a result, the Liberals gained a parliamentary majority by winning over many of the Progressive votes. The Liberal-Conservatives won only ninety-one seats, a fall of twenty-five seats in less than one year.²

¹Canadian Annual Review, 1921, p. 509.

²Ibid., 1925-26, pp. 36-41, and 1926-27, pp. 48-53.

The Liberal-Conservative party was againⁱⁿ the political wilderness and Arthur Meighen, fully realizing the discontent in party ranks, resigned as party leader. He had failed to project himself and the party outside Ontario into other important regions of Canada, particularly the prairies and Quebec.³

The province of Quebec was particularly important in determining the fortunes of the Liberal-Conservative party, and although the party's fate in Quebec was not entirely due to Arthur Meighen, he was considered a serious detriment to the party in that province. He was thoroughly disliked by the French Canadians for his leadership in initiating conscription during World War I and the propaganda employed against him appeared to be insurmountable.⁴

Meighen was also distrusted by many of Montreal's English speaking financiers and businessmen. Meighen had been known for criticizing the Canadian Pacific Railroad

³Seats Won by the Liberal-Conservative Party

	<u>1921</u>	<u>1925</u>	<u>1926</u>
<u>Man.</u>	0 seats of 15 total	7 seats of 17 total	0 out of 17 total
<u>Sask.</u>	0 _____ 16	0 _____ 21	0 _____ 21
<u>Alta.</u>	0 _____ 12	3 _____ 16	1 _____ 16
<u>Que.</u>	0 _____ 65	4 _____ 65	4 _____ 65

Ibid., 1921, p. 509, 1925-26, pp. 36-41, 1926-27, pp. 48-53.

⁴W. R. Graham, "Meighen and the Montreal Tycoons: Railway Policy in the Election of 1921", Canadian Historical Association Report, 1957, p. 75.

and advocating an increase in government owned railways. The Montreal financiers also felt that he was overly influenced by certain financial interests in Toronto such as the Canadian Bank of Commerce and the National Trust Company.⁵ Consequently, when Meighen met the St. James Street financiers, that included such influential men as Edward Beatty, President of the C.P.R., Senator White, Montreal financier, and Sir Charles Gordon, Chairman of the Bank of Montreal, he had real difficulty in acquiring any form of political support in the forthcoming election of 1926. Meighen had hoped to take advantage of the unpopular Liberal tariff position and gain their support by stressing his commitment to a high protective tariff. Meighen, however, only gained some friendly sympathies and failed to win the strong support of this influential and wealthy group.⁶ Their support was necessary to make vital gains in Quebec and also in the Maritimes for their campaign coffers were usually subsidized from the richer Quebec funds. Consequently, when Meighen resigned as party leader after the 1926 defeat, the party called for a National Liberal-Conservative convention to be held in Winnipeg, from October

⁵Ibid., p. 74.

⁶Public Archives of Canada, (hereafter cited as PAC) John W. Dafoe Papers, Microfilm Reel 74, (hereafter cited as Reel 74), John W. Dafoe to Harry Sifton, May 10, 1926.

10th to 12th, 1927. Its purpose was twofold, to elect a new party leader and to formulate a new party program. The leadership, as in most conventions of this type, was the main issue of interest amongst the public and the delegates themselves. The delegates clearly wanted to pick an individual with proven abilities, a man who could unify a divided party and lead it dynamically to power. They wanted to pick a winner.

Six candidates accepted the nomination for the leadership. All had certain abilities but most had serious weaknesses which could not be ignored. These weaknesses would have been major handicaps in winning electoral victory.

The honourable Hugh Guthrie from Wellington South in Ontario was a leading contender for the leadership. In many ways he was one of the most attractive candidates for the position. He was experienced and capable. His parliamentary career dated back to 1900. He had been appointed Solicitor-General of Canada on October, 1917, and had been Minister of Militia and Defence in both the Borden and Meighen governments in the post war years. He was appointed Minister of National Defense again in Meighen's second administration in 1926. With the resignation of Arthur Meighen he was chosen as temporary leader of the party until a national convention could be called to select a

permanent leader.⁷ In this capacity, it was said that he had won the admiration of many of his parliamentary colleagues and retained their support at the nominating convention.⁸ The support of these parliamentarians was his main source of strength.

Hugh Guthrie also was a good speaker and turned this to advantage when he made his speech before the convention. It was conceded to be one of the best put forward by any of the candidates, as ^{was} fully indicated by the volume of applause of his audience.⁹

Despite these attributes, Hugh Guthrie was not without political liabilities. Several factors seriously weakened his candidacy. Guthrie had been a long-time Liberal prior to his entering the Unionist government under Robert Borden. Some elements in the party would not exonerate him from his youthful political indiscretion.¹⁰

⁷John R. MacNicol, National Liberal-Conservative Convention (Toronto: Southam Press, 1930), p. 261.

⁸Calgary Daily Herald, Oct. 10, 1927.
Arthur R. Ford, As the World Wags On (Toronto: Ryerson Press, 1950) p. 108. Ford was editor-in-chief of the London Free Press at the time.

⁹The Globe, Oct. 12, 1927.

¹⁰Winnipeg Evening Tribune, Sept. 7, 1927.

Another serious handicap was his inability to get strong support from all regions of Canada. Guthrie was highly suspect in Quebec. His entry into Conservative circles resulted from his breaking with Laurier on the conscription issue, an action which would tarnish his image in Quebec. In 1927 he still indicated a sentiment highly unpopular in Quebec. In his speeches he advocated that the conservative party should initiate policies which could win the west, for nothing could be gained by trying to attract Quebec support.¹¹

A self interested but knowledgeable Quebec conservative leadership candidate, C. H. Cahan, interpreted Guthrie's speeches as an indication that he either knew nothing of the mentality, aspirations and opinions of the Quebec people or was intentionally flouting Quebec before the whole country. Cahan felt that a national leader must appeal to the entire nation for political support.¹² Many other party people felt the same. Guthrie would be no more popular in Quebec than Arthur Meighen. This was an important consideration, for any party that could not reduce the overwhelming Liberal majority in Quebec would have great

¹¹The Globe, Sept. 8, 1927.

¹²PAC, Henri Bourassa Papers, Reel-271, C. H. Cahan to George Pelletier, May 23, 1927.

difficulty in acquiring a working majority in parliament. Furthermore, Hugh Guthrie lacked that dynamic charisma which would be necessary to sweep the rest of the country.¹³ Hugh Guthrie's liabilities were prominent and they seriously detracted from his candidacy.

C. H. Cahan, a prominent Montreal lawyer also contested the leadership. Like Guthrie he had important credentials for the position. He was considered to possess "a first rate mind".¹⁴ Furthermore he was a strong force in Montreal Conservative politics. He was said to have had the support of the powerful owner of the Montreal Star, Lord Atholstan.¹⁵ His legal firm also attracted some rich

¹³The Globe, Sept. 8, 1927.

¹⁴PAC, R. K. Finlayson, "Life with R.B., That Man Bennett", unpublished manuscript, p. 119. R. K. Finlayson was a private secretary to R. B. Bennett throughout the Conservative years of office from 1930-35. In this position, Finlayson would have a valuable insight into Bennett's personality and working relationship with the members of his cabinet. As a private secretary he could view the various relationships with a certain objectivity and at the same time he could experience for himself the Bennett brand of leadership.

¹⁵Ibid., and also found in PAC, R. B. Bennett Papers, Vol. 10, "1927 Convention Committee", C. C. Ballantyne to Hugh Guthrie, Nov. 16, 1926, p. 4082. The study of the Bennett Papers in original form took place at the PAC, where the Papers were being catalogued. The Bennett Papers on microfilm came from the University of New Brunswick Library (UNBL), the designated repository for the Bennett Papers.

clients such as the large textile firms in Montreal.¹⁶ Cahan thus seemed to be a candidate who could rally the support of the Montreal financial interests. This was important because the party relied heavily upon this sector for large contributions to the party coffers. It would be desirable to nominate a candidate who could get the support of these interests.

Cahan's other great asset was his organizational knowledge within the party, particularly in the province of Quebec. He was made the chairman of the Quebec convention committee to see that delegates were nominated from each constituency to attend the forthcoming national convention. He made a great effort to see that Quebec participated actively in the work of the Convention at Winnipeg and did not hold themselves aloof. He emphasized the need for a strong representation of Quebec delegates to protect the interests of the province.¹⁷ In the process, of course, Cahan was making important contacts within the Quebec Liberal-Conservative party which would help him in his quest for the leadership.

Despite these qualifications, C. H. Cahan was not a candidate who could be expected to carry the country in a national election. He was the oldest of the six

¹⁶PAC, Finlayson, p. 118.

¹⁷PAC, Bourassa Papers, Reel-721, C. H. Cahan to George Pelletier, May 23, 1927.

candidates and yet had the least amount of parliamentary experience. He did not win his first federal seat until October, 1925, after having lost on three previous occasions.¹⁸ Cahan clearly did not have the necessary voting appeal and parliamentary experience for national leadership. Although he had a strong power base in Montreal and parts of Quebec, Cahan could expect only scattered support elsewhere¹⁹--with the exception of Nova Scotia where he had been the provincial Conservative leader for four years and editor of the Halifax Herald.²⁰ One feature which severely restricted his attempts to gain support outside his home base of Quebec was the distrust of him by leading Conservative figures. The Honourable C. C. Ballantyne president of the National Brick Company considered him to be "a dangerous man", one who would use his position to see that only Cahan delegates would be appointed to the national convention.²¹ Cahan's dissatisfaction over the procedure of balloting as finally decided by the Committee on Rules

¹⁸MacNicol, p. 353.

¹⁹The Globe, Oct. 6, 1927.

²⁰Ibid., Sept. 8, 1927.

²¹PAC, Bennett Papers, Vol. 10, "1927 Convention Committee", C. C. Ballantyne to Hugh Guthrie, Nov. 16, 1927, p. 4082.

and Regulations²² could only have reinforced this sentiment in some circles. His reputation as a political schemer lasted throughout his career. Noted party affiliates were often afraid of attending political meetings and conventions organized by him for fear of falling into a political trap.²³ Cahan's last chance at winning delegates outside his home territory was in his address to the National convention. His speech that was read at length in a weak breaking voice clearly indicated his ineffectiveness as a political campaigner. The necessary dynamic and inspirational qualities were lacking and his audience became tired.²⁴ C. H. Cahan, despite his positive traits, did not seem to the delegates to be the man to lead them to victory.

Robert James Manion, the M.P. from Fort William, Ontario also contested the leadership. He was a promising young member of the party. He had been an active member in the House since first elected in 1915 and had cabinet experience. He had been appointed as Minister of Soldiers' Civil Re-establishment in the first Meighen government and then appointed as Postmaster General in

²²The Globe, Oct. 10, 1927.

²³University of New Brunswick Library (hereafter cited as UNBL) reel 14, L. G. Gravel to R. B. Bennett, Apr. 27, 1929, p. 17997, and J. L. St. Jacques to Sir George Perley, May 31, 1929, pp. 18009-18011.

²⁴Winnipeg Evening Tribune, Oct. 12, 1927.

the second Meighen administration in 1926.²⁵ He had also proved himself to be an able debater on the floor of the House.

Perhaps Manion's greatest asset was his personality. He typified the popular conception of the "fighting Irishman". He could fight vigorously on the floor of the House for what he believed and still be the good natured fellow outside of it. He was well liked on both sides of the House. His personality and speaking ability made him popular as a public speaker in Conservative circles and he was often in demand in this role . By making himself available for these speaking engagements, Manion was able to make some valuable contacts within the party and thus line up some convention support.

However, Robert Manion was not the right man to lead the Liberal-Conservative party, at least not at this time in history. He stood out as being far too young. He was a full eleven years the junior to the second youngest candidate, R. B. Bennett.²⁶ His youth combined with his temperament portrayed him as an individual who was perhaps not yet politically mature enough for the office of Prime Minister. He seemed a bit too rash in his statements and

²⁵MacNicol, p. 182.

²⁶Ibid., pp. 182 and 102.

eleven years later, his leadership ability in this regard was still subject to question. Arthur Meighen perhaps best expressed these doubts.

With all his ability he lacks a certain deftness of utterance--the capacity to formulate his pronouncements along definite and well-considered lines, to make them forcible and at the same time well fortified and defensible. This is very vital in a leader.²⁷

Like Hugh Guthrie, Manion also suffered from the stigma of being a former Liberal. However his association with that party was ^{not} nearly so lengthy as Guthrie's.

Another significant handicap under which he laboured was his inability to establish for himself an economic power base. He did not have the personal wealth that some of the other candidates had. Furthermore, as a physician from an area not highly industrialized he was unable to get the necessary support from the business interests which would have been highly beneficial in winning the convention and eventually the office of prime minister itself.

At this stage in history, Dr. Manion was not the man for the occasion. His youth, his temperament, his past political affiliations and his lack of strong financial and influential support all tended to disqualify himself

²⁷J. L. Granatstein, The Politics of Survival: The Conservative Party of Canada, 1939-1945 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1967), p. 11, as found in Arthur Meighen Papers, MG26, Arthur Meighen to H. R. Milner, Apr. 14, 1938.

as a serious contender for the national leadership and Canada's highest office.

Robert Rogers and Sir Henry Drayton also contested the leadership at the Convention; however neither could be considered real contenders. Rogers had been Minister of the Interior in 1911 and Minister of Public Works for five years from 1912 to 1917.²⁸ Drayton had been Minister of Finance and Receiver-General from 1919 to 1921.²⁹ Both had an ability to speak French and did so along with Dr. Manion in a direct effort to appeal to the French Canadian delegates. Robert Rogers also took advantage at the occasion of the convention address to make an appeal directly to the women's vote at the convention which comprised about twenty-five per cent of the total.³⁰ Drayton relied primarily on his connections in Toronto where he was well liked to get him the leadership. He had been a leading Toronto lawyer for years and had received several appointments from the Ontario government.³¹

²⁸MacNicol, p. 152.

²⁹Guide to Canadian Ministries Since Confederation: July 1, 1851 - January 1, 1957 (Ottawa: Public Archives of Canada, 1957), pp. 36 and 41.

³⁰The Globe, Oct. 12, 1927.

³¹MacNicol, p. 265.

Neither man could have had strong realistic expectations of winning the leadership. Rogers had lost his national prominence for eight years when he resigned his portfolio in 1917 and refused to run in the 1917 election. Although he made a comeback by winning a seat in the 1925 election he was defeated in 1926 and was thus not a parliamentary member at the time of the convention.³² As a result he was not campaigning from a position of strength and his efforts in pursuit of the leadership were not particularly strong. Drayton was even less energetic. He was not a good orator and scarcely "lifted a finger" to win the leadership.³³ Neither man was suitable for national leadership.

Of the six contestants only Richard Bedford Bennett appeared to have the necessary credentials for winning Canada's highest office. He was the candidate who had the best possible chance of garnering the widest regional support. He was born in New Brunswick, the son of a boat builder, and had spent the first seventeen years of his life in this Maritime region. He then moved west where he was a prominent Calgary lawyer for over twenty years.³⁴

³² Ibid., p. 152.

³³ The Globe, Oct. 10, 1927.

³⁴ MacNicol, p. 102.

Bennett benefitted by being able to claim to have a genuine feeling and understanding of both areas and ^{the} its problems.

Bennett also had the advantage of an impressive legal career. In Calgary he had been chief legal counsel for the CPR west of Winnipeg. At the same time he began to amass himself a fortune. He was chief shareholder of the Canada Cement Company and the E. B. Eddy Co. He had invested heavily in the Alberta Pacific Grain Elevators and made over one million dollars in the sale of these shares to British interests. He had also been President of Calgary Power Limited and a director of Imperial Oil Limited.³⁵ This successful legal and financial background could serve to gather the support of the big business firms behind Bennett and the party. Bennett's advocaton of higher tariffs also was popular with the industrial areas of Ontario and Quebec.

Of all the areas in 1927, Bennett's strength in Quebec was ^{most} subject to question. He was not the favourite of the French for he made no real attempt to court them to win the leadership.³⁶ It was also claimed that St. James Street was rather suspicious of the temperamental

³⁵Ernest Watkins, R. B. Bennett: a Biography (Toronto: Kingswood House, 1963), p. 78.

³⁶Marc LaTerreur, "R. B. Bennett et le Quebec: Un Cas D'Incompréhension Réciproque", Canadian Historical Association, Historical Papers, 1969, p. 94.

Bennett whom they feared would not accept dictation.³⁷ Nevertheless, if he was not loved by Quebec, he was not unacceptable to Quebec either. He was not Arthur Meighen and had not taken any part in the conscription crisis of World War One. He had refused to run in the 1917 election. Consequently with his election there would be hopes of winning some of the dissatisfied French Canadian vote. Bennett also had characteristics which could serve to ease the suspicions of the Montreal financiers. He was a man of wealth, knowledgeable and sympathetic to the workings of the corporate interests and also an advocate of higher tariffs. He was thus in a sense one of them. Furthermore, he enjoyed a strong personal friendship with one of Montreal's most important individuals, Edward Beatty, President of the C.P.R.³⁸

Along with his significant business experience, Bennett could also bring to the leadership a lengthy career in the ^{politics} political field. He had been a member of the Legislative Assembly of both the North West Territories and the province of Alberta before being elected to the House of Commons in 1911. He also served in the Meighen cabinets

³⁷The Globe, Sept. 8, 1927.

³⁸D. H. Miller-Barstow, Beatty of the CPR: A Biography (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1951), pp. 105-6.

as Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada in 1921 and as Minister of Finance in 1926.³⁹

Along with his political experience, Bennett also had the attribute of being one of the best orators in the House of Commons. His speaking improved through the years. One political observer commented on his orations in this way:

There are still the old torrential passages, tumultuous and tumbling but with them there is a power of drawing clear distinctions, a crystal clarity of thought and a command of clear-cut exposition that are potent in debate. At times too, there is beauty. Bennett in his hurried life, has not neglected the classics; and occasionally the cadences of his phrases and his literary allusions, with their revelation of wide reading, conform to best classical traditions.⁴⁰

Bennett put his speaking ability to good use to impress the Winnipeg convention. His speech was rated as being the best of those given by the six candidates.⁴¹

R. B. Bennett with all these political assets was undoubtedly the best possible choice of the convention. His thorough political and business experience schooled him in the process of governing the country. His business

³⁹MacNicol, p. 102.

⁴⁰Grattan O'Leary, "Conservatism's New Prophet", Maclean's Magazine, XL (Nov. 15, 1927), 3-4.

⁴¹The Globe and Winnipeg Evening Tribune, Oct. 12, 1927.

connections, affluent friends and his own personal finances would also be welcome to fill the Conservative financial coffers. His dynamic energy, oratorical ability and regional appeal were unmatched by any of the other candidates. R. B. Bennett was the best choice to lead the party to victory. The convention realized this and elected him as Liberal-Conservative leader on the second ballot with a total of seven hundred and eighty votes.⁴²

In obtaining his position, R. B. Bennett owed a great deal of gratitude to two prominent men in the conservative party, Major General McRae, millionaire M.P. for Vancouver North and Howard Ferguson, Premier of Ontario. As chairman of the Organization Committee of the National Liberal Conservative Convention McRae was largely responsible for its success and was in no small way connected with the Bennett victory itself. McRae was determined that Arthur Meighen should not return as leader, and was impressed with Bennett's political and business background.⁴³ McRae contributed large sums of money in organizing the

⁴²Hugh Guthrie was second with 320 votes. Cahan had 266, Manion 148, Rogers 37 and Drayton 3 votes. PAC, Bennett Papers, Vol. 10, "Verbatim Report Winnipeg Convention 1927", p. 3697.

⁴³Michael David Swift, "R. B. Bennett and the Depression, 1930-1935". (M.A. thesis, University of New Brunswick, 1964), p. 69.

convention and in aiding the Bennett candidacy.⁴⁴ He worked exhausting hours "for weeks and months on end" in this regard. He was in active touch with all constituencies and was able to push the Bennett cause. By being involved with the selection of delegates and the representation of women, he was in a position to exert considerable influence behind the scenes, long before the convention began.⁴⁵

Howard Ferguson, Premier of Ontario, was another prominent figure who pushed Bennett to the leadership. Several factors made Ferguson a significant force behind Bennett's ascent to power. The development of multi-partyism since 1919 had undermined the centralization of Canadian party finance. Also since the development of natural resources constitutionally fell under provincial surveillance the provincial governments were the important keys to the opening up of vast natural resources to the large private corporations. Consequently the provincial premier who enjoyed a close liaison with these industries also could expect contributions to the party funds at election time.⁴⁶ Ferguson being the premier of the

⁴⁴John R. Williams, The Conservative Party of Canada (Durham: Duke University Press, 1956), p. 124.

⁴⁵Grattan O'Leary, "The Rival Chiefs of Staff", MacLean's Magazine, XLIII (July 1, 1930).

⁴⁶Committee on Election Expenses: Studies in Canadian Party Finance, Alphonse Barbeau, Chairman (Ottawa: Queen's Printer, 1966), p. 5.

wealthiest Canadian province was thus a powerful man in Conservative circles and a tremendous asset to any candidate. Right up to convention time, many Ontario Conservatives wanted Ferguson to run for the leadership himself.⁴⁷ His biggest concentration of strength lay in the Toronto area where there were twenty-five voting delegates.⁴⁸ Nevertheless, as Ferguson continued to assert that he would not be a candidate, Bennett's popularity rose sharply amongst the Ontario group, as the Ontario premier proceeded quietly to rally support around Bennett.⁴⁹ Robert Manion felt that it was Ferguson's influence that swung some of Manion's followers over to Bennett.⁵⁰

Ferguson was also instrumental in demonstrating the lack of internal harmony in the party when he clashed with Arthur Meighen on the floor of the convention. Arthur Meighen had spent most of his address defending his speech made at Hamilton two years previous^{ly}. In the speech Meighen had advocated that in the event of a future war, before the

⁴⁷Winnipeg Evening Tribune, Oct. 8, 1927.

⁴⁸The Globe, Sept. 14, 1927.

⁴⁹Ibid., Oct. 10, 1927, also Arthur Ford, As the World Wags On (Toronto: Ryerson Press, 1950), p. 108.

⁵⁰PAC, R. J. Manion Papers, Vol. 105, "Diary Jan. 1, 1925 to Jan 1, 1931", '1927 Convention'.

country took any action, there should be an election over the con-
 scription issue. Ferguson spoke next and vehemently attacked
 the speech and ^{the} policy. He described it as "the grossest
 kind of violation of all the principles of unity in Canada".⁵¹
 Ferguson, however with his retort did nothing to mend the
 party's internal unity. He was continually interrupted
 from the floor by pro-Meighen sympathisers. On one occasion,
 the chairman was forced to intervene and restore order.⁵²
 So strong was the resurgence of pro-Meighen sentiment that
 Meighen himself believed that he could have carried the
 convention if he had chosen to run. John W. Dafoe an acute
 political observer of the Canadian scene was also of the
 same opinion.⁵³ Ferguson was not without support either
 as the convention broke into factions, alternately cheering
 for Meighen and Ferguson.⁵⁴ The clash was so extreme that
 Ferguson publicly threatened to dis sociate himself from
 the convention if the delegates chose to endorse Meighen.⁵⁵

⁵¹PAC, Bennett Papers, Vol. 10, "Verbatim Report, Winnipeg Convention 1927", p. 3478.

⁵²Ibid., p. 3480.

⁵³PAC, Dafoe Papers, Reel-74, John W. Dafoe to Sir Clifford Sifton, Oct. 15, 1927.

⁵⁴The Globe, Oct. 11, 1927.

⁵⁵PAC, Bennett Papers, Vol. 10, "Verbatim Report, Winnipeg Convention, 1927", p. 3481.

The antagonism carried over to the next day when the lists of standing and non-standing nominees were read to the convention. Although the convention was requested not to applaud the candidates, the supporters of Meighen and Ferguson refused to obey the request. The name of Arthur Meighen was cheered loudly. When Ferguson's name was also mentioned as a non-standing candidate most of the Ontario delegation rose to their feet cheering their support.⁵⁶

It appears that the Ferguson-Meighen rift quite possibly enhanced Bennett's chances of securing the leadership. By staying out of the confrontation he did not alienate the Meighen sympathizers, and was able to maintain his support from Toronto as well. Furthermore, the Ferguson-Meighen dispute emphasized the fact that it was more imperative than ever to select a leader who could unite the party. To many of the delegates, R. B. Bennett was the only one who could do so. His wide basis of regional support could appeal to all regions and make him a formidable leader to head the Liberal-Conservative party in the next election. Bennett appeared to be the only available saviour to lead them out of the political wilderness and into power.

R. B. Bennett was then in a position to assume strong authority as party leader. The party stalwarts were

⁵⁶Winnipeg Evening Tribune, Oct. 12, 1927.

aware of the party's disunity. There was a strong demand within the party for a strong leadership so that the party itself could rally behind the man, forgetting inner differences, in an effort to seize power.

Sir Robert Borden, the last truly successful Conservative leader, stated in his address the necessity for loyalty to the leader:

Select your leader, and after you have selected him, stand by him. (Applause.) Being human, he may not always be right. Perhaps it would be well for you sometimes to remember that you are also human, and that occasionally when you think he is wrong he may be right. It is worth while to remember that.⁵⁷

Sir Robert Borden also impressed upon the party the necessity of permitting the leader to formulate policy:

... bear in mind that the leader ought to have something to say about the definition of policy. There are some great fundamental principles, of course, to which the Liberal-Conservative party has always been committed, and to which I hope it will always be committed in the future, but if you go into details, and define a policy too much in detail, pray bear in mind that this country is rapidly developing; that conditions are changing from time to time, and that you must not forestall too much a leader who will be responsible to you, to parliament, and the country for the policy which is put before the people. (Applause.)⁵⁸

The party was clearly looking for strength in a leader, one who could exercise initiative and direct a

⁵⁷PAC, Bennett Papers, Vol. 10, "Verbatim Report, Winnipeg Convention, 1927", p. 3455.

⁵⁸Ibid., p. 3456.

united team. George Spotton, M.P. for North Huron dramatized this viewpoint in his address. He called for a leader who would "hold the reins" and use "the whip".⁵⁹

R. B. Bennett had legitimate grounds for believing that a certain toughness and authoritarianism was desired by the party to forge party unity and to foster a strong directed effort to defeat the government and gain power.

Bennett rose to this challenge and soon showed signs that he was perfectly willing to provide the direction and leadership. In an Ottawa address he indicated that in the future, Conservative policy would be heavily influenced by himself.

It is true that at the Winnipeg Convention we laid down certain policies in resolutions to determine what should be the general course and attitude of our party, but the shaping and moulding of our policies in detail are matters in which consultation must take place between the leader of the party and his lieutenants in caucus, in small groups.⁶⁰

Despite this initiative there is evidence suggesting that his back bench support wanted even more dynamic leadership in parliament than what he was giving. Instead of dramatically attacking the government on the floor of the House, the back benchers felt that he was reserving his

⁵⁹Ibid., p. 3696.

⁶⁰Ottawa Journal, Jan. 25, 1928.

most eloquent addresses "for full dress occasions". They wanted more of a spectacle in parliament with Bennett leading an attack on a frightened government.⁶¹

Bennett responded to the criticism before his first session as opposition leader had ended by jumping into any scuffle and making it a major issue. His most vigorous attacks on the government in the first session occurred on the issue of parliamentary estimates which had been postponed until the very end of the session. In the opposition's viewpoint this was a deliberate government move to reduce the criticism on its estimates by holding the carrot of prorogation before them. Bennett however refused to be bribed and led the attack on many different points. Consequently, parliament's adjournment was postponed for two days.⁶²

As Bennett gradually began to strengthen his grip and dominance over the party and its parliamentary group, many of his parliamentary followers apparently felt that he was assuming too much leadership.⁶³ However, after they had permitted Bennett to generate such a strong burst of energy as their leader, it was now almost impossible to curb his power.

⁶¹Douglas MacKay, "The Session in Review", Macleans' Magazine. XI (July 1, 1928), 17.

⁶²Ibid.

⁶³PAC, Dafoe Papers, Reel 75, Grant Dexter to John W. Dafoe, Jan. 18, 1930.

Bennett continued to consolidate his leadership despite some rumblings in certain quarters of the party. He strengthened his position with his good performances in parliament, giving the party direction and leadership and by making the party appear to be a credible alternative to the King government.

He also attempted to increase his popularity with the rank and file of the party and at the same time rejuvenate the party and restore its internal unity. He did this by undertaking lengthy speaking engagements throughout the country. During the summer recess of 1929, Bennett toured the Maritimes. Later in the year he proceeded to tour the west with major addresses being delivered at Calgary, Winnipeg and Edmonton. He then visited Quebec in an effort to gain new support for the party there.⁶⁴ After the prorogation of the 1929 parliament, Bennett continued his fatiguing treks and addresses across the country. After delivering more than two dozen speeches in Ontario he went to British Columbia and then the Prairies for a long series of public speeches.⁶⁵ Bennett's vitality and efforts stood out. His actions solidified his hold on the party rank and file and he became the focal point of the party for the next election.

⁶⁴Canadian Annual Review, 1928-1929, p. 30.

⁶⁵Ibid, 1929-30, pp. 29-30.

Another reason for his increasing control of the party was the extent of his financial contributions to the party itself. In the 1930 general election he spent over six hundred thousand dollars to improve the party's position⁶⁶ and his support came long before the election was called, when financial support was generally difficult to get. These contributions permitted General McRae to open a central organization for the party in an effort to out-organize the Liberals at the next election. The headquarters proved costly and such wealthy Conservatives as E. B. Ryckman, Sir George Perley, J. D. Chaplin, General A. D. McRae and R. B. Bennett were primarily responsible for keeping it operating. However, Bennett's contributions were much larger than the others⁶⁷ and were particularly vital in keeping the organization operating. He promised to pay \$2,500 per month for the year 1929 and into 1930.⁶⁸ Bennett even paid in advance to offset some pressing party need. In September of 1929 he sent a \$10,000 cheque to ease some "pressing salary commitments"⁶⁹ and again in November

⁶⁶Richard Wilbur, The Bennett Administration, 1930-35 (Ottawa: Canadian Historical Association Booklet 24, 1969), p. 3.

⁶⁷UNBL, Bennett Papers, Reel 242, A. D. McRae to E. B. Ryckman, May 30, 1930, p. 297932.

⁶⁸Ibid., Reel 14, R. B. Bennett to Sir George Perley, Oct. 3, 1929, p. 17515.

⁶⁹Ibid., R. B. Bennett to Conservative Party Organization, n.d., p. 17510, and also found in Conservative Party Organization to R. B. Bennett, Sept. 3, 1929, p. 17511.

contributed another \$10,000 "to keep the wolf away".⁷⁰ Sir George Perley who was in charge of central party finances claimed that he could no longer devote himself to these affairs and asked Bennett to attempt to keep headquarters going.⁷¹ Bennett responded with further advance payments one of which amounted to a sum of \$50,000.⁷²

Bennett was also instrumental in attracting large financial sums from the business community, even in Montreal where Meighen had enjoyed little success. Bennett's imperialist attitude was one of the factors which won the influence of Lord Atholstan and his powerful Montreal Star.⁷³ His tariff policies and "Canada first" attitude won the support of other wealthy financiers and industrialists. Over \$575,000 was collected from Montreal's corporate interests for the 1930 election and this included \$50,000 from both the Bank of Montreal and the C.P.R.⁷⁴ This strong financial support from Montreal was vital to help overcome the Liberals

⁷⁰Ibid., R. B. Bennett to Sir George Perley, Nov. 5, 1929, p. 17522.

⁷¹PAC, Bennett Papers, "Notable Persons", Sir George Perley to R. B. Bennett, Jan. 6, 1930.

⁷²UNBL, Bennett Papers, Reel 242, A. D. McRae to E. B. Ryckman, May 30, 1930, p. 297932.

⁷³Laterreur, p. 94.

⁷⁴PAC, Manion Papers, Vol. II, "List of Contributions as of Sept. 2, 1930".

who were solidly rooted in Quebec province and to help finance the important Maritime campaigns.⁷⁵ The party's reliance on their new chieftain was thus considerably increased, for Bennett could not only attract large sums from important sources but could also contribute generously himself. This ability was in no small way a significant factor in the 1930 electoral victory.

The 1930 election campaign continued to consolidate Bennett's control of the party. He was the key figure in the campaign as he proceeded to dominate it. Chubby Power, a Liberal of future prominence, believed that this election was Canada's first experience in electing a leader who had benefitted so much from the "cult of Personality" rather than emphasizing the ideas that he represented.⁷⁶ Power described the situation in this way:

⁷⁵Committee on Electoral Expenses: Studies in Canadian Party Finance, Alphonse Barbeau, chairman (Ottawa: Queen's Printer, 1966), p. 5.

⁷⁶Norman Ward ed., A Party Politician: The Memoirs of Chubby Power (Toronto: McMillan, 1966), p. 264.

Laurier and Macdonald, though idolized by their respective followers, represented the ideology of the party to which they belonged. Beginning with Bennett, I think it could reasonably be said that the party was his, rather than he was of the party. There is no doubt that Bennett's high character, his great reputation, his forceful utterances and his eloquence on the hustings had more to do with the victory achieved in 1930 than the allegiance of the electorate to the principles and policies of the Conservative Party.⁷⁷

Bennett was able to sell himself to the Canadian people by exhibiting some of his phenomenal energy. Throughout the campaign he covered 14,000 miles and made over one hundred major speeches.⁷⁸ His ringing orations presented him as a strongman, one who could solve the economic problems of the country. He was not afraid to take a position and stand firmly on it as exemplified in the following statement: "Mackenzie King promises you conferences; I promise you action. He promises you consideration of the problem of unemployment; I promise to end unemployment."⁷⁹

Bennett's emotional appeals echoed throughout the country in his efforts to institute a form of economic

⁷⁷Ibid., p. 265.

⁷⁸Frederic H. Soward, "The Canadian Elections of 1930", American Political Science Review, XLV (Nov. 1930), 999.

⁷⁹H. Blair Neatby, William Lyon Mackenzie King: The Lonely Heights (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1964), p. 334, as found in Ottawa Journal, July 11, 1930.

nationalism. He pledged the party to a policy of "Canada first, then the Empire", even in traditional anti-tariff areas such as Calgary on the Prairies. In the Prairies and Quebec he pledged to do his utmost to promote Canadian agriculture by assuring the Canadian producer a market in his own country.⁸⁰ Bennett proved to be a much better salesman in both these areas than Arthur Meighen. The Conservatives were swept into power with twenty-three Conservatives elected from the Prairies and twenty-four from Quebec.⁸¹ Bennett's charisma and ability to appeal to widely different areas of regional support contributed greatly to the result.

Even the strongly pro Liberal newspaper, The Manitoba Free Press attributed the Liberal-Conservative success to Bennett's great efforts in a column the day after the election was over.

The manner in which Mr. Bennett played upon Mr. King's pride, combativeness - and - perhaps belief in his star in order to get him in the mood to fight a battle on ground chosen by his opponent and under conditions which helped them and put him at a disadvantage, will doubtless be recorded in future books of political strategy for future Prime Ministers.⁸²

⁸⁰Canadian Annual Review, 1929-30, pp. 97-8.

⁸¹Ibid., pp. 637-40.

⁸²Manitoba Free Press, July 29, 1930.

Certainly, many other factors besides Bennett's herculean efforts contributed greatly to the electoral outcome. The economic situation, the mistakes of Mackenzie King, the expert organizational prowess of General McRae, the speaking tours of Harry Stevens, Dr. Manion and Hugh Guthrie and the intervention of the Conservative provincial premiers into the federal campaign, along with other factors all contributed significantly to the final outcome. Nevertheless it was still a Bennett victory. He had been the focal point of the party. He had presented a dynamic leadership which party supporters could rally around. In this regard he was highly effective. Under Bennett, the Conservatives won 137 seats and thus had more colleagues in parliament than any Conservative prime minister since the days of Sir John A. MacDonald.⁸³ The party had a wide range of support with representation from every province.⁸⁴ It was a big change from the days of Arthur Meighen. Bennett's stature in the party rose to the pinnacle, because so much of the success was believed to have depended on him.

The election thus produced a strong prime minister. Bennett had certain justification for assuming the posture

⁸³Soward, p. 995.

⁸⁴Canadian Annual Review, 1929-30, pp. 636-41.

of a vigorous leader. He had been elected by his party to lead it out of the political wilderness. He had been urged right on the floor of the convention by his colleagues to take the reins and to formulate party policy. He had been criticized for not being aggressive enough in parliament in the early stages of his leadership. It was quite natural that a man of such a temperamental independent spirit as R. B. Bennett would take full advantage of these mandates for decisive leadership. Added to these mandates, Bennett's tremendous contributions to the party could be interpreted as giving him an absolute right to give strong decisive leadership to the party and government. His tireless treks across the country unified the party for the coming election as nothing else could. His large personal contributions to central headquarters helped to revitalize the whole party and created a superb organization, far superior to the Liberal opponents. Bennett's ability to attract the confidence and financial support from the large business concerns also was a significant factor in the election. Perhaps the greatest contribution however was the man himself. His image as an intelligent successful businessman who could free the country from the grips of the depression was an important feature in the electoral victory. His speeches commanded attention. The man commanded respect. No other man had made such a great contribution to the party's resurgence to power.

Bennett was elected to lead the party and urged to do so. He paid for the party and was the driving force in leading them to victory. In many respects he could feel that he had the right to lead them vigorously after the victory. He could feel that he had earned it.

II

ONE-MAN GOVERNMENT: AN ACCUSATION

Once in power, Bennett was accused of running a "one-man government" by many of his opponents. They felt that he was completely dominating his cabinet, imposing his will and paying little attention to his fellow ministers. Many different factors fostered this appearance of "one-man government". Some of them were attributed to Bennett himself, while others were beyond his control.

The criticism arose immediately when Bennett announced his cabinet, for he reserved the portfolios of Finance and External Affairs for himself along with his duties as Prime Minister and President of the Council. In the eyes of the opposition, this workload seemed much too oppressive for any one man to handle effectively. Mackenzie King, the Liberal leader, felt that the finance portfolio was such an important and onerous one that a separate member should hold this post in order to be able to concentrate full attention on this responsibility. This seemed to King to be more necessary than ever in this period of adverse economic activity. Mackenzie King dramatized the Bennett approach as "the Mussolini touch in matters of politics".

To King, Bennett was the image of "the great Pooh-Bah of the Mikado" who controlled every office of state. The Liberal leader proceeded to publicize the Bennett technique as contrary to the interests of cabinet government. He believed that Cabinet government was designed to give the country the benefit of a great number of minds and to free it from a single tyranny.¹

The image of Bennett, "the one-man government" was seized upon by his political opponents and publicized continuously throughout his term of office. His political opponents continued the attack in the House of Commons and in the newspapers of the country. The people were to be fully informed of any Bennett trait which seemed dictatorial. As a source of amusement for itself and as a propaganda technique to press the point home to the public, the opposition circulated a number of comical and unauthenticated stories about the Prime Minister. One of the most popular anecdotes told of Bennett sitting alone in a club and talking to himself. A stranger asked what he was saying, and another replied that he was simply holding a cabinet meeting.²

¹Canada, Parliament, House of Commons Debates (hereafter cited as Hansard), 1930 Special Session, p. 17.

²Lord Beaverbrook, Friends: Sixty Years of Intimate Personal Relations with R. B. Bennett (London: Heinemony, 1959), p. 81.

The opposition thus utilized every opportunity to criticize and spread propaganda about what they believed was a "one-man government". It was a simple theme to be continually repeated in an effort to discredit the government.

Bennett's energy and sense of emergency contributed greatly to the charge of "one-man government". From the very first he was a blaze of action. He appeared to be the driving force behind the whole government. Within six weeks he had selected his ministers, formed the government and called a special session of parliament to deal with the unemployment situation. This resulted in the Unemployment Relief Act of 1930 which created a twenty million dollar fund to ease the unemployment problem. Within these six weeks he had also changed tariff schedules and revised the dumping statutes of the country.³ Bennett also was quick to fulfill two of his election pledges. He increased the federal government's shares of the cost of old age pensions from fifty to seventy-five per cent and increased the subsidies to the coal mining industries in both the Maritimes and the West.⁴

³Hansard, Special Session 1930, pp. 573 and 600, and also recorded in Manitoba Free Press, Sept. 27, 1930.

⁴Hansard, Special Session 1930, p. 117, and also noted in PAC, R. K. Finlayson, "Life with R.B., That Man Bennett", unpublished manuscript, p. 125.

Bennett was given full credit for his quick decisive efforts. Even the highly critical Manitoba Free Press claimed: "there is something heroic in these accomplishments and Mr. Bennett deserves all the credit which his political feats entitle him to receive".⁵

This initial decisive action made it possible for his political supporters to promote Bennett as the "man of action" who went out to meet problems.⁶ His political opponents interpreted his actions in its authoritarian context. The Manitoba Free Press claimed that the Bennett policies had been stamped on the special session of parliament "with the determination of a dictator".⁷ Whatever the interpretation was, there was no disagreement on the extent of the Bennett influence on the government's efforts.

Fresh from electoral victory, he provided the dynamic momentum to the party in the initial session. Harry Stevens, acknowledged, even after he had left the cabinet in disenchantment, that Bennett was "an indefatigable worker", one who toiled from early morning til 10 or 11 in the evening.⁸ So hard did he drive himself and his

⁵Manitoba Free Press, Sept. 27, 1930.

⁶PAC, Dafoe Papers, Reel 76, John W. Dafoe to Vincent Massey, July 22, 1932.

⁷Manitoba Free Press, Sept. 27, 1930.

⁸PAC, H. H. Stevens Papers, Vol. 163, "1955 Interview with Harry Stevens", p. 198.

cabinet that he and a half dozen ministers suffered more or less severe illnesses in just over a full year of office. The prime minister had pushed himself so hard that by the last week of October 1931, he was restricted to his apartment in the first of a set of illnesses.⁹ Harry Stevens, then minister of Trade and Commerce was the first of his ministers to be stricken. His illness was the most serious as he was forced to have a series of operations. E. B. Ryckman was also ill and never really was restored to health.¹⁰ Ryckman eventually resigned from the cabinet in November of 1933 for reasons of health.¹¹ C. H. Cahan, the Secretary of State was hospitalized for seven weeks with a fractured thigh bone.¹² This accident, combined with overwork impaired his usual good health and in two months after his release from hospital he was forced to take a one month sea voyage to Bermuda and Jamaica.¹³ Hugh Guthrie, minister

⁹Manitoba Free Press, Nov. 3, 1931.

¹⁰PAC, Manion Papers, Vol. 96, "Press Clippings Scrapbook, 1931-32", p. 51, as found in Border Cities Star, Nov. 20, 1931.

¹¹UNBL, Bennett Papers, Reel 310, E. B. Ryckman to R. B. Bennett, Nov. 28, 1933, p. 388088.

¹²PAC, Bourassa Papers, Reel 721, C. H. Cahan to Henri Bourassa, Sept. 26, 1931, p. 81.

¹³Ibid., M. Delante to Henri Bourassa, Nov. 18, 1931, p. 85.

of justice was also periodically indisposed. Senator Gideon Robertson, the Minister of Labour, was another victim of over exertion. Bennett's dynamic leadership had taken a very heavy toll in its first year. There appeared to be little time for play. Sir George Perley, Alfred Duranleau and Edgar Rhodes were said to be the only ones in the cabinet who played golf regularly. Wes Gordon and R. J. Manion enjoyed fishing. According to the Border Cities Star, few of the other ministers indulged in any kind of sport. This paper felt that the cabinet members were too serious and should take life more lightly.¹⁴ These illnesses could be interpreted by Bennett critics as the direct result of slave-driving tactics from an authoritarian Prime Minister who dictated party policy and swamped his ministers with menial tasks.

R. B. Bennett known as "the Chief" to his party colleagues was clearly the energetic leader of the party team. The early Bennett years produced a tired bunch of colleagues who waited patiently for every opportunity to get what they considered was a well deserved vacation.¹⁵

¹⁴PAC, Manion Papers, Vol. 96, "Press Clippings Scrapbook, 1931-32", p. 51 as found in Border Cities Star, Nov. 20, 1931.

¹⁵Ibid., Vol. 105, "Diaries 1914-42", Oct. 24, 1931 and Nov. 15, 1932. PAC, R. B. Hanson Papers, Vol. 1, "Political Correspondences 1920-1939", R. B. Hanson to R. B. Bennett, Dec. 13, 1930. It should be noted that Hanson was just an M.P. at this time and not yet a cabinet minister.

"The Chief's" travel itinerary was closely watched by his associates to see when they could escape their vigorous chores. Apparently, Bennett's genuine holidays were rather few in number. They usually involved a trip with many duties along the way. R. J. Manion expressed the situation in this way: "R.B. holidays by getting his teeth fixed at Toronto!! What a hell of a holiday".¹⁶

Bennett's actions in the House of Commons were also responsible for promoting his image as the authoritarian leader of the cabinet and party. In the initial years of power Bennett seemed to be the star performer in the House of Commons in the opinion of many observers. Bennett could appear ruthless in debate, and every time he scored a point or humiliated the opposition with some stinging comment, a prolonged period of desk-thumping emanated from his party's benches. Chubby Power believed they thoroughly enjoyed the chance to get back at the Liberals after being in opposition for so long. Many of Bennett's followers were content to let him lead in debate because of his great effectiveness.¹⁷ Bennett was in such oratorical form that even such capable men as H. A. Stewart, Minister of Public Works, R. J. Manion

¹⁶PAC, Manion Papers, Vol. 105, "Diaries, 1914-42" July 1, 1932.

¹⁷Norman Ward, ed., A Party Politician: The Memoirs of Chubby Power (Toronto: Macmillan, 1966), p. 268.

and H. H. Stevens felt overshadowed. Bennett consistently stole the limelight because of his great working ability and his belief that he was best qualified to defend the policy of the government.¹⁸

Bennett's powerful impact on the Commons in the early stages of the Liberal-Conservative regime was quite probably the result of the ineffectiveness of the Liberal opposition in the same period. Two noted individuals on opposite sides of the political fence, R. K. Finlayson and Chubby Power both believed that Bennett "took full advantage of a thoroughly whipped Opposition" to push his programs through the House. Both observers believed the Liberal party to be "wholly dispirited" and few Liberals were willing to tackle Bennett in a rough and tumble debate.¹⁹

Bennett's performance as compared to King's also tended to promote Bennett as the giant of parliament in 1930 and part of 1931. Whether by design or through disillusionment Mackenzie King appeared to lack inspired leadership. In the eyes of Chubby Power, he took time to readjust to opposition and "to play the role of a first class fighting leader".²⁰ Bennett was thus permitted to proceed relatively unchecked.

¹⁸Ibid., p. 280.

¹⁹Ibid., p. 268. This viewpoint is also confirmed in Finlayson, p. 110.

²⁰Ward, p. 264.

Even if Mackenzie King had the inclination to fight Bennett vigorously on the floor of the House, he faced at least two serious handicaps. First, Bennett had just been elected on a program of many promises. It was clear to all that the people wanted action and therefore it would be highly unpopular for King to obstruct Bennett when he was attempting to take action.²¹ Secondly, Mackenzie King was seriously hampered by the issue of the 1931 Beauharnois Power Scandal in which he was implicated. His Caribbean hotel bill of \$288.53 prior to the 1930 general election had been paid by the Beauharnois Corporation.²² Throughout much of the 1931 session, King was thus placed on the defensive by the fighting Prime Minister. Bennett was prepared to state: "I have always held that the receiver of stolen goods was a criminal."²³ King had to be prepared for this type of retort and it was thus quite natural for him not to be quite as aggressive as he might have been under these humiliating conditions.

Another factor which promoted the Bennett image as the dominant leader of the Tory party was Bennett's tendency to do so much of the speaking for the party

²¹Ibid., p. 266.

²²Hansard, 1931, Vol. IV, p. 4028.

²³Ibid., p. 4383.

himself. Certainly Mackenzie King found it rather amazing to watch Bennett handle the parliamentary estimates while his cabinet colleagues sat about listening to the chief defend their departments.²⁴ There was a legitimate reason for this, because the Bennett cabinet did lack strong debating strength. Both loyal Conservatives and their opponents agreed on this fact. In the evaluation of Thomas Cantley, a New Brunswick Conservative supporter, the whole cabinet fell short in debating power. The debating strength of the Maritime provinces as represented in the federal cabinet was thought to be at its lowest ebb in sixty years.²⁵ Chubby Power also attributed the Tory members' silences to their lack of front bench ability in debate. In his view the best defenders of the Tory policies were Hugh Guthrie, R. J. Manion, Harry Stevens and Bennett himself.²⁶ The Toronto Evening Telegram had the same opinion of the debating abilities of the Bennett cabinet. The newspaper however believed that the Bennett cabinet did contain men of ability but felt that many were lacking in parliamentary

²⁴H. Blair Neatby, William Lyon Mackenzie King, 1924-32: The Lonely Heights (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1963), p. 360 as found in MacKenzie King Diary, March 30, 1931.

²⁵PAC, Hanson Papers, Vol. 1, "Political Correspondence, 1920-1939", J. Cantley to R. B. Hanson, May 31, 1932, pp. 71072.

²⁶Ward, p. 270.

experience and were not adept at handling frequent interjections from trained critics in the course of their orations.²⁷ It was thus quite natural that the Bennett presence would stand out amongst his colleagues in the greatest debating forum in the nation, particularly in the first years of office. During this period two of the big four debaters in the Tory camp were incapacitated for varying lengths of time. With the temporary loss of services of Hugh Guthrie and Harry Stevens, Bennett had to assume even a greater share of the oratorical load. This further promoted his image as the domineering leader of the Liberal-Conservative Party. Bennett's remarkable abilities also made him stand out among his followers. During his brief career as Finance Minister, one leading official in that department claimed that Bennett had "confounded the experts of the department with his grasp of the most intimate details". It was said to be the same in the Justice Department when Bennett had served there briefly under Arthur Meighen.²⁸ Not only was "the Chief" knowledgeable in his own areas of endeavour, but he also tried to keep himself informed on other departments as well. One instance of this occurred when Canadian

²⁷PAC, Manion Papers, Vol. 96, "Press Clippings Scrapbook, 21931-32", The Evening Telegram, Feb. 26, 1931.

²⁸Grattan O'Leary, "Conservatism's New Prophet", MacLean's Magazine, XL (Nov. 15, 1927), 46.

Publishers requested an interview on the question of postage. They had expected to see the Postmaster-General but on their arrival, the Prime Minister was also present and the publishers were said to be amazed at his thorough knowledge of the subject. Bennett thus appeared to have a rather overwhelming knowledge of many areas of government administration to uncritical or casual observers.²⁹ The fact that Bennett tried to keep informed on the problems of all the departments and that he had an ability to speak on these subjects, furthered the belief that he was in fact doing the work of these departments and thus running a one-man government.

Furthermore, Bennett's very presence acted as a human barometer on government activity. The government's energies, were notably greater whenever Bennett was at the helm. During "the chief's" holidays or illnesses the activities of the government diminished noticeably. The most glaring example of this occurred during the last stage of the Bennett regime after he had announced the New Deal program for economic recovery and reform. Bennett had vigorously set out to implement his new program by initiating legislation for the eight hour day and the six day week.³⁰ At the time of his illness in February of 1935

²⁹Arthur Ford, As the World Wags On (Toronto: Ryerson Press, 1950), p. 131.

³⁰PAC, Manion Papers, Vol. 18, "Family Correspondence", R. J. Manion to James Manion, Mar. 1, 1935.

he was taking a prominent part in handling the administration's unemployment insurance bill.³¹ His three month absence from the House because of illness and a trip to England had a profound effect on the Bennett reform program. R. J. Manion referred to him as "the spearhead" behind which the administration was working.³² Without "the spearhead" the reforms had to rely on Sir George Perley, the acting Prime Minister to engineer them through the house. Certain leading newspapers such as the Toronto Telegram and Mail and Empire remained optimistic that the abilities of the remaining cabinet members were sufficient to substitute for Bennett to keep the reform program moving quickly through the house.³³ Others who were more closely concerned with the reform programs were much more pessimistic and disillusioned. R. J. Manion who had been urging Bennett to take some kind of reform action for over three years was particularly disenchanted. He was critical of Bennett, whom he believed had kept so much of the program in his own hands that it would be quite difficult for anyone else to take over his initiatives.³⁴ Manion was also critical of

³¹Hansard, 1932, pp. 901-53, 959-80, and 1037-89.

³²PAC, Manion Papers, Vol. 97, "Press Clippings Scrapbook, 1932-35", p. 141. Ottawa Journal, Mar. 15, 1935.

³³Ibid., Toronto Telegram, Mar. 11, 1935 and Mail and Empire, Mar. 14, 1935.

³⁴Ibid., Vol. 18, "Family Correspondence", R. J. Manion to James Manion, Mar. 4, 1935.

Sir George Perley for his apparent lack of interest in pursuing the program initiated by Bennett. He expressed his resentment in this way:

With old Sir George more or less in command in the House and Guthrie sick for the last two weeks also, and a fairly obvious effort on the part of Sir George and some of the others to keep me in the background, I think we have had a pretty rotten looking condition in the House, and I am rather fed up with it. . . . I am hoping that Guthrie will be back today, for poor old Sir George handling things is certainly not encouraging to the younger and more energetic portion of our Party.³⁵

Under Perley's leadership, Manion was quite convinced that they had not done enough to fulfill "the chief's" radio speeches.³⁶ W. D. Herridge, Bennett's chief advisor and main initiator of the Canadian New Deal was also of the same opinion. In a letter to Manion, Herridge lamented:

The colour has faded from the reform picture. The promise of performance is gone I fear our big beautiful reform child is almost dead.³⁷

Certain developments, which were not quite as noticeable to the general public, but noticed by professional politicians and other astute political observers contributed

³⁵Ibid., Mar. 11, 1935.

³⁶Ibid., Mar. 22, 1935.

³⁷Ibid., Vol. 9, "Personal Correspondence: 1930-43, Herridge-#", W. D. Herridge to R. J. Manion, Mar, 22, 1935.

to the concept of one-man government. Bennett at his nomination convention was really only one of numerous leading Conservatives who were drawing a great deal of public attention. Arthur Meighen, Hugh Guthrie, Howard Ferguson and General McRae were four high ranking Conservatives who held a great deal of power in party ranks. As the leadership of Bennett progressed through the years, however, all four figures gradually faded somewhat into the background.

Arthur Meighen, Bennett's conservative predecessor, was still quite respected in party circles despite his inability to win elections. Despite strong appeals from Conservative sources to bring Meighen into the cabinet, as Minister of Finance,³⁸ Bennett refused to do so. He explained that the reason was "purely political". Quebec was against Meighen. Therefore he could not be appointed to such an important post, for the government relied upon the continued support of those members in the interests of national unity and for the sake of maintaining the government's internal strength.³⁹

Bennett, however was prepared to make him Government leader in the Senate and Minister without Portfolio. Perhaps,

³⁸PAC, Hanson Papers, Vol. 1, "Political Correspondence, 1920-1939", R. B. Hanson to R. B. Bennett, Dec. 13, 1930 and Dec. 20, 1930.

³⁹Ibid., R. B. Bennett to R. B. Hanson, Dec. 18, 1930.

this was an appeasement to those who were demanding that they call upon the services of Arthur Meighen. It was rumored in Ottawa political circles that Bennett was quite worried about "the Meighen boom".⁴⁰ Meighen, however, stated that he was convinced that Bennett wanted him in the Senate because "there was a worthwhile, long-term work to be done in that chamber".⁴¹ There also seemed to be the intention of Bennett to use Meighen's talents to embarrass the Liberal party by pressing an attack on the three Liberal senators who allegedly were involved in the Beauharnois scandal. This became apparent when King queried in the House the implications of the appointment. Bennett quickly retorted: "It will mean two or three fewer senators at an early date".⁴² Meighen did not disappoint Bennett in this regard.

Nevertheless, Bennett's appointment of Meighen to the Senate and his failure to give Meighen an important cabinet post did tend to isolate Meighen from Bennett and the House. Although still a prominent figure in the party's

⁴⁰PAC, Dafoe Papers, Reel 75, Grant Dexter to John W. Dafoe, Jan. 18, 1930.

⁴¹Arthur Meighen, Unrevised and Unrepented: Debating Speeches and Others, Foreward by M. Grattan O'Leary (Toronto: Clarke Irwin, 1949), p. 419.

⁴²Hansard, 1932, Vol. 1, p. 7.

inner circles, Meighen no longer had access to the most dramatic and publicized forum of debate in the country. His actions in the Senate never would get the same amount of publicity as he would in the House. For the time being therefore, his national stature was somewhat diminished.

Hugh Guthrie, the second ranking candidate at the 1927 Liberal-Conservative convention also appeared to fade into the background in contrast to the prominent Bennett. Guthrie, unlike Meighen, was given a significant post in the Bennett cabinet as Minister of Justice. He was thus in a position to maintain his respected following and attract public attention to the government, rather than to just Bennett alone. However this did not occur for his general health began to fail throughout the 1930's and he was periodically inactive during the periods of greatest legislative activity during the initial parliamentary sessions and at the last New Deal parliament. By the end of the Bennett years of power he no longer seemed to be aggressively interested in the leadership. He was no longer considered as the heir apparent in Conservative circles.⁴³

Howard Ferguson, as Premier of Ontario was a power in Conservative politics. Bennett owed him a tremendous debt of gratitude for his support at the nominating

⁴³PAC, Manion Papers, "Family Correspondence", R. J. Manion to James Manion, Mar. 11, 1935.

convention of 1927 and his contributions to the 1930 electoral victory. Ferguson was rewarded when he was offered the prestigious post of High Commissioner for Canada in London. With this appointment, Ferguson was far from Conservative policy making and publicity. Ferguson's political power gradually diminished in his prestigious exile. He was not even called to Ottawa for the Imperial Conference of 1932. One editor applauded the way Bennett had "shelved the kingmaker".⁴⁴

General A. D. McRae, had been another powerful politician within Conservative circles. As Chief Organizer of the Conservative party he was partially responsible for Bennett's 1927 convention victory and played a great part in the 1930 electoral victory. He played such a key role in that campaign that it appeared to at least one observer that Bennett and McCrae, together, were running the Liberal-Conservative Party.⁴⁵ He had risen to great heights in the party since his first election as a Conservative in 1926. He was a gregarious fellow who went out of his way to make friends and to know almost every politician and correspondent

⁴⁴J. F. White, gen. ed., The Canadian Forum, XII (Sept. 1932), p. 443.

⁴⁵UNBL, Bennett Papers, Reel 15, unnamed, nondated newspaper clipping, p. 19597.

in the nation's capital. This trait proved to be one of the secrets of his success.⁴⁶

Although McRae's rise to prominence was very rapid, his decline was almost as quick. He campaigned and organized so intensively that he lost his own parliamentary seat in Vancouver.⁴⁷ He resigned as party organizer, unhappy with Bennett's decision not to keep the Conservative central office open on a permanent basis. McRae had been appointed to the senate and offered the post of High Commissioner in London. However he did state that he might have accepted the appointment to Washington if it had been offered to him instead of W. D. Herridge. These factors contributed heavily to the rift between McRae and Bennett.⁴⁸ It was a split between two strong personalities and had been predicted by many during the 1930 electoral campaign.⁴⁹

With McRae out of the House of Commons, and no longer chief organizer for the party, he was no longer in

⁴⁶M. Grattan L'Leary, "The Rival Chiefs of Staff", MacLean's Magazine, XLIII (July 1, 1930) 8.

⁴⁷UNBL, Bennett Papers, Reel 241, E. Rhodes to Major General McRae, July 30, 1930, p. 297335.

⁴⁸Arthur Ford, pp. 145-6.

⁴⁹UNBL, Bennett Papers, Reel 15, untitled, nondated newspaper clipping, p. 19597.

the public limelight. He still held some influence on Conservative policy and strategy but his influence did diminish considerably and he gradually faded into the background of the public's mind.

The Liberal-Conservative party in the early Bennett years to a great extent thus diminished from a party of many leading figures to a party of one powerful leader. In varying degrees Meighen, Guthrie, Ferguson and McRae gradually faded into the background behind the shadow of R. B. Bennett. No strong contender or prominent figure within the party attracted nearly as much public attention until later on in Bennett's term when Harry Stevens appeared dramatically in the political spotlight. This tendency of the leading political figures to fade away and the lack of any new person within the party to attract public attention greatly promoted the belief that the administration was truly a "one-man government".

III

WORKING WITH R.B. : MEIGHEN AND CAHAN

To analyse the charge of "one-man government", it is necessary to review the working relationship between Bennett and several important Conservative colleagues. Arthur Meighen and C. H. Cahan deserve particular attention in this regard. Meighen was a unique figure when appointed to the cabinet as Minister without Portfolio in 1931, for he was a former Prime Minister and Bennett's predecessor as Conservative leader. Meighen's prestige, influence, abilities and experience were all highly respected in Conservative party circles. C. H. Cahan, on the other hand, was an ambitious rival of Bennett at the 1927 Winnipeg leadership convention. Both Meighen and Cahan, although they were members of the Bennett cabinet, never did achieve the same level of prestigious publicity that they had previously enjoyed. Their working relationship with R. B. Bennett thus deserves special consideration in the analysis of Bennett's role as government leader.

By the time Arthur Meighen entered the cabinet in 1931, the attitudes of Meighen and Bennett towards each other had been well established over a long period of years.

Both were in the House from 1911 to 1917, with Arthur Meighen serving as Solicitor-General and Bennett as an M.P. supporting the Borden Unionist government. Bennett was an ambitious politician whose desire for a cabinet post was being frustrated by the fact that his senior Calgary law partner, Sir James Lougheed, was already Minister without Portfolio and also leader of the Government in the Senate.¹ While Bennett's career seemed to be at a standstill, Arthur Meighen, a younger lawyer, was brought into the cabinet as Solicitor-General in October of 1915 and then given the portfolios of Secretary of State and Minister of Mines in August of 1917.² Harry Stevens contended that Bennett "was always a bit jealous of Arthur Meighen".³ Certainly, Bennett's early feelings towards Meighen became public when Bennett opposed the guarantee of forty-five million dollars worth of Canadian Northern Railway debentures.⁴ Meighen was the chief government spokesman for

¹Wilfred Smith, "R. B. Bennett and Sir Robert Borden", The Canadian Historical Review, XLV (June 1964), 116-19, as found in R. B. Bennett to Sir Robert Borden, April 17, 1918.

²Guide to Canadian Ministries Since Confederation, July 1, 1867 - Jan. 1, 1957 (Ottawa: Public Archives, 1957) pp. 32-4.

³PAC, H. H. Stevens Papers, 7th Interview, June 7, 1966, p. 2.

⁴Hansard, 1914, Vol. IV, p. 3735.

the proposal at that particular time and was consequently branded as "the gramophone of Mackenzie and Mann" by Bennett.⁵ When Meighen proceeded to question Bennett while he was still in the process of oration, Bennett strongly objected to "the impertinent interruptions of this young man" who proceeded to repeat the record from the gramophone.⁶ The debate was an ugly incident and R. K. Finlayson believed that it created mutual suspicion in their future relations and was a very significant factor in explaining the reluctance of Meighen to be a major supporter during the Bennett regime.⁷ Even by 1930 during the federal election, their relationship was exceedingly cool. Meighen felt that Bennett's conduct towards himself could hardly have been worse for Bennett showed no indication of any kind that he wanted Meighen's assistance in the election.⁸

Some felt that Bennett's coolness to Meighen spread also to the former Prime Minister's associates during the 1930's. Some of Meighen's friends even complained outright

⁵Ibid., p. 3758.

⁶Ibid., p. 3760.

⁷PAC, R. K. Finlayson, "Life with R.B., That Man Bennett", unpublished manuscript, pp. 48-9.

⁸Roger Graham, Arthur Meighen: No Surrender (Toronto: Clarke, Irwin, 1965), p. 26, as found in Arthur Meighen Papers, July 18, 1930.

to Bennett for being persecuted because of their loyalty to Meighen. They felt that this^{had} cost them a cabinet position.⁹

By January of 1932, Bennett did decide to utilize the talents of Arthur Meighen. This was something that had been advocated by many Tories. Bennett offered him the position of the government's leader in the Senate as well as Minister without Portfolio. Their relationship did improve somewhat after the appointments, but they never did become true friends although each developed a certain respect for the other. For his services, Meighen claimed that Bennett had agreed to give him almost a completely free hand in the leadership of the Senate.¹⁰ Furthermore, Bennett had concurred that the Senate need not be a mere reflection of the respective sides of the lower house but should serve a practical usefulness.¹¹

Meighen contended that Bennett adhered to his bargain for he never sought to interfere in any way with the Senate's course of action.¹² He publicly credited

⁹PAC, Bennett Papers, Vol. 102, H. E. Spencer to R. B. Bennett, July 16, 1935, pp. 67650.

¹⁰Debates of the Senate of the Dominion of Canada, 1934: Official Report, p. 153.

¹¹PAC, Manion Papers, "Personal Correspondence", Arthur Meighen to R. J. Manion, Dec. 28, 1938.

¹²Ibid.

Bennett with the statement

that no man ever gave another freer scope than he gave me; no Prime Minister ever before committed to the Senate constructive work of such consequence, or ever accepted from it with so good a grace such a formidable catalogue of amendments to legislation initiated in the House of Commons.¹³

The Senate amended government measures numerous times, many in important features, and also defeated policies which had been submitted with Bennett's recommendation. However, Meighen claimed that Bennett never complained or even suggested that the Senate should take another course of action.¹⁴ The Senatorial amendment to the Limitation of Hours of Work Bill of 1935 was a good example of Bennett's conciliatory attitude to Senate initiatives. After Bennett had rather informal discussions with Arthur Meighen, Bennett and the House of Commons agreed to the amendment.¹⁵

Bennett also utilized the Senate as an important body for initiating bills that were intricate and involved and required a great deal of intensive committee work. Under Meighen's leadership, the Senate originated sixteen

¹³Arthur Meighen, Unrevised and Unrepented, pp. 419-20.

¹⁴Ibid., p. 318.

¹⁵Hansard, 1935, p. 4307.

bills in four years. During the Mackenzie King years of government, Meighen's counterpart, Senator Dandurand, was only able to originate nine government measures in the Senate during his eleven years as Senate leader.¹⁶ Bennett definitely delegated to Meighen considerable responsibility and legislative power in his role as the government Senate leader. Bennett respected Meighen's position and gave him a free hand in carrying out his duties.

In the role of a cabinet advisor, Meighen was not so useful to Bennett, for Meighen only gave Bennett his assistance at his own discretion and convenience. To a great extent, Meighen's personal business affairs were considered more important than his service to the Prime Minister. During the parliamentary recess in June of 1932, Meighen told Bennett that he expected to be in Ottawa at least one day a week to keep in touch with cabinet affairs and render his services but had not been able to come since the recess because of the six week illness of the head of Meighen's company. In a letter, Meighen reiterated his intention of spending one day a week in Ottawa.¹⁷ During this period, Bennett actively sought Meighen's attendance at Council on important matters concerning the

¹⁶F. A. Kunz, The Modern Senate of Canada, 1925-1963: A Re-appraisal (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1965), p. 189.

¹⁷UNBL, Bennett Papers, Reel 335, A. Meighen to R. B. Bennett, June 13, 1932, p. 419,356.

forthcoming Imperial Conference of 1932. Bennett was willing to call the Council meetings at a time which would suit Meighen.¹⁸ Meighen vetoed a suggested date by Bennett and replaced it with another.¹⁹ Bennett was depending heavily upon Meighen's advice and suggestions with regard to the Conference and in a letter, made the plea: "Please do not fail."²⁰ Meighen promptly notified Bennett that he could arrive in the morning of the opening of the Conference but would have to leave again that night. Meighen himself conceded that he was of little use to Bennett during this important period. Meighen's business interests were still occupying his full time in Toronto.²¹ Meighen's directors' meetings continually limited his role as an advisor to a Prime Minister who was willing to listen to him.²²

Meighen maintained this independent attitude even during the 1935 federal elections when Bennett had requested that he help in the national campaign. Meighen refused to help him actively, stating that he did not want to lose

¹⁸Ibid., R. B. Bennett to Arthur Meighen, June 15, 1932, p. 419223.

¹⁹Ibid., Arthur Meighen to R. B. Bennett, June 17, 1932, pp. 419223-5.

²⁰Ibid., R. B. Bennett to Arthur Meighen, July 18, 1932, p. 419226.

²¹Ibid., Arthur Meighen to R. B. Bennett, July 19, 1932, p. 419227.

²²Ibid., Arthur Meighen to A. W. Merriam, Feb. 16, 1933, p. 419252.

his influence and impair his value in the Senate by being entangled in party politics.²³ This was also Meighen's excuse for not attending party caucuses. Bennett found it difficult to accept Meighen's explanation and clearly felt that Meighen had failed him as well as the Party. Bennett felt that his request was not unreasonable and claimed that Meighen's refusal hurt him more than he could say.²⁴

However, whenever Bennett did meet with Meighen, privately or in council, he listened attentively to him on a wide range of topics. On the subject of the controversial Duff Royal Commission on Railways, Meighen concurred with Bennett that it was politically advantageous to implement the recommendations of the Commission rather than pursue the amalgamation of the Canadian Pacific and Canadian National Railways. Meighen, however, persuaded Bennett to have this important and provocative legislation introduced first into the Senate where it could receive a more careful and detailed consideration than in the House of Commons.²⁵ Bennett's willingness to throw this legislation

²³Ibid., Arthur Meighen to R. B. Bennett, Oct. 1, 1935, pp. 419367-8.

²⁴Ibid., R. B. Bennett to Arthur Meighen, Oct. 31, 1935, p. 419371.

²⁵Roger Graham, Arthur Meighen: No Surrender, p. 42.

into the hands of Meighen was another indication of his respect and confidence in the abilities of his colleague.

On the question of the merits of private versus public control of radio broadcasting, Meighen again influenced Bennett. Meighen convinced Bennett that the control of radio should not be passed into private hands by comparing the relative merits of Australian broadcasting with that of Canada's radio system.²⁶

Bennett certainly did not follow all the advice given to him by Meighen, particularly with regard to appointments. Meighen recommended that the prime minister should appoint Sir Henry Drayton to a judgeship in Ontario.²⁷ Bennett felt that Drayton had been removed too long from his law practice for this to be justifiable and therefore did not make the appointment. Nevertheless Bennett did leave the door open for Meighen to discuss it with him on his next visit.²⁸ As far as Senatorial appointments were concerned, Meighen contended that he had virtually no influence whatsoever. He admitted that this was partially the result of being

²⁶UNBL, Bennett Papers, Reel 350, R. B. Bennett to C. O. Knowles, Feb. 7, 1935, p. 439299.

²⁷Ibid., Reel 335, Arthur Meighen to R. B. Bennett, Aug. 5, 1932, p. 419228.

²⁸Ibid., R. B. Bennett to Arthur Meighen, Aug. 8, 1932, p. 419229.

absent from the meetings whenever the appointments were made.²⁹

Bennett also refused Meighen's request to have the Chief Justice of Canada inquire into the Hydro Electric Power Scandal of 1933. Meighen had been implicated in it as a result of the release of the Ontario Smith-Latchford Royal Commission report on the subject. Meighen wanted Bennett to clear up his name and the issue.³⁰ Bennett vetoed the request and took the position that Meighen was innocent in his mind and that the report could not seriously be regarded as an infringement upon Meighen's honour as a public figure.³¹ Meighen had previously expressed his gratitude for Bennett's attitude and treatment of the matter.³² Meighen understood Bennett's situation and accepted his decision on the subject but wanted the Senate to investigate the matter if it wanted.³³

The Meighen-Bennett relationship was indeed a complicated one which extended over a long period of years.

²⁹Kunz, p. 32 as found in PAC, Arthur Meighen Papers, Arthur Meighen to C. J. Hamilton, Feb. 3, 1933, Series 5, No. 223.

³⁰UNBL, Bennett Papers, reel 335, Arthur Meighen to R. B. Bennett, Jan. 4, 1935, pp. 419386-8.

³¹Ibid., R. B. Bennett to Arthur Meighen, Jan. 7, 1935, p. 419390.

³²Ibid., Arthur Meighen to R. B. Bennett, July 4, 1934, pp. 419363-4.

³³Graham, Arthur Meighen: No Surrender, p. 57.

Bennett's tardiness in appointing Meighen to the cabinet and Meighen's relative inactivity in cabinet affairs reinforced the idea that Bennett operated a "one-man government". The idea grew that the temperamental Bennett could not work with men of great abilities and the critics could cite Meighen as an example. However their relationship during the Bennett years of power indicates that Bennett was not nearly as rigid and authoritarian as many believed. Bennett gave Meighen almost unlimited freedom as Senate leader and his flexibility in accepting amendments to his own bills indicates that he was not domineering Arthur Meighen. Similarly in Meighen's role as a cabinet advisor, Bennett did not appear as the overbearing leader. Bennett was willing to give Meighen more influence in government affairs, to listen to his proposals and to accept some of his recommendations. Meighen's influence was not as great as it could have been in the government primarily as a result of Meighen's attitude and his lack of availability.

Bennett's relationship with C. H. Cahan, his appointed Secretary of State, was also a complex affair. Like Meighen, Cahan's powerful intellect and legal experience provided a base for Bennett's continuous respect but in both these relationships there has been the charge that Bennett made insufficient use of these talented Conservatives. In the case of Cahan, their working relationship appeared reasonably stable and friendly for the most part

during Cahan's term of office. Cahan used to receive friendly birthday wishes from Bennett and they always tended to applaud his great talents.³⁴ Other letters often refer to Bennett's "deep appreciation" or gratitude for all the work that Cahan had done.³⁵ This praise was significant for other cabinet ministers like R. J. Manion felt that they received far too little satisfaction from the prime minister. R. K. Finlayson believed that Cahan was among the very few cabinet colleagues who always held Bennett's respect and unwavering confidence. Apparently he admired Cahan's professional legal status and intellect.³⁶

This feeling however, did not mean that they were always in harmonious accord. After the 1930 election, Cahan preferred to be Minister of Justice and felt that his legal standing and political prominence in Quebec entitled him to this portfolio. Bennett, who wanted Hugh Guthrie in this position, notified Cahan to accept or reject the position of Secretary of State within a couple of hours. Cahan grudgingly accepted the post.³⁷ However this early disagreement did not appear to have unduly hampered their working

³⁴PAC, C. H. Cahan Papers, Vol. 1, "Correspondence Feb. 1926 - May 1938, "R. B. Bennett to C. H. Cahan, Oct. 30, 1929.

³⁵Ibid., Sept. 19, 1930 and July 27, 1936.

³⁶PAC, Finlayson, p. 347.

³⁷Ibid., pp. 120-1.

relationship and Cahan was given considerable freedom within his department.

Bennett's genuine respect for Cahan and his need for continued Montreal support were important reasons for allowing the Secretary of State to assume a rather independent attitude on several important occasions. Cahan was always considered a strong regional representative. He looked after the provincial interests of Quebec in general and of English-speaking Montreal in particular.³⁸ Some scholars have been rather critical of Bennett's treatment of Quebec³⁹ but Cahan worked hard on its behalf. Le Devoir lauded Cahan for his efforts at resisting the "near-dictatorship" of Bennett.⁴⁰ On other questions, such as reciprocity with the United States, Cahan took a rather independent position against the prevailing Bennett mood.⁴¹

Although the Prime Minister was extremely critical of Cahan's attitude towards his reform legislation early

³⁸PAC, Bourassa Papers, reel 721, L. Dupire to C. H. Cahan, Oct. 5, 1931, p. 82. Dupire, after having criticized the federal government's treatment of Quebec interests in a news article in Le Devoir, acknowledges in this letter the work done by Cahan on Quebec's behalf.

³⁹Marc Laterreur, "R. B. Bennett et le Quebec: Un Cas d'Incomprehension Reciproque", Canadian Historical Assoc., Historical Papers 1969. Laterreur takes a very critical position of Bennett's handling of Quebec interests.

⁴⁰PAC, Arthur Meighen Papers, Vol. 173, "Meighen Personal, 1932", Le Devoir, Feb. 4, 1931.

⁴¹PAC, Dafoe Papers, Reel 76, Grant Dexter to John W. Dafoe, Nov. 30, 1934.

in 1935, he continued to support and defend Cahan on other questions. In particular, Bennett sided with Cahan for his actions which contributed to the resignation of Harry Stevens from the cabinet on the issue of the Price Spreads Commission. It had been alleged that Cahan was one of the chief conspirators against Bennett and the government in an effort to halt the investigation of the Dominion Textile Company by the Price Spreads Commission. It was charged that Cahan, as chief counsel and legal advisor to Sir Charles Gordon, head of the Dominion Textile Co. and also President of the Bank of Montreal, had instigated the cabinet conflict which brought about Stevens' resignation.⁴² Cahan and Sir George Perley caused the resignation by stating in council that Stevens should apologize to the injured parties in the report. The statement was then released to Charles Bishop of Southam Press.⁴³ Stevens later contended that it was this breach of party solidarity on the part of Cahan which had brought about the breaking of ties between himself and Bennett.⁴⁴

Bennett, nevertheless, quickly placed the blame for the cabinet rift on Stevens. The Prime Minister contended

⁴²UNBL, Bennett Papers, Reel 241, Robert Reid to R. B. Bennett, Nov. 4, 1934, pp. 297472-6.

⁴³PAC, Finlayson, p. 273.

⁴⁴Hansard, 1935, Vol. III, p. 2673.

that the records were contradictory to the published remarks of the Minister of Trade and Commerce. Bennett defended Cahan by asserting that there was no evidence to suggest a conspiracy had developed within the cabinet or outside of it. He claimed that nothing was done "clandestinely".⁴⁵ As Stevens continued to publicize the work of the Price Spreads Commission and as the Bennett-Stevens relationship continued to deteriorate, Bennett never seriously attempted to stop the developing feud between Cahan and Stevens over the Price Spreads Investigation. Consequently, it erupted in the House of Commons in April, 1935.⁴⁶ Bennett continued his support of Cahan for fighting the Prime Minister's battle against Stevens.⁴⁷

In his capacity as Secretary of State, Cahan had many different tasks to perform for the portfolio's jurisdiction varies and can be extended into various areas depending upon the volition of the Prime Minister. One of Cahan's most important duties was to function as the main medium of communication between the federal government and the provinces. Bennett therefore often sought advice from the

⁴⁵UNBL, Bennett Papers, Reel 241, R. B. Bennett to Robert Reid, Nov. 9, 1934, pp. 297506-7.

⁴⁶Hansard 1935, Vol. III, p. 2672.

⁴⁷PAC, Dafoe Papers, Reel 77, Grant Dexter to John W. Dafoe, June 23, 1935.

the legally-minded Cahan on the subject of Dominion-Provincial relations.⁴⁸

In January of 1931, Cahan drafted various sections concerning Canada that he wanted embodied in the Statute of Westminster. He presented them to the Prime Minister and asked that they be submitted to the governments of the provinces for consideration.⁴⁹ Bennett expressed his great appreciation for Cahan's efforts in drafting the clauses⁵⁰ and stated that an Inter-Provincial conference would be called for the Easter recess of Parliament. Bennett indicated his respect for Cahan and his need of consultative advice from the Secretary of State by expressing his desire to meet with Cahan to discuss the agenda for the coming Conference. Bennett also told Cahan that he would be relying on his assistance during the Conference to discuss the Statute of Westminster.⁵¹

As a legislator, one of Cahan's greatest ~~tasks~~ was concerned with the Companies Act to which he made major amendments in 1931. This was followed by a Companies

⁴⁹Ibid., Reel 101, C. H. Cahan to R. B. Bennett, Jan 23, 1931, pp. 115, 744-5.

⁵⁰Ibid., R. B. Bennett to C. H. Cahan, Feb. 21, 1931, pp. 115, 760.

⁵¹Ibid., Feb. 14, 1931, p. 115759.

Creditors Arrangement Act in 1933 and a more thorough reform and consolidation in 1934. This latter reform included provisions for the protection of the public and for the better administration of the business of Dominion companies.⁵² More Companies Act legislation was also introduced in 1935.

C. H. Cahan was very heavily involved in all of these important bills. Even in the rather radical Companies Creditors Arrangement Act of 1933 which was designed to invalidate existing bankruptcy legislation, Cahan played a key role by ably piloting the bill through the House of Commons.⁵³ Although Cahan was not one of the most prominent cabinet members in the debates of the House of Commons, Bennett did rely on him fairly extensively to steer the Secretary of State's own legislation through the house. Cahan generally did this fairly competently although he was not conceded to be a very good speaker.

Again in 1934, the Prime Minister depended on Cahan "to take control" of the drafting of the Companies Act for discussion at the Conference with the Provincial premiers on January 17. Bennett had arranged to have W. K. Fraser, a Toronto lawyer work closely with Cahan in the preparation of

⁵²PAC, Cahan Papers, Vol. 6, "Speeches, 1933-39", Address at Windsor Hall, Montreal, Sept. 12, 1935, pp. 15-16.

⁵³Hansard, 1933, Vol. IV, p. 4090 and pp. 4194-5 and Vol. V, pp. 4722-4.

the important draft. Bennett wrote in a letter to the Secretary of State that Cahan's wide experience and practical knowledge equipped him to handle the situation better than anyone else he knew. Having given this praise Bennett proceeded to outline the necessary provisions to be included in the draft. He wanted to eliminate the sale of public securities without a clear statement indicating their backing in the form of assets.⁵⁴

With this directive, Bennett left the work to Fraser and Cahan and directed Fraser to communicate directly with Cahan.⁵⁵ Fraser and Cahan were quite active in drafting the legislation and found that the subject was more involved than they first believed. So dedicated and meticulous was Cahan, that major parts of the bill were redrafted and many others revised, although Fraser originally understood that only a revision of part one of the bill was needed. They spent more than eight days in Ottawa revising and publishing the bill which Cahan wanted completed as quickly as possible to have it ready for first reading in the House.⁵⁶

⁵⁴UNBL, Bennett Papers, Reel 85, R. B. Bennett to C. H. Cahan, Jan 4, 1934, pp. 96810-281.

⁵⁵Ibid., R. B. Bennett to W. K. Fraser, Jan. 4, 1934, p.26810-282.

⁵⁶Ibid., W. K. Fraser to R. B. Bennett, May 18, 1934, pp. 96810-323.

After the act was passed, R. C. Matthews, Minister of National Revenue complained that it was failing to work properly.⁵⁷ The Revenue department was perturbed that the collection of sales taxes was being hampered by the new Act.⁵⁸ Bennett, however, quickly came to the defence of his Secretary of State and placed the blame on the officials of the department of National Revenue for interpreting the Statute erroneously.⁵⁹

In his last year in office however Bennett no longer gave to Cahan the complete control of the Companies Act legislation. Bennett was much more reform-minded at this time than his Secretary of State. Bennett still consulted his minister on the subject but he was influenced more significantly by other sources. Grant Dexter received a report from Norman MacLeod, an intimate friend of Cahan, that Bennett had sent a book on company law written by F. W. Wegenast to the office of Secretary of State and asked for a memorandum on it. Bennett wanted to amend the Companies Act and announce it publicly in his January New Deal addresses of 1935. Cahan refuted the book and argued strongly against the elimination of non-par-value stock.

⁵⁷Ibid., R. C. Matthews to C. H. Cahan, Dec. 19, 1934, p. 96810-366.

⁵⁸Ibid., C. H. Cahan to R. C. Matthews, Dec. 21, 1934, p. 96810-367.

⁵⁹Ibid., R. B. Bennett to R. C. Matthews, Dec. 22, 1934, pp. 96810-370.

Bennett later congratulated him on the memo and stated that the act should stay as it was. However, on the day of the broadcast Bennett telephoned Cahan and denounced him for issuing such a faulty memo. He claimed that Cahan was trying to balk his reform policy, but he would not be deterred and that if Cahan would not follow his lead, Cahan knew that retirement was the proper course to follow.⁶⁰

Bennett's transformation was the result of the efforts of his brother-in-law, W. G. Herridge and R. K. Finlayson, Bennett's personal secretary. Finlayson had consulted with Wegenast on the "non par stock" issue and was able to convince Bennett to issue the statement in his broadcast that he would abolish non par stock. Bennett also included the suggestion in the amendments to the Dominion Companies Act.

Finlayson claimed that Cahan was furious about the decision, and at a Bennett banquet following the radio address had asked Finlayson: "Do you know that that damn fool Prime Minister of yours doesn't know any more about company law than a sixteen year old child?"⁶¹

In spite of these outbursts by the two men at this crucial point, their feelings soon moderated towards each other. Although Cahan continued to be in the centre of

⁶⁰
PAC, Dafoe Papers, Reel 77, Grant Dexter to John W. Dafoe, Jan. 14, 1935.

⁶¹
PAC, Finlayson, pp. 266-7.

certain cabinet disturbances, Bennett still appeared quite affable to his Secretary of State⁶² and they continued to stand together in their criticisms of the rebellious Harry Stevens.

Bennett fully recognized the good work of his Secretary of State in a number of fields. It was Cahan who concluded detailed adjustments of claims and accounts with former enemy and neutral countries during the First World War. He prepared and procured amendments to the Copyright Act and Naturalization Act as well as the Patent and Civil Service Acts. He successfully completed an Act to Provide For the Organization of a Bureau of Translations and produced a new improved Patent Act in 1935.⁶³

C. H. Cahan was also quite influential in matters outside of his own department, particularly in the area of foreign affairs. Although Bennett had taken the portfolio of Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs for himself, he really devoted little of his time to it. W. G. Herridge and Dr. O. D. Skelton, his trusted non-political advisors, were given considerable roles of importance in this area along with Cahan himself. Cahan was relied upon heavily in this area and Bennett permitted him considerable freedom of action in it.

⁶²PAC, Dafoe Papers, Reel 77, Grant Dexter to John W. Dafoe, June 3, 1935.

⁶³PAC, Cahan Papers, Vol. 6, "Speeches, 1933-39", Address at Windsor Hall, Montreal, Sept. 12, 1935, pp. 16-17.

In 1932, Cahan was appointed by Bennett to attend and speak at the Geneva Conference as Canada's representative. In a telegram from Bennett as Secretary of State for External Affairs, Cahan was told to support the League wholeheartedly and to support sanctions against the Japanese for invading Manchuria. Herridge, who was the Canadian Minister to Washington, had a part in drafting the telegram. Cahan, however, did not follow the instructions, and instead, he stated that Japan had some justification in establishing the satellite state of Manchukuo. According to Finlayson, Cahan was influenced by Sir John Simon, head of the British delegation who argued against taking any step that could possibly initiate war.⁶⁴ Cahan's deviation from the advice given in the telegram startled some members of the Conservative party. R. J. Manion who was also selected by Bennett to attend the conference stated that he did " . . . not know what authority he had to make this speech, probably none as this is his usual way of doing things".⁶⁵ Herridge was placed in a more difficult position for he had indicated to the Americans that Canada would support sanctions against Japan. For a time, Herridge felt that Cahan's address undermined his

⁶⁴PAC, Finlayson, pp. 296-7.

⁶⁵PAC, Manion Papers, Vol. 18, "Family Correspondence", R. J. Manion to James Manion, Dec. 28, 1932.

usefulness in Washington and he contemplated resigning his post. When Bennett was told of the situation by R. K. Finlayson, he was unperturbed and calmly defended Cahan's speech as a good one.⁶⁶ Bennett then proceeded to defend Cahan's speech in the house by claiming that it showed no real departure from the general principles of foreign policy which he as Prime Minister had previously indicated to the house.⁶⁷ Herridge soon found his way out of his difficulty and he never resigned his post.

In 1933, Cahan prepared and procured a new trade agreement as well as a Convention with France which concerned the rights of Nationals and Commercial and Shipping affairs. He had personally negotiated these as a representative of the federal government.⁶⁸ Bennett praised Cahan for his diligence and acknowledged that Cahan had been working entirely alone in meeting agricultural and wine manufacturing experts and had been working day and night in an effort to finalize the agreement.⁶⁹ Cahan thus

⁶⁶PAC, Finlayson, p. 297.

⁶⁷Hansard, 1932-3, Vol. II, p. 1664.

⁶⁸PAC, Cahan Papers, Vol. 6, "Speeches, 1933-39", Address at Windsor Hall, Montreal, Sept. 12, 1935, p. 16.

⁶⁹UNEL, Bennett Papers, Reel 310, Address to Study Club, May 15, 1933, p. 388155.

proved to be a valuable colleague in helping the Prime Minister in the Foreign Affairs portfolio. He was also called upon to assume the post of Acting Minister of National Revenue as a result of E. B. Ryckman's illness. Cahan conscientiously worked at the portfolio and closely consulted with the Prime Minister.⁷⁰

Cahan's influence on the Prime Minister in such matters as Canadian tariffs was speculated upon by many during this period. R. K. Finlayson, one of Bennett's closest aides, minimized his influence while men like Harry Stevens and John W. Dafoe were firmly convinced that Cahan's opinions carried a lot of weight in tariff decisions. Finlayson claimed that the people who credited Cahan with influencing Bennett's attitude towards protective tariffs seemed to overlook the fact that Bennett himself was a staunch protectionist.⁷¹ This interpretation can certainly be substantiated by Bennett's election promise in 1930 to blast his way into the markets of the world. It is also illustrated by the staunch adherence to high tariff policies in the early years of the Bennett regime. However, Dafoe and Stevens could point to specific instances such as the Imperial Economic Conference at Ottawa in 1932 where

⁷⁰Ibid., Reel 234, C. H. Cahan to R. B. Bennett, May 5, 1931.

⁷¹PAC, Finlayson, p. 118.

Cahan did play a part in wringing some major tariff concessions from the Prime Minister. As a lawyer in Montreal Cahan had been legal advisor for some rich clients which included some leading textile manufacturers in the city.⁷² Dafoe and Stevens contended that Cahan, as an influential member of council, was able to convince Bennett that protection was still desirable for the textile industry. John Stevenson as representative of the Times of London, claimed that A. O. Dawson of Canada Cottons Ltd. had talked to Bennett during the conference and that Bennett was ready to disregard the pleas of the manufacturers. He also claimed that Cahan was not deserting their interests and that forces were "being mustered for the fray".⁷³ Dafoe noted that Cahan was continually and openly consulting with the textile interests. At the end of the conference, the textile leaders believed that Cahan had saved them.⁷⁴ Harry Stevens contended that Bennett had wilted under pressure from Cahan and the head of the Canada Cotton Company.⁷⁵ After the

⁷²Ibid.

⁷³PAC, Dafoe Papers, Reel 76, John Stevenson to John W. Dafoe, July 15, 1932.

⁷⁴Ibid., John Dafoe note re: Ottawa Conference of 1932, n.d.

⁷⁵PAC, Stevens Papers, 10th Interview, June 28, 1966, p. 15.

textile tariffs with the British had been agreed to by the British, Bennett changed the terms of the agreement. In the autumn of 1932, he introduced a bill in the house which increased the tariff on cotton and woollens above the agreed rate. Stevens stated that Bennett consulted no one on the question except C. H. Cahan and one or two other cabinet ministers who looked after the big interests.⁷⁶

It is evident that the Cahan-Bennett working relationship was a fairly effective one. Cahan proved to be a valuable colleague who worked hard in his department. Cahan was active in producing new legislation and revising old statutes largely on his own without any great interference from Bennett. Bennett's most significant intervention early in 1935 on the non par stock issue was an understandable one, for it really amounted to a major policy decision, a decision to push ahead vigorously with a dynamic reform policy. This program required a great deal of party unanimity and Bennett could be expected to be blunt on this occasion.

On the whole, Cahan won Bennett's respect and could take independent action from time to time and receive Bennett's support. He won a great deal of praise from the Prime Minister who had a reputation for seldom giving any.

⁷⁶Ibid., p. 16.

He was consulted by Bennett on such important matters as tariffs and Dominion-Provincial Relations and was even delegated a considerable amount of work from Bennett's own portfolio in Foreign Affairs. Although he felt that his influence was not as great as it should have been,⁷⁷ this can probably be attributed to the desires of a very ambitious man.

⁷⁷PAC, Finlayson, p. 119.

IV

THE EVIDENCE OF H. H. STEWENS

While Arthur Meighen and C. H. Cahan were two prominent Tories who failed to achieve the type of prominence and to receive the high degree of favourable publicity that they would have liked during the Bennett administration, another Conservative, Harry H. Stevens, Minister of Trade and Commerce, was able to gain the political spotlight and remove himself from the shadow of R. B. Bennett. In many respects, Harry Stevens contrasted strongly with Meighen and Cahan. Stevens handled a more important portfolio, particularly in the period of economic depression and while handling these responsibilities developed a bitter enmity with C. H. Cahan. Stevens' working relationship with R. B. Bennett was also the most explosive one in the cabinet. Because of these circumstances the Bennett-Stevens working

relationship must be analysed to assess the extent of the charge of one man government against Bennett.¹

Like Arthur Meighen, Harry Stevens' relationship with R. B. Bennett was a complicated one and went back many years to the period from 1911 to 1917 when they sat next to each other in the House as party colleagues. In the opinion of Stevens, their relations differed on matters concerning the Canadian Pacific Railway and Stevens claimed that Bennett resented his attitude very much.² In 1914, when Bennett had broken party ranks to vote against a forty-five million dollar guarantee of debentures issued by the Canadian Northern Railway, Stevens actively spoke in defence of Sir Thomas White, the Minister of Finance, who presented

¹Professor J. R. H. Wilbur has done a considerable study of Harry Stevens, his resignation and the formation of the Reconstruction Party. Some of his works include: The Bennett Administration 1930-1935 (Ottawa: Canadian Historical Association Booklet 24, 1969). The Bennett New Deal: Fraud or Portent? (Toronto: Copp Clark, 1968). "H. H. Stevens and the Reconstruction Party", Politics of Discontent, Ramsay Cook, C. Brown and C. Berger, eds. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1967). "R. B. Bennett as a Reformer", Historical Papers, 1969, Canadian Historical Association. "H. H. Stevens and R. B. Bennett, 1930-34", Canadian Historical Review, XLIII, (March 1962). This chapter owes much to the careful work of Professor Wilbur. Because of his study, this chapter deals solely with aspects of the Bennett-Stevens relationship which are concerned with the charge of "one-man government".

²PAC, Stevens Papers, Vol. 163, "Seventh Interview-June 7, 1966", p. 1.

the issue to the House of Commons.³ Stevens supported the approach taken by both the Borden and Meighen governments' railway policies that eventually created the Canadian National Railway. Stevens contended that this issue represented a sharp cleavage between himself and Bennett for Bennett resented Stevens' attitude on the railway policies.⁴

Nevertheless, their differences of opinion on railways could not have been taken personally by Stevens. When Meighen resigned in 1926 at a meeting of ex-cabinet ministers, Stevens took the position that Bennett should take the leadership of the party but was overruled and Hugh Guthrie was made temporary leader for one year until a leadership convention could be called. In the meantime, Stevens, working for Bennett's selection as party leader, visited the headquarters of the provincial Conservative organizations in Canada.⁵ The Bennett-Stevens' relationship at this stage certainly was quite good and Bennett expressed his gratitude at the convention soon after his selection as party leader was announced. Stevens contended that Bennett walked over to him, shook his hand and said, "Harry, I owe this entirely

³Ibid., p. 2.

⁴Ibid., p. 6.

⁵Ibid., "Ninth Interview - June 14, 1966", p. 24.

to you. . . . You are the one that put me here." Bennett apparently repeated the statement later, on several occasions.⁶ From that time until the emotional differences over the Price Spreads Affair, Stevens claimed that he was always treated with every consideration by Bennett.⁷

In the 1930 general federal election, Stevens continued to work actively for the party and his leader by going on an extensive speaking tour. As the leading Conservative speaker for Western Canada, he campaigned from Fort William and Port Arthur to the coast of British Columbia. As a result he lost his own seat of Vancouver Centre, largely because he was absent for almost all of his own campaign.

Bennett gratefully acknowledged Stevens' services and wanted Stevens to stay in the House. Earlier in 1929 when Stevens had tendered his resignation as an M.P., for business reasons, Bennett made a personal plea for Stevens to reconsider, to withdraw his resignation, carry on as best he could, and run again in the next election.⁸ After Stevens lost his seat in the 1930 election, Bennett once again indicated his desire to have his services. This time he

⁶Ibid., p. 25.

⁷Ibid., p. 26.

⁸Ibid., "Tenth Interview - June 28, 1966", p. 2, and also found in "1955 interview with H. H. Stevens".

wanted Stevens in the cabinet as Minister of Trade and Commerce and found a seat for him in Kootenay East. This was accomplished by enticing a successfully elected conservative member to step down in his favour.⁹ By this action Bennett indicated that he had dismissed all of his past differences with Stevens and was grateful for Stevens' work on his behalf. It also indicated that Bennett was aware that he would require and have to rely on capable men to carry on the business of government. At this stage the two colleagues enjoyed a very good relationship and Stevens maintained/^{later} that any difference which developed between himself and Bennett occurred as a result of Stevens' activity in the Price Spreads Committee and Bennett's criticisms of some of its procedures. Stevens felt that Bennett was very considerate of his views until the Price Spreads issue developed.¹⁰

Harry Stevens, as Trade and Commerce Minister, held one of the most problematic portfolios in the cabinet due to the great collapse of world trade throughout the 1930's. Because Canada is more affected than most countries by fluctuations in world trade, the situation in Canada was particularly serious and in such a situation the Prime

⁹Ibid., "1955 Interview with H. H. Stevens", p. 148 and also found in "Ninth Interview-June 14, 1966", p. 28.

¹⁰Ibid., "Tenth Interview", pp. 1-2.

Minister would be more interested and active in the affairs of the Department of Trade and Commerce than under normal conditions.

Nevertheless, in the general business of running his department Stevens contended that he had very little interference. He attributed this to his ability to stand firmly against the Prime Minister when he knew he was right. Bennett encountered this trait shortly after Stevens accepted his portfolio. The incident occurred when Bennett phoned Stevens to tell him that a complaint had been filed by a prominent steel manufacturer against Canada's trade commissioner in New Zealand. Bennett wanted the commissioner fired, but after Stevens checked his files and found that the commissioner was not at fault, he did nothing more. Three weeks later Bennett inquired whether the commissioner had been replaced and received the reply from Stevens that there had been no dismissal because the commissioner had followed the correct course of action. Stevens contended that Bennett was quite arrogant when he stated, "Mr. Stevens, I am the Prime Minister of Canada, and as the Prime Minister I instruct you to dispose of the services of this man Cole in New Zealand." Stevens told Bennett that he would do as instructed and he wrote a letter to Cole stating that he was to be released from his position under instructions from the Prime Minister although in Stevens' opinion he had fulfilled his duties

commendably and should not be retired. Stevens then sent the letter to Bennett with a memo stating that the letter for the removal of Cole was enclosed within and that it was left to Bennett to forward the letter. Bennett never sent the letter and Stevens claimed that the incident ended any further interference by the Prime Minister in his department.¹¹

Prior to this occasion, Bennett had also suggested that Stevens should dismiss Dr. H. M. Tory from the government's services on the Research Council of Canada. Stevens vigorously defended the man and refused to make any change. Bennett did not press the matter and gave in to his minister. However when Stevens resigned from the cabinet, Dr. Tory was relieved from duty very shortly.¹²

Stevens claimed that Bennett and he worked together fairly well, with Stevens labouring at the formulation of policy in his trade and commerce department and presenting it to the Prime Minister for approval as is normal practice. However, Bennett was the one who usually made the important public announcements concerning changes in external trade policy. This was part of the Bennett style and it was one factor which tended to strengthen the public image of one-man government.¹³

¹¹ Ibid., "Eighth Interview - June 9, 1966", pp. 8-9.

¹² Ibid., "1955 Interview", p. 197.

¹³ Ibid., "Tenth Interview", p. 5.

Bennett also introduced some bills which normally could be considered the responsibility of the Minister of Trade and Commerce. These bills included the Tariff Appointment Act and Australian Trade Agreement. Bennett also often answered the opposition questions which pertained to the Trade and Commerce department. There were other indications that Bennett was playing a heavy role in the department when Fernand Rinfret, a Liberal M.P. observed in 1931, that one of Stevens' own department members returning from a Chinese trade mission, had reported directly to the Prime Minister instead of going through the minister responsible.¹⁴

To many observers, this was typical one-man government. Bennett, appeared to be doing the work of another cabinet minister. There was a great deal of justification for Bennett's involvement, however, for the Canadian trading picture was deteriorating rapidly and the prosperity of the country depended upon improved trade. Furthermore Bennett had ridden to power in 1930 on the pledge of ending unemployment and "blasting" his way into the world's markets. Stevens loyally defended his leader's actions as being one of cooperation with him rather than interference.¹⁵

¹⁴Hansard, Vol. II, May 14, 1931, p. 1618.

¹⁵Ibid.

Certainly Stevens was involved with meaningful work in his department. One of his prime concerns was the stimulation of foreign trade and he worked energetically in this regard. His approach was an attempt to diversify Canada's trading pattern. Instead of concentrating upon American trade, his objective was to increase Imperial trade with Britain and her colonies. Bennett, as a strong imperialist, agreed with this approach. Therefore Stevens actively sought to direct Canadian businessmen to deal directly with the countries that happened to be the primary producers of products such as coffee, cocoa, and certain citrus fruits. He realized that a good many of these products were being purchased from the United States because it was more convenient to make business contacts there than in the Caribbean, Africa or Australia. The trade minister found that it was often financially better to deal directly with these countries once good business contacts were made with them, so he actively encouraged these businessmen to make the effort to develop these contacts.

Stevens also discovered that in order to develop trade elsewhere, he had to persuade the various countries to change their shipping practices. He claimed that the Australians produced better dried fruit than the Californians but the trade was negligible because Australian packing methods were inferior. Stevens, therefore contacted the Australians, made an arrangement with them, and then encouraged

the Canadian importers to deal more with Australia. As a result, trade with these other countries increased and it was a significant step in his effort to diversify the Canadian trade pattern.¹⁶

One of the major problems that the energetic Trade and Commerce minister encountered was a tremendous wheat surplus of about 480 million bushels in 1931. This seriously depressed the price of wheat for the western farmers.¹⁷

The Board of Grain Commissioners, the body responsible for the marketing of Canadian wheat, was under Stevens' department and had to report directly to the minister.¹⁸ Stevens worked closely with the Board and also met various foreign officials in an effort to solve the wheat problem. The low prices remained a problem throughout the Bennett years but Stevens and the Board of Grain Commissioners eventually did reduce the surplus considerably.¹⁹

Stevens was very energetic in his efforts at promoting trade and was not hesitant in making some contentious or irregular suggestions before council in the pursuit of his objectives. In 1931, he advocated that a large supply

¹⁶PAC, Stevens Papers, Vol. 163, "Tenth Interview", pp. 8-9.

¹⁷Ibid., "1955 Interview", p. 127.

¹⁸Ibid., "Eleventh Interview - July 12, 1966", p. 7.

¹⁹Ibid., "1955 Interview", p. 127.

of wheat should be shipped to China in return for a fifteen year term payment. Bennett did not approve of the transaction and it was never implemented.²⁰ On another occasion, however, Stevens took venturesome action, and ingratiated himself with the Prime Minister. On this occasion, Robert Weir, the Minister of Agriculture had been corresponding with a representative from a trading organization that was conducting business with the Soviet Union. Weir wanted to trade Canadian cattle for Soviet aluminium to provide some relief for Canadian agriculturalists. However at the time of the Imperial Conference of 1932 Canada had an embargo against imported products from the Soviet Union. It was partly designed to increase the export of coal from Wales in an effort to promote Imperial trade, but E. B. Ryckman, the Minister of National Revenue had publicly claimed that the reason for the action was that the Soviet republic was an atheistic state. Weir consequently concluded his correspondence with the trading company because he feared that he was acting in conflict with the policy of the government. However, when Stevens was given a copy of the correspondence by the representative of the company, he took prompt action and showed the letters to Bennett. Bennett

²⁰Ibid.

was elated and heartily approved of Stevens' decisiveness.²¹ This was typical of Stevens' energy and willingness to advance possibly contentious ideas in a determined effort to solve a particular problem.

The attempt to build up stronger Imperial trading relations culminated in the Imperial Conference of 1930 in London and the Imperial Conference of 1932 in Ottawa. Because of the tremendous importance of foreign trade to Canada's economic prosperity and employment level, Bennett had to assume a strong and influential role at the Conferences. He relied heavily on these conferences to help pull Canada out of the depths of the depression. The situation was of such gravity that he could not rely solely on his Trade and Commerce Minister to carry the load. Bennett had to assume control on these occasions. Nevertheless, Harry Stevens was present at both conferences and played an active role at them.

The 1930 conference began on October 1, and lasted until November 14. Throughout the conference, Bennett, Stevens, Hugh Guthrie and Maurice Dupré were the Canadian cabinet members who normally attended all the important meetings.²² As well as attending these meetings, Stevens

²¹PAC, Finlayson, pp. 122-3.

²²UNBL, Bennett Papers, Reel 87, p. 99943.

also served on the Committee of Economic Co-operation.²³

At the conference Stevens proposed to the delegates that an effort by Britain, the United States and Canada should be made to help industrialize China through a program of technical and financial assistance. Bennett was not particularly enthusiastic over the idea but did allow Stevens to present the suggestion. Stevens claimed that it received considerable support from British authorities and they followed the suggestion after the conference was concluded. Stevens' suggestion was never pursued by the western powers. However, it was not Bennett who destroyed the scheme. It failed because the United States and France were at this time actively pursuing a policy of gold accumulation. The Stevens' suggestion was contradictory to the American policy and was therefore never implemented.²⁴

In the opinion of John E. Read, a Canadian representing the department of External Affairs, Stevens' influence with the Prime Minister declined considerably as a result of one particular meeting of the Canadian delegation which was held in the morning before the regular conference meetings. At this meeting, Stevens addressed the Canadian

²³Ibid., p. 99379.

²⁴PAC, Stevens Papers, "Tenth Interview", pp. 11-13 and "1955 Interview", p. 149.

delegation and advocated a free coinage of silver as a basis for currency in an effort to ease the economic problem.²⁵ Bennett was quite upset over his minister's proposal, for the question was one that had been debated and settled about one hundred years previously in England and for a generation in the United States. Bennett had no toleration for this type of economic thinking, and made his feelings clear after Stevens had concluded his speech.²⁶ Stevens and John Read both claimed that after that incident, Bennett ignored Stevens for a great deal of the remainder of the conference.²⁷ Bennett also proceeded to take Ned Rhodes, the Minister of Finance, to the 1933 World Economic Conference in London. Stevens did not accompany the Prime Minister on the occasion.²⁸ Nevertheless, Stevens, as a self-professed heretic on the subject of free silver, did continue to express his opinions publicly and Bennett proceeded to live with Stevens' ideas.²⁹ According to R. K.

²⁵PAC, John E. Read Interview, pp. 19-20. Read was an old family friend and claimed that Bennett was named after one of Read's uncles. Bennett's father had also worked in apprenticeship to Read's grandfather for four or five years. Read interview, pp. 7-8.

²⁶PAC, Finlayson, pp. 123-4.

²⁷PAC, John E. Read Interview, p. 21.

²⁸PAC, Finlayson, p. 124.

²⁹PAC, Stevens Papers, "Tenth Interview", p. 13.

Finlayson, Stevens was the most competent and industrious administrator in the Bennett cabinet.³⁰

Although Stevens had offended Bennett with his free silver speech in 1930, Bennett still heavily relied upon his services at the Ottawa Economic Conference of 1932. The conference was important for it was designed to promote new trade agreements among the Commonwealth countries. Stevens was placed in charge of supervising all the trade agreements between Canada and the other Dominions which included Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, Irish Free State and Rhodesia.³¹ Stevens, along with some of the leading Canadian civil servants met separately with each of these countries' representatives and negotiated their agreements. The New Zealand agreement was not completed at the conference however, but Stevens met with their officials several months later in Honolulu to complete the negotiations.³²

Bennett wanted to draft the British agreement himself and asked Stevens not to draft it. However, shortly before the conference was to begin, Bennett stated that

³⁰PAC, Finlayson, p. 122.

³¹PAC, Stevens Papers, "1955 Interview", p. 164.

³²Ibid., "Eleventh Interview", p. 2.

he was so busy that he had not been able to complete the draft and he asked Stevens to finish it. Stevens and his officials had to work throughout the weekend to complete the draft for the opening of the conference the next week.³³ He interviewed the British representatives from the steel and textile industries and discussed the list in the customs schedule which pertained to their products. Stevens also had a lengthy meeting with Britain's Minister of Customs and as a result of these interviews, Stevens and his aides were able to complete an agreement.

Bennett's main role at the Conference was to chair the meetings, and maintain their momentum. He also chaired the meetings of the Canadian ministers, coordinated their efforts and provided the necessary leadership. The actual negotiations of the details of the agreements were left almost entirely in the hands of Stevens.³⁴

Stevens acknowledged that Bennett did make several revisions to the British agreement after consultation with other sources. After an agreement had been reached with the British iron and steel manufacturers, Bennett, who was under pressure from Canadian iron and steel manufacturers

³³Ibid., "Tenth Interview", p. 15.

³⁴Ibid., "Eleventh Interview", pp. 1-2.

changed the written schedule and placed a tariff on large boiler plates. The British authorities were quite incensed with this action and Stevens resented the revisions. At the Conference, he refused to support Bennett's addition of duties on the boiler plates. Bennett disliked Stevens' lack of support, but Stevens felt committed to the initial agreement and would not modify his position.³⁵ After the conference had concluded and the House of Commons was in session, Bennett inserted another duty in the British agreement. Additional textile duties were included and C. H. Cahan was acknowledged as the influential cabinet minister behind this action.³⁶

Outside the jurisdiction of his own office, Stevens was equally as vigorous in advancing his ideas to his leader for approval. To combat unemployment, Stevens suggested that a fund should be created from which loan companies could draw to increase house building by private construction.³⁷ Bennett, who was still concerned about budgetary deficits in 1930 was not very impressed with the idea and asked where they would get the hundred million dollars.³⁸ Stevens

³⁵Ibid., "1955 Interview", p. 167.

³⁶Ibid., "Eleventh Interview", pp. 3-4 and also "Tenth Interview", pp. 16-17.

³⁷Ibid., "1955 Interview", p. 152.

³⁸Ibid., "Tenth Interview", p. 18.

constantly made suggestions throughout Bennett's term of office concerning the reduction of unemployment. Many of the New Deal reform policies had been suggested by Stevens in memorandum form months before the policies were announced.³⁹

Outside of this departmental work, Bennett found Stevens to be his most valuable cabinet colleague in the area of public relations and in defending the interests of the government. E. J. McMurray, a prominent Liberal, considered Stevens to be one of the top three debaters in parliament, along with Meighen and Bennett during the twenties and thirties. Through Stevens' period in the cabinet, he was one of Bennett's most capable spokesmen. He was said to have an ability to address parliament like a lawyer who was addressing a jury, and with a rather simple set of facts he could ably defend or attack as he pleased.⁴⁰ Stevens was very valuable to Bennett in parliament for the cabinet seriously lacked strong debating power.

Outside of the House of Commons, Bennett relied upon Stevens more than any other cabinet minister to speak to important groups throughout Canada. Bennett sent him into certain ridings to defend the Conservative cause in

³⁹PAC, Dafoe Papers, Reel 77, Grant Dexter to George Ferguson, Jan. 30, 1935.

⁴⁰PAC, Finlayson, p. 124.

important byelections when Bennett could not be present.⁴¹ Sometimes Stevens addressed the various organizations alone, while on other occasions he would headline a cabinet team at certain centres.⁴²

Throughout 1932 and 1933 in particular, Stevens performed the role of the main government speaker in Canada while Bennett was out of the country attending such affairs as the Washington Conference and World Economic Conference in his efforts to find a solution to the great depression. Although there were rumours in Ottawa that Stevens would have liked to be present at some of these conferences, his role at home was an important one for Bennett, his party and the country. While Bennett attended these conferences which offered rays of hope for the Canadian people, Stevens was attempting through his speeches to bolster the spirits of individual Canadians as well as revitalize his political party. He talked directly to the people, encouraging them to face the economic problems of the period. He also issued his own personal creed which outlined the principles upon which Stevens believed every average citizen should

⁴¹PAC, Manion Papers, Vol. 18, "Family Correspondence", R. J. Manion to James Manion, Oct. 5, 1932, and also Vol. 13, "Personal Correspondence 1930-1943", Harry Stevens to Drummond-Hay, Dec. 6, 1934.

⁴²Ibid., Vol. 18, "Family Correspondence", R. J. Manion to James Manion, Apr. 24, 1933.

act. The creed was published in the newspapers and then published again in both French and English by the government on coloured cardboard. The pamphlet was made available to anyone who requested it and Stevens contended there were over one hundred thousand personal requests. It was a significant attempt on Stevens' part to direct the minds of the people towards their responsibility to Canadian interests rather than towards their own personal problems during the difficult period.⁴³

Besides working diligently at his departmental work and performing other tasks for Bennett, Stevens was also active in committee work in the House. He played a very prominent role in the Select Standing Committee on Railways and continually pressed for railway expansion in British Columbia. He was also on the Committee when Sir Henry Thornton was replaced as President of the Canadian National Railway.⁴⁴ This was done in an attempt to solve some of the very serious economic railway difficulties which required a great deal of attention during the period.

It was Stevens' involvement in a parliamentary committee which eventually produced his dramatic resignation from the Bennett cabinet in the autumn of 1934.

⁴³PAC, Stevens Papers, "Tenth Interview", pp. 5-6.

⁴⁴D'Arcy Marsh, The Tragedy of Henry Thornton (Toronto: Macmillan, 1935), p. 139.

Stevens had been receiving a great deal of personal publicity for his leadership in the committee's work which was involved in investigating and publicizing the problem of unfair competition and the "sweatshop" conditions of various Canadian industries. For Bennett's critics, this open breach appeared as conclusive evidence that Bennett could not get along with any competent colleagues who tried to steal the limelight from himself.

The issue of conflict between the two men began to develop in the summer of 1933 while Bennett was involved in a series of international conferences. The Standing Committee on Agriculture and Colonization had reported to the House in May of 1933 that dairy businesses had been enjoying good profits while the milk farmers were not obtaining an equitable portion. Stevens was quite concerned about this injustice and recommended that the government should undertake reasonable supervision of the industry.⁴⁵ Stevens' interest in correcting the injustices was kindled once more when James Walsh, director of the Canadian Manufacturers' Association came to him and asked for government action to help over two hundred small Canadian manufacturers who were annoyed at their treatment received from large department and chain stores.⁴⁶ When Bennett was informed

⁴⁵Wilbur, "H. H. Stevens and R. B. Bennett, 1930-34", p. 5.

⁴⁶PAC, Stevens Papers, Eleventh Interview", p. 11.

of the situation, he claimed that it was a matter of provincial concern. Stevens, however, continued to inform him of the exploitation of certain workers in the clothing industries where the "sweating" system was practiced. He recommended to Bennett that the fair wage officers from the Department of Labour should investigate the situation in the factories which had government contracts.⁴⁷ Bennett was also informed about the "sweating" practices among the ladies' handbag manufacturers in Toronto.⁴⁸

The rift between the two men emerged after Bennett had asked Stevens to speak for him in Toronto to a convention of Canadian boot and shoe manufacturers on January 15, 1934.⁴⁹ At the convention, Stevens criticized the practices of the large department and chain stores for using their powers as mass buyers to apply pressure on the individual manufacturers and on the labourers in the clothing industry. This was fully publicized in the press and when Bennett arrived in Ottawa on January 17, he met a delegation from the T. Eaton Company which had some strong complaints against Stevens.⁵⁰ Consequently, Bennett told

⁴⁷Ibid., Vol. 14, "Correspondence 1930-1934", H.H. Stevens to R. B. Bennett, Sept. 6, 1933.

⁴⁸Ibid., Sept. 16, 1933.

⁴⁹PAC, Bennett Papers, Vol. 101, R. B. Bennett to H. H. Stevens, Oct. 26, 1934, p. 67,367.

⁵⁰Wilbur, "H. H. Stevens and R. B. Bennett, 1930-34", pp. 7-8.

Stevens that in the reports from the press he had gone "further in formulating policy, without reference to the head of the Government or his colleagues, than a Minister should go under sound constitutional practice".⁵¹ Bennett also wanted Stevens to refrain from making such outspoken statements. Stevens could not accept this and his resignation was tendered on January 19. Bennett's reaction was not one of the ruthless dictator who was out to chastise an errant minister. He expressed his sorrow and gave his apologies,⁵² perhaps for any unintentional slights. Bennett did not accept the resignation and conceded to Stevens' wishes that an investigation of the charges made in Toronto should be initiated. Although Bennett refused Stevens' request for a Royal Commission to look into the subject, Bennett did agree to create a Select Committee of the House to investigate the matter and publicly asked parliament to elect Stevens as Chairman of the Committee.⁵³ Stevens was told that his committee would have a free hand to secure evidence and make the necessary recommendations. Bennett

⁵¹PAC, Bennett Papers, Vol. 101, R. B. Bennett to H. H. Stevens, Oct. 26, 1934, p. 67367.

⁵²PAC, Stevens Papers, Vol. 133, File #1, "A Brief History of the Break. . . ." p. 1, and also found in "1955 Interview", p. 156.

⁵³PAC, Bennett Papers, Vol. 101, R. B. Bennett to H. H. Stevens, Oct. 26, 1934, pp. 67368-9.

later claimed that the committee did have this freedom of action, and that no effort was made to limit in any way the activities of the committee except to remind it on several occasions that the courts interpreted the subjects of contracts and price fixing as being under provincial jurisdiction.⁵⁴

In interviews twenty years later, Stevens contended that he, as chairman of the committee, did not receive the support from either Bennett or the cabinet, which had been pledged to him by the Prime Minister.⁵⁵ He claimed that this was particularly true after the committee had interviewed Stanley MacLean of Canada Packers.⁵⁶ In a letter to Charles Luke at the time of his resignation, he accused Bennett of taking "a critical and nagging attitude" towards his work on the committee and of complaining about expenditures and the cross-questioning of important business interests.⁵⁷ However, these statements are disturbingly inconsistent with the letter he wrote to Bennett four days after his second resignation. In this letter, he reviewed the lack of cabinet support and never attributed these

⁵⁴Ibid., p. 67369.

⁵⁵PAC, Stevens Papers, "1955 Interview", p. 161.

⁵⁶Ibid., "Tenth Interview", p. 2

⁵⁷Ibid., Vol. 64, File 84 (L-2), H. H. Stevens to Charles H. Luke, Jan. 29, 1935.

charges directly to Bennett. He did complain of the irritating criticisms but these were attributed to "a small minority of the Cabinet". He was also critical of one of the senior cabinet members who constantly asked, "What can you do about it anyway. (sic)"⁵⁸ It is an oddity that Bennett is not directly included in this letter with the accused cabinet ministers.

Yet, in his letter to Charles Luke, Stevens claimed:

And never once, at any time, down to the time of my resignation (a period of nine months) did Bennett support me, or encourage me, or help me in the slightest degree.⁵⁹

This statement is completely erroneous for there are definite indications of Bennett's support for Stevens' work during the session of the Standing Committee. From the first, Bennett acknowledged the difficulty of the committee's task but pledged that the government would do its best. He gave Stevens full credit for giving his "untiring attention" to the price spreads problem and acknowledged that the chain store situation was one of the worst evils.⁶⁰ As the Price Spreads Committee continued its investigations, Bennett

⁵⁸UNBL, Bennett Papers, Reel 226, H. H. Stevens to R. B. Bennett, Oct. 30, 1934, p. 277069.

⁵⁹PAC, Stevens Papers, Vol. 64, File 84 (L-2), H. H. Stevens to Charles H. Luke, Jan. 29, 1935.

⁶⁰UNBL, Bennett Papers, Reel 227, R. B. Bennett to J. A. MacDonald, Feb. 2, 1934, p. 277,233.

received more protests about Stevens' investigations, but Bennett defended the actions that were taken. He claimed that the government had to face the situation in the best possible way and could not afford to leave the country "exposed to the destructive influences of forces which it can neither control nor restrain".⁶¹ Not only was Bennett praising and defending Stevens before the public but he also personally congratulated Stevens and his committee for the work that they had accomplished on the tobacco investigations. This occurred in the latter weeks of the Committee's first session.⁶²

The charges made by Stevens against Bennett in the letter to Luke may be the product of the accumulated bitterness following his resignation. It appears that it was really the excessive needling by certain members in the cabinet and Bennett's failure to suppress them that caused Stevens' resignation from cabinet office. However, the Bennett-Stevens relationship did not deteriorate until the last three months before Stevens resignation, when the famed pamphlet was published.

Stevens certainly had his share of adversaries in the cabinet particularly from the wealthier and more

⁶¹Ibid., Reel 226, R. B. Bennett to E. W. Nesbitt, June 6, 1934, p. 275919.

⁶²Ibid., R. B. Bennett to H. H. Stevens, June 19, 1934, p. 276940.

business oriented elements. C. H. Cahan, the Secretary of State, was "no friend" of Stevens and was very critical of Stevens' committee work and led the opposition against it.⁶³ Sir George Perley, Minister-without-Portfolio, who became the acting Prime Minister whenever Bennett was absent, sided with Cahan against Stevens because he felt that Stevens' actions were contrary to the best interests of the party.⁶⁴ Other ministers such as R. C. Matthews, Minister of National Revenue and Robert Weir, Minister of Agriculture were acknowledged respectively as either being "definitely opposed" to Stevens' work⁶⁵ or being on very unfavourable terms with Stevens as a result of clashes on several occasions.⁶⁶ Prior to the Price Spreads Issue, E. B. Ryckman, Minister of National Revenue until his resignation on Dec. 1, 1933, was another business minded individual whom Stevens considered to be "definitely opposed" to him.⁶⁷ Stevens did not feel that Ryckman "was very much interested in human progress or social development. . . ." ⁶⁸

⁶³PAC, Stevens Papers, "Tenth Interview", pp. 4 and 11.

⁶⁴PAC, Finlayson, p. 118.

⁶⁵PAC, Stevens Papers, "Thirteenth Interview - July 28, 1966", p. 9.

⁶⁶Ibid., "Twelfth Interview - July 19, 1966", p. 10.

⁶⁷Ibid., "Thirteenth Interview", p. 9.

⁶⁸Ibid., "Twelfth Interview", p. 9.

This antagonism towards Stevens among certain members of the cabinet could be a partial explanation for Bennett's not giving Stevens the high level of enthusiastic support that he wanted on the Price Spreads Committee. Bennett knew the type of opposition from within the cabinet that could develop from an investigation of this kind and as a result could be expected to assume a more moderate position for the interests of party unity. Without Bennett's unqualified support, Stevens felt overpowered by the strong forces of dissent within the cabinet.

There are other indications that Bennett was not intending to undermine the work of the Committee for although the investigations aroused a lot of public interest, Bennett was in a position to end the inquiry when the parliamentary session ended on July 5, 1934; he did not take this course of action and instead submitted to Stevens and the recommendation of the Committee that a Royal Commission, headed by Stevens as chairman should continue the inquiry.⁶⁹ Up to this point Bennett was quite cooperative in allowing the committee to proceed without any significant interference.

On June 27, 1934, Stevens delivered a speech to the Conservative Study Club, a group of forty Conservative members of Parliament, on the topic of the Price Spreads

⁶⁹Wilbur, "H. H. Stevens and R. B. Bennett, 1930-34", p. 10.

Inquiry. During the speech, he proceeded to criticize the operations of Canada Packers and the Robert Simpson Company. Stevens also had printed copies made for absentee members. This was not irregular, for Stevens was merely addressing his party followers. The speech, however, changed the nature of the Bennett-Stevens personal relationship and Bennett's attitude towards the work on Price Spreads.

Stevens' distribution of the printed speech raised the ire of Bennett. The Liberal press, the Toronto Star and the Ottawa Citizen received copies of the speech and quoted briefly from the Stevens pamphlet. These publications caused C. L. Burton, the president of the Robert Simpson Co. to threaten to sue for libel if the publication was not suppressed. Stevens, in the final analysis, had to be faulted for not being more careful in distributing the pamphlets. Stevens claimed that he only wanted a few hundred copies printed. However, Chamberlain, a member of his own staff, supervised the task and three thousand were printed. James Muir, from the Bureau of Statistics edited and mimeographed the pamphlet and sent all but six copies back to Chamberlain. Muir claimed that he sent these copies which were not for publication to a few of Stevens' friendly newspaper editors. Muir contended that this was the usual practice according to Stevens' arrangement.

Bennett promptly contacted Stevens in Winnipeg and castigated him for the news releases. Stevens claimed that he had no knowledge that the pamphlet would be published.⁷⁰ Bennett wanted Stevens quickly to retrieve the issued pamphlets. However, on August 7, 1934, the Winnipeg Free Press published the entire pamphlet with an additional editorial entitled "The Pamphlet that was Suppressed".⁷¹ Bennett told Stevens that he did not want the pamphlet circulated for two reasons. Bennett claimed that it was "fundamentally unsound" for a Chairman of any Select Committee or Royal Commission to publicly discuss that Committee's proceedings before the final compilation of evidence. He had also heard that certain statements in the pamphlet were inaccurate.⁷² After Bennett investigated, he was convinced Stevens had been incorrect, and Bennett claimed that the inaccuracies were ". . . the cause of all this trouble".⁷³

With the publication of the Free Press articles, Bennett and the Government were placed in a very embarrassing position. However, Bennett did not autocratically

⁷⁰Ibid., pp. 11-12.

⁷¹Manitoba Free Press, Aug. 7, 1934.

⁷²PAC, Bennett Papers, Vol. 101, R. B. Bennett to H. H. Stevens, Oct. 26, 1934, pp. 67371-2.

⁷³UNBL, Bennett Papers, Reel 226, R. B. Bennett to Major W. W. Kennedy, Aug. 29, 1934, p. 277001.

proceed to replace Stevens as chairman of the Royal Commission. Bennett left Stevens virtually alone for three months.⁷⁴ The Prime Minister kept preoccupied with other matters and left for a Geneva meeting of the League of Nations. In the meantime, Stevens occupied himself as the chief Conservative speaker in a series of federal by-elections. He also continued his diligent study of the Price Spreads issue and became more aggressive in his research. He began a preliminary study of the textile industry despite the fact that this action was outside the terms of reference of his Royal Commission.⁷⁵

After allowing the conflict to rest for three months, Bennett reopened the matter on Oct. 25 at the first cabinet meeting upon his return from overseas. Bennett was still convinced that there were errors in the Stevens' pamphlet and asked Stevens what course he was wanting to take when the Royal Commission met within a week's time.⁷⁶ It was at this point that Stevens' cabinet adversaries led by C. H. Cahan called upon Stevens to do something to rectify the statements made by him in regard to Sir Joseph

⁷⁴PAC, Stevens Papers, Vol. 133, File #1, "A Brief History of the Break. . . .", p. 2.

⁷⁵Wilbur, "H. H. Stevens and R. B. Bennett, 1930-34", p. 15.

⁷⁶PAC, Bennett Papers, Vol. 101, R. B. Bennett to H. H. Stevens, Oct. 26, 1934, p. 67373.

Flavelle,⁷⁷ the former President of the Robert Simpson Company. These were the references that were believed to be inaccurate. C. H. Cahan led the criticism, but Bennett did not take any part in the conflict. After the meeting concluded, Cahan was supposed to have told Charles Bishop of Southam Press that Stevens had been asked to apologize to the injured people. This resulted in Stevens' immediate resignation,⁷⁸ but no evidence has been found to indicate that Bennett had pushed Stevens out of the cabinet and the chairmanship of the Price Spreads Commission.⁷⁹ Bennett appeared in a sociable mood as he talked to reporters after the meeting.⁸⁰ He also contended the Stevens' resignation was rather "strange" behaviour for he claimed that the meeting proceeded in a "most friendly manner".⁸¹

It would appear that the forces within the party as represented by Cahan and the various cabinet colleagues who were strongly opposed to Stevens' work on the Price Spreads Committee, were most responsible for Stevens'

⁷⁷PAC, Stevens Papers, "1955 Interview", p. 158.

⁷⁸Finlayson, p. 273.

⁷⁹Wilbur, "H. H. Stevens and R. B. Bennett, 1930-34", p. 14.

⁸⁰The Globe, Oct. 27, 1934.

⁸¹UNBL, Bennett Papers, Reel 226, R. B. Bennett to F. W. Turnbull, Nov. 8, 1934, p. 276392.

resignation from the cabinet. Bennett can not be considered overly rigid in his relationship with Stevens up to this point for he had submitted to some of Stevens' demands; he had congratulated Stevens for his work; he had praised and defended Stevens' work in front of others, and he did not arbitrarily demand Stevens' resignation for embarrassing the government. Stevens resented the fact that Bennett did not energetically promote the work of the Inquiry but action such as this on Bennett's part would only have created greater friction with a large group of cabinet ministers.

Once Stevens had resigned from the cabinet, the Bennett-Stevens relationship changed markedly. Bennett became increasingly rigid in his attitude towards Stevens. Bennett was quite irritated and never did make any serious attempts to get Stevens back into the fold. Stevens further embarrassed the government in his public speeches by minimizing the attitude of the government on the Price Spreads Commission. Finally Bennett rigidly told the party whip that Stevens should not be invited to the party caucus.⁸² This was done despite a great multitude of letters to Bennett after the resignation advocating Stevens' return into the cabinet and his retention within party ranks. Certain

⁸²PAC, Stevens Papers, Vol. 58, H. H. Stevens to A. J. Anderson, July 11, 1935.

cabinet members, led by R. J. Manion had also advocated the same.⁸³

Despite the severe rift between Bennett and Stevens, the Price Spreads Inquiry still continued with a new chairman. Bennett also agreed to an extension of the terms of reference of the Commission to include an investigation of textiles⁸⁴ and then pledged that the government would institute favourable legislation based upon its recommendations. When the Royal Commission tabled its report in the House, Bennett instructed his private secretary to give the recommendations of the report to the Justice department for drafting, as such legislation was believed to be under the constitutional jurisdiction of the federal government. The department drafted various bills, such as the amendments to the Companies Act, which were based upon the recommendations of the report.⁸⁵ Stevens felt however, that the government treated the recommendations "very lightly" and felt that the legislation based upon the Report was "entirely inadequate",⁸⁶ This viewpoint was inaccurate for

⁸³UNBL, Bennett Papers, Reel 350, R. J. Manion to R. B. Bennett, Jan. 21, 1935, p. 438685.

⁸⁴Wilbur, "H. H. Stevens to R. B. Bennett, 1930-34", p. 16.

⁸⁵PAC, Stevens Papers, Vol. 93, File 15B, Stevens' secretary to F. R. Bolton, Jan. 23, 1936.

⁸⁶PAC, Stevens Papers, Vol. 64, "Correspondence, 1935-1936", File Folder #84, H. H. Stevens to E. V. Lorraine, July 16, 1935.

the legislation proved to be overly ambitious. The resulting labour statutes which dealt with such matters as days of rest, hours of work and minimum wages were considered ultra vires of the federal government and were later declared unconstitutional by the courts.⁸⁷ Stevens' statement was true to the extent that the government often appeared to lack the driving enthusiasm for some of the reforms. This can be partially explained, however, by Bennett's long illness and absence from parliament shortly after his New Deal addresses were delivered in January of 1935. Without Bennett's forceful leadership, the progress of the reform legislation moved very slowly, for the cabinet members who were less enthused about the reforms now had greater influence in the government. It was during Bennett's illness that Cahan's amendments to the Companies Act came before parliament. Under the circumstances, Bennett did make an appreciable effort to implement some of the suggestions of the Price Spreads Commission and reduce some of the evils of the economic system.

Although the Bennett-Stevens relationship ended in a fiery rift which resulted in the formation of the Reconstruction Party, this was not the result of one-man government. Stevens conceded that their relationship had been quite good prior to the Price Spreads issue. In his

⁸⁷PAC, Finlayson, p. 282.

role as Minister of Trade and Commerce, he had done an enormous amount of departmental work behind the scenes and had been strong enough to resist the pressures of Bennett in his department. Bennett placed heavy reliance on him in parliamentary debate and gave him important responsibilities at the Imperial Economic conferences of 1930 and 1932, where in the latter he was delegated the responsibility of supervising all the major Canadian trade agreements. He was certainly one of the most active and important cabinet members in the Bennett government although at times, he was often frustrated at his failure to get many of his economic and employment suggestions accepted as government policy. Stevens' failure to get some of these measures passed can not be attributed solely to an intransigent Prime Minister, for many of his ideas were also an anathema to a variety of cabinet colleagues. The rift itself between Bennett and Stevens was very much the result of the rambunctious actions of Harry Stevens. He refused to compromise any of his principles on the Price Spreads issue and forged ahead of his leader and party colleagues. As a result, much of the responsibility for the break must be attributed to him.

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THE EVIDENCE OF R. J. MANION

Another important minister in the Bennett cabinet was R. J. Manion, Minister of Railways and Canals. Unlike Harry Stevens, Manion found that he could work satisfactorily under Bennett's leadership, despite the fact that Stevens and Manion were very much alike. Both men exhibited a dynamic fiery spirit as well as being more progressive in their thinking than most men in the cabinet. Manion was also Stevens' closest parliamentary friend. There were other characteristics which created a potential for conflict between Manion and Bennett. As a 1927 leadership rival to Bennett, Manion was an ambitious man who eventually was selected as Bennett's successor in 1938. Manion was also more adventuresome in his ideas and policies than Bennett and was not schooled in the affairs of private business. Because of these important differences between the two men, Manion becomes an important figure in the evaluation of Bennett's political leadership and the charge of one-man government.

Throughout the Bennett years of office from 1930 to 1935, there were several disturbances in the working relationship between Manion and Bennett. As early as late

1930 and early 1931, one Liberal M.P. contended that Manion and other cabinet ministers were feeling overshadowed in the government and were expressing their resentment on private occasions.¹ Grant Dexter, correspondent for the Manitoba Free Press also confirmed this with a report of the Ottawa "gossip" that a group of discontented ministers had met in Arthur Meighen's hotel room and Manion had talked very bitterly about the Prime Minister and stated that he was an impossible colleague.²

The most public clash between the two men, however, occurred in parliament on June 4, 1935. The power of the Bennett wrath was revealed to Dr. Manion at that time. It all began when the Railways Minister repudiated a criticism made by Mr. Justice Hyndman and questioned the dependability of the Hyndman report on unemployment conditions among ex-service men.³ Manion also stated that he hoped the rest of the report was more dependable.⁴ The clash which followed between Manion and Bennett, although

¹Norman Ward ed., A Party Politician: The Memoirs of Chubby Power (Toronto: MacMillan, 1966), p. 280.

²PAC, Dafoe Papers, Reel 75, Grant Dexter to John W. Dafoe, Jan. 11, 1931.

³PAC, Manion Papers, Vol. 98, "Press Clippings Scrapbook, 1935-37", Border Cities Star, June 5, 1935.

⁴Hansard, 1935, Vol. IV, p. 3257.

not part of regular proceedings, was heard by a number of people and reported by many of Canada's newspapers. Bennett created the disturbance by leaning over Hugh Guthrie, Minister of Justice, and by openly chastising his Railways Minister. The Prime Minister reportedly claimed that Manion's statements should have been made in council and not stated by a government member in public. Manion, reportedly retorted that he would make similar statements in cabinet or in the House as he saw fit and the Prime Minister could have his resignation if so desired.⁵ Bennett never asked for the resignation and two days later Manion stated that the incident was just one of these confrontations that occur periodically and which the papers fully publicize, but in reality amount to very little.⁶ Bennett's parliamentary outburst on this occasion was apparently quite typical of his character. One of Bennett's closest aides, Rod Finlayson described him as being "intensely masculine, momentarily giving way to his anger in explosive utterances".⁷

⁵PAC, Manion Papers, Vol. 98, "Press Clippings Scrapbook, 1935-37", Manitoba Free Press, June 5, 1935.

⁶Ibid., Vol. 12, "Personal Correspondence", R. J. Manion to Hon. W. H. Price, June 6, 1935.

⁷PAC, Finlayson, p. 345.

There are also other private indications that the relationship between the two men was a rather uneasy one. Manion in his diary described Bennett as being "very temperamental".⁸ They also came close to a blow-up over the issue of lowering interest rates in March of 1934.⁹

Despite the periodic grievances and outbursts of the two men, there is ample evidence to suggest that these disagreements were overcome and did not hamper their working relationship unduly. After the 1930 election, Bennett was quite complimentary to Manion.¹⁰ In July of 1931, Bennett picked up Manion and they spent a day at W. G. Herridge's summer home, paddling, swimming, rambling, and talking a bit about politics.¹¹ At the end of August they planned to motor up to Churchill together in Manion's car.¹² In February of 1932, Manion wrote that he and the Prime Minister were getting on well and that they had lunch

⁸PAC, Manion Papers, Vol. 105, "Diaries 1914-42", Feb. 5, 1933.

⁹Ibid., Vol. 18, "Family Correspondence", R. J. Manion to James Manion, Mar. 26, 1934.

¹⁰Ibid., Vol. 105, "Diaries 1914-42", Dec. 1930.

¹¹Ibid., Jul. 26, 1931.

¹²Ibid., Aug. 29, 1931.

together.¹³ Later in April of the same year Bennett attended a dinner honouring Dr. Manion, and in a response to the toast to "Canada", Bennett paid him high tribute.¹⁴ In November and throughout most of the administration, Manion received a special handwritten letter of birthday greetings from "the Chief". The letters were all very friendly and usually quite amusing.¹⁵ In May of 1933, Manion was happy about being appointed to go to the League Conference at Geneva.¹⁶ In January of 1935, Manion claimed that Bennett had been "exceedingly nice" to him although he had no complaints with the Prime Minister for just over two years.¹⁷

The Bennett-Manion relationship was thus one of comparative harmony with certain periods of turbulence resulting from two strong personalities working in proximity to each other. R. K. Finlayson held this viewpoint, for Manion was the type who would stand up to Bennett and fire back at him.¹⁸ Harry Stevens also contended that Bennett respected

¹³Ibid., Feb. 24, 1932.

¹⁴Ibid., Vol. 96, "Press Clippings Scrapbook", p. 81, Ottawa Journal, April 28, 1932.

¹⁵Ibid., Vol. 4, "Personal Correspondence", R. B. Bennett to R. J. Manion, Nov. 19, 1932, Nov. 18, 1933, Nov. 17, 1934.

¹⁶Ibid., Vol. 105, "Diaries, 1914-42", May, 1933.

¹⁷Ibid., Vol. 18, "Family Correspondence", R. J. Manion to James Manion, Jan. 17, 1935.

¹⁸PAC, Finlayson, p. 345.

individuals with this type of strength.¹⁹ Consequently the outbursts were soon smoothed over in the interests of the government, the party and the business of Canada. Manion's loyalty to Bennett and the party remained firm throughout the administration. This fact was accepted and stated by Bennett on several occasions²⁰ and this enabled them to continue to work together as dedicated individuals throughout the years of government.

As Minister of Railways and Canals, Manion had been appointed to a post which the Prime Minister himself acknowledged as " . . . one of the most difficult and exacting departments of government . . . ". The Conservatives had inherited a rapidly deteriorating economic railroad situation because of the collapse of world trade and the great depression. The seriousness of the situation was clearly indicated by R. J. Manion when he tabled the Annual Report of the C.N.R. for 1930 in the House of Commons on April 13, 1931. Gross revenue had dropped some 17% from 1929 to 1930. Net earnings had fallen from 46.8 million dollars to 26.5 million dollars.²¹ Because it had to pay interest on its past

¹⁹PAC, Stevens Papers, "1955 Interview", p. 164.

²⁰PAC, Manion Papers, Vol. 96, "Press Clippings Scrapbook", p. 81, Ottawa Journal, April 28, 1932, UNBL, R. B. Bennett Papers, Reel 242, R. B. Bennett to Major R. B. Powell, Oct. 11, 1935.

²¹Canadian Annual Review, 1930-31, p. 396.

loans, the Company was going deeper and deeper into debt. As the situation grew worse, the government was increasingly bombarded with representatives from various groups and interests throughout Canada who were pressing for different forms of railway change. Also to be contended with were the two great railway czars of the period, Edward Beatty, president of the C.P.R. and Sir Henry Thornton, president of the C.N.R., both of whom had increased their power considerably throughout the prosperous twenties. Any important railway changes of the period would have to be in consultation with them and their views would have a great deal of publicity and public support if changes were to be made.

The Bennett-Manion business relationship regarding the Ministry of Railways and Canals could best be described as a form of partnership. Manion carried on the work of the department but Bennett did have a keen interest in it and even took the initiative in handling certain problems that developed within it.

Although it was actions like this that helped to build up the image of Bennett as a one-man government, Bennett's attention to the railway problem had ample justification. In the first instance, Manion lacked experience in the transportation field and quick action on the part of the government was necessary to save the railways. Manion, thus had to learn quickly and prepare for

a change of policy. This necessitated consultation with other knowledgeable political individuals in the cabinet. Bennett was the most knowledgeable as the former Western legal advisor to the C.P.R. He also had a strong personal friendship with Edward Beatty which was advantageous for gaining some form of co-operation from his big enterprise. Manion had no such relationship, but certainly the greatest justification for Bennett's role in the department was the seriousness of the railway situation itself. It was one of Canada's largest industries, employing thousands of men, vital to the interests of the Canadian economy and any major re-organization of the system would have widespread economic and political ramifications throughout the country. It was so important that the Prime Minister had to take a vital interest in the affairs of the department and do all that was possible to help the Railways Minister.

In an effort to improve the situation, it was the responsibility of the Select Standing Committee on Railways and Shipping, chaired by R. B. Hanson, to scrutinize the affairs of the railroads and make a report. The Committee spent a great deal of time in 1931 and 1932 inquiring into the operating expenditures of the C.N.R. in particular. The final report was presented to the House of Commons on May 20, 1932, and the salaries and expenses of executive officers received the main brunt of the criticism. The Report recommended stringent economies, reduction of highly

paid officials, reduction of high executive salaries and a stricter supervision of all expense accounts. It was also severely critical of the Company for supplying the President with an official residence at a cost of approximately twenty thousand dollars per year.²² Sir Henry Thornton subsequently resigned his position as President of the C.N.R. Contrary to his public statements, Thornton privately claimed that his resignation was asked for by R. J. Manion, speaking for the Government.²³

The Standing Committee's Report and the Thornton resignation could not reasonably be interpreted as the result of a personal vendetta of Bennett against the C.N.R. president and an instance of one-man rule. Harry Stevens had confided in a later interview that Bennett "thoroughly disliked" Thornton but also maintained that most of his Conservative colleagues shared the same feelings.²⁴ Grant Dexter of the Manitoba Free Press also failed to find in the Conservative cabinet any admirer of Henry Thornton's management of the C.N.R.²⁵ The Minister of Railways clearly

²²Hansard, 1932, Vol. III, pp. 3131-5.

²³D'Arcy Marsh, The Tragedy of Henry Thornton (Toronto: Macmillan, 1935), p. 265.

²⁴PAC, Stevens Papers, "1955 Interview", pp. 87-88.

²⁵PAC, Dafoe Papers, Reel 75, G. Dexter to J. W. Dafoe, Nov. 15, 1931.

indicated a personal dislike of his economic policies. Manion claimed that Sir Henry Thornton " . . . had no realization of the value of money, whether his own or that of the Government".²⁶ Budget-conscious R. B. Bennett, Manion and most of the cabinet were pretty much in agreement on the policy of reducing expenditures in the railroad industry and this consequently placed them in direct opposition to the C.N.R. president. Bennett did not stand alone on the issue.

The work of the Standing Committee on Railways and the government's close scrutiny of the C.N.R. operations led many of its supporters to fear that the government might amalgamate the C.N.R. and the C.P.R. in its efforts to find a solution to the railway problem. This was publicly advocated by Bennett's good friend, Edward Beatty. Furthermore the Government appointed a Royal Commission on Transportation chaired by the Rt. Hon. Lyman Duff on Nov. 20, 1931 to investigate the railway situation and to make recommendations to solve the problems.²⁷

At this point, Bennett was quite concerned about the situation and took a leading role in the railroad issue. Apparently, Manion in a statement to Grant Dexter

²⁶R. J. Manion, Life is an Adventure (Toronto: Ryerson, 1936), p. 295.

²⁷Canadian Annual Review, 1932, p. 535.

claimed to have no knowledge of who would be appointed to the Royal Commission, for Bennett was handling that matter as well as dictating the terms of reference.²⁸

The report of the Duff Royal Commission was submitted to the Government on Sept. 16, 1932. Its main recommendations were the maintenance of separate identities for the two railways and the provision of machinery to achieve cooperation between the two railway systems in order to eliminate duplicate services and facilities.²⁹ The government used the Report as ^{the} main basis of legislation in the 1933 parliament.

Really, the general tone of the Report was the policy that the Bennett government had always followed publicly. Bennett in the 1930 election had firmly stated his railroad policy as, "Competition ever--amalgamation never".³⁰ Nevertheless, Manion was not being eased out of his department, for he had always been anti-amalgamationist and he proceeded to play an important role in defining the final formulation of the railroad policy. In an address at Montreal he affirmed the government's objective

²⁸PAC, Dafoe Papers, Reel 75, Grant Dexter to J. W. Dafoe, Nov. 15, 1931.

²⁹Canadian Annual Review, 1932, p. 537.

³⁰UNBL, Bennett Papers, Reel 349, p. 437885. The Globe, Dec. 18, 1934.

regarding the railroads as being one of "greater co-operation and less duplication".³¹ On April 22, 1931, Manion restated the government's objective in an address to the House of Commons but he also expressed how difficult it was to get the railways to co-operate.³²

Manion as Minister of Railways, played the leading role in directing the Bill which resulted from the recommendations of the Duff Royal Commission through the House. Under pressure from Mackenzie King the government amended the Bill to provide assurances against the amalgamation of the two railways.³³

Despite the revision of the Bill, many opponents of the Conservative Party were not convinced that the amalgamation question was a dead issue. It appeared to them that Bennett had been seriously thinking about the amalgamation issue and moving the government in that direction. He stated:

In my judgement it would be impossible to bring about the amalgamation of these two systems on any terms or conditions unless the people, themselves, had an opportunity so to declare. I have given much thought to the point as to whether or not the honest and proper method to pursue is, at the next general election, to afford an opportunity by plebiscite for the people to determine whether or not it is desirable that this should happen.³⁴

³¹Canadian Annual Review, 1930-31, p. 389.

³²Hansard, 1931, Vol. 1, p. 875.

³³Ibid., 1933, Vol. IV, p. 4327.

³⁴Ibid., Vol. , p. 3062.

By suggesting the possibility of a plebiscite on the question, it is evident that Bennett was having difficulty in announcing a decision. He was under pressure from Beatty, the C.P.R. President to pursue amalgamation. Besides the personal friendship between the two men, the C.P.R. and the Bank of Montreal had been generous contributors to the Conservative Party's electoral funds of 1930.³⁵ Certainly the Conservative Party needed and wanted their continued financial support in the next election. The danger that these financial sources might dry up for the Conservative party was present if the amalgamation question was not handled adequately, for the C.P.R. and Bank of Montreal were excellent examples of an Interlocking directorate. Edward Beatty was also a Director of the Bank of Montreal and Sir Charles Gordon, Chairman of the Bank of Montreal was a director of the C.P.R. Furthermore, there were four other Directors who were sitting on the Boards of both companies.³⁶ Another factor in favour of the amalgamation question was the possibility of making Canada's railroads more economical. Even Dr. Manion conceded the possibility of saving eighteen million dollars per year under the amalgamation scheme during existing depression

³⁵PAC, Manion Papers, Vol. II, "List of Contributors as of Sept. 2, 1930".

³⁶D. H. Miller-Barstow, Beatty of the C.P.R.: A Biography (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1951), p. 132.

conditions.³⁷ The other consideration of which Bennett was fully aware was the general unpopularity throughout the country of creating a railway monopoly. The government would also be subject to the criticism that it had sold out to the financial magnates such as Beatty who favoured the scheme. The Liberals and some of Canada's leading newspapers led by the Manitoba Free Press, were vigilant in protecting the interests of the C.N.R. and a dual railway system in Canada. In the political arena, Manion affirmed that the amalgamation issue presented many difficult problems for the Conservative Party.³⁸

Bennett was being pulled in two different directions and he was in a dilemma. Publicly the government continued to pursue its old policy of railway co-operation with no thought of amalgamation under the leadership of the Railway Minister. Manion in 1934, introduced bills in the House which provided for the joint use by both railway companies of the tracks and premises at Quebec City and Saint John.³⁹ He also attempted to unite the C.N. and C.P. Express and

³⁷UNBL, Bennett Papers, Reel 349, Press Report of R. J. Manion's Speech at Brockville, Jan. 7, 1935, p. 437882.

³⁸PAC, Dafoe Papers, Reel 75, Grant Dexter to John W. Dafoe, Nov. 15, 1931.

³⁹Hansard, 1934, Vol. II, pp. 1154-5.

Telegraph Companies to eliminate duplication of services⁴⁰ but had to withdraw this Bill from the House when the co-operation between the two railways broke down on the matter.⁴¹ Privately however, the amalgamation issue was not dead both in the council chamber and in private discussions between the government and railroad officials.

Finally, Manion made an important policy address at Smith Falls on Dec. 18, 1934, in which he took a very dramatic and strong stand by stating that the government had no intention of bringing about the amalgamation of the railways.⁴² He claimed shortly after in a letter to Herridge that he "took the bull by the horns . . ." with the complete intention of bringing the matter to a head:

Council was called and I rather expected a blow-up, but to my pleased surprise things went along much more sweetly than they have in ages so I am hoping that perhaps my speech was looked upon as the cutting of the Gordian knot for someone who may have been hard pressed by interests who will not quite agree with my speech.⁴³

Manion's bold address at Smiths Falls firmly
set the government's railway policy

⁴⁰Ibid., Vol. IV, p. 4144.

⁴¹Ibid., p. 4249.

⁴²UNBL, Bennett Papers, Reel 349, p. 437885, The Globe, Dec. 18, 1934.

⁴³PAC, Manion Papers, Vol. 9, "Personal Correspondence", R. J. Manion to W. G. Herridge, Dec. 19, 1934.

for the remainder of the life of the administration. He thus relieved Bennett of a difficult decision and task which had been burdening him for some time. In Manion's mind, the speech marked a new era of "exceedingly" good relations between himself and Bennett:

I rather imagine the reason he is particularly nice is that I took the bull by the horns in the railway question and announced that this Government was not thinking of amalgamation, and I punctured Eddie Beatty's seventy-five million dollar bubble rather badly. . . .⁴⁴

With the policy firmly decided, Manion continued to pursue the course of railway co-operation and made more addresses criticizing the amalgamation issue and reaffirming the government's position in the mind of the public. His Brockville speech in early January of 1935 was another dramatic address, notable for its refutation that amalgamation could reduce any worthwhile part of the railroad deficit under present depression conditions.⁴⁵ Manion was left alone by Bennett to defend this policy.

Although Manion was quite successful in finalizing his policy on the issue of amalgamation, he often had difficulty in getting Bennett to accept some of his suggestions

⁴⁴Ibid., Vol. 18, "Family Correspondence", R. J. Manion to James Manion, Jan. 17, 1935.

⁴⁵UNBL, Bennett Papers, Reel 349, Press Report of R. J. Manion's Speech at Brockville, Jan. 7, 1935, p. 437883.

which would involve heavy expenditures in his department. In July of 1934, Manion wanted to combat the unemployment problem and aid Canada's heavy industries and the C.N.R. at the same time. He recommended that the government assist the railway in buying cars and locomotives by subsidizing them for one-third of the cost.⁴⁶ Bennett felt the pressure of these heavy industries' demands but took no immediate action since he had not heard from the railway company that new cars were required.⁴⁷ Manion persisted in pushing his proposal claiming that Canadian Car and Foundry Limited, National Steel and Eastern Car Companies favoured the scheme. He claimed enthusiastically that this form of expenditure would have a greater multiplying effect on Canadian employment than other expenditures, for many industries such as the railways, the forests and the coal mines would benefit by it. Manion stated that in conversation with C.P. Fullerton, the C.N.R. chairman was willing to co-operate if they received a one-thirds subsidy.⁴⁸ Thomas Cantley, a Conservative M.P. also wrote Bennett stating that he had seen a C.N.R. memorandum requesting new railway cars of different types.⁴⁹ Bennett acknowledged

⁴⁶Ibid., Reel 398, R. J. Manion to R. B. Bennett, July 6, 1934, pp. 498,534.

⁴⁷Ibid., R. B. Bennett to Col. Thomas Cantley, Aug. 9, 1934, pp. 498,662.

⁴⁸Ibid., R. J. Manion to R. B. Bennett, Aug. 14, 1934, pp. 498,734-5.

⁴⁹Ibid., T. Cantley to R. B. Bennett, Aug. 18, 1934, pp. 498,769.

the need of new cars but presented new reasons for not acting immediately. He claimed that it was necessary to maintain the financial integrity of the country, for Saskatchewan's economic state was considered quite desperate. Besides the railway did not require more rolling stock immediately to maintain their business volume at that time. Bennett contended that the financial situation was so serious and circumstances were such that the scheme could not be immediately carried out. He also expressed the desire to consult Dr. Manion further on the question when Manion returned to Ottawa. On Manion's arrival, the Prime Minister contended that the issue would be carefully studied and that there would be a definite and final decision.⁵⁰

Later in the month Manion again wrote Bennett and stated that the number of cars desired by the railroad was sufficiently large enough to divide between the three companies previously mentioned.⁵¹ Enclosed in the letter was another letter from Fullerton to Manion which stated that the railroad required the one-third subsidy to justify the expenditure at that time.⁵²

⁵⁰Ibid., R. B. Bennett to T. Cantley, Nov. 1, 1934, p. 498980.

⁵¹Ibid., R. J. Manion to R. B. Bennett, Nov. 9, 1934, p. 499002.

⁵²Ibid., C. P. Fullerton to R. J. Manion, Nov. 8, 1934, p. 499000.

Bennett, however, was firm in the criticism of the idea. He was opposed to paying one-third of the cost of the C.N.R.'s equipment for it would enable the privately owned companies to make similar demands on the government and this was something Bennett wanted to avoid. He argued that if work was undertaken at the C.N.R.'s request it would have to be in the nature of long term engagements and the country would have to make the payment.⁵³ Manion became disheartened and was convinced that the Prime Minister had closed the door to his proposal.⁵⁴

More than one month later however, Bennett took the initiative under the persuasive pressure of Colonel Cantley, and re-opened the issue once again. Bennett wanted to meet Manion at his convenience to discuss the car order problem once again.⁵⁵ If Manion's hopes of a quick reversal of opinion were revived, they were to remain unsatisfied for as late as April of 1935 the government was still considering the possibilities of the matter.⁵⁶ However by mid

⁵³Ibid., R. B. Bennett to R. J. Manion, Nov. 10, 1934, p. 499003.

⁵⁴Ibid., R. J. Manion to R. B. Bennett, Nov. 10, 1934, p. 499010.

⁵⁵Ibid., R. B. Bennett to R. J. Manion, Dec. 18, 1934, p. 499092.

⁵⁶Ibid., Reel 399, George Perley to J. H. Ogilvie, Apr. 11, 1935, p. 500833.

April the government announced a proposed expenditure of fifteen million dollars on the scheme in the interests of unemployment relief.⁵⁷ The scheme immediately received numerous protests from various railroad groups who protested the lack of work being done in their own railroad shops.⁵⁸ In view of the opposition the House passed a bill which would give an eight and one half million dollar order of equipment to be divided among the three competing companies. Much of the remaining money was to be spent on the building and repairing of cars in various railway shops throughout Canada.⁵⁹

The minister of Railways and Canals did play an important role in bringing this relief program into effect. He had made all the arrangements with all the companies participating in the program.⁶⁰ The scheme had been modified by Bennett and political pressures along the way, but it was essentially the same measure as initiated by Manion. However, it took more than nine months of urging and prodding by Manion and various pressure groups for Bennett

⁵⁷Ibid., Winnipeg Tribune, Apr. 22, 1935, p. 500839.

⁵⁸Ibid., George Perley to Joseph Clarke, May 3, 1935, p. 500852.

⁵⁹Ibid., Sir Thomas White to R. B. Bennett, July 4, 1935, p. 500878.

⁶⁰Ibid., R. B. Bennett to Sir Thomas White, July 17, 1935, p. 500881.

to decide to implement the scheme. In the end it might well have been the forthcoming federal election which convinced Bennett to approve it.

In areas outside of his own department, Manion was equally as energetic and straightforward in offering suggestions to the Prime Minister. As the depression lingered, Manion became one of the leading advocates of change and reform in the Bennett cabinet. As early as May of 1931, he had recommended the spending of fifty or one hundred million dollars by the government on different large-scale enterprises to combat unemployment and "to fill in the lowest part of the depression". After Manion heard from Bennett that he would be pleased to receive Manion's unemployment suggestions, Manion proceeded to elaborate his ideas in a letter to Bennett, dated July 1, 1931. Again, in this letter Manion recommended the expenditure of up to one hundred million dollars for employment projects. He stressed the danger of hesitation by suggesting the possibility of serious riots, for men could "hardly be blamed for refusing to starve quietly". He had a variety of public works schemes which would provide large scale employment and also be of future benefit to Canada. He advocated the layout of plans for the Trans Canada Highway in cooperation with the provinces, along with highway construction in other areas. He favoured the extension of railway branch lines. Manion also advocated the use

of work camps as a form of relief or distress measure, in which a living wage would only be given. The men could be given wholesome cheap food and possibly fifty cents per day for spending money. The work camps could be organized "as in army days".⁶¹

Manion's recommendations were partially fulfilled but not in the most gratifying manner for Manion. The Trans Canada Highway plans were not immediately formulated and implemented although an important start was made in the latter years of the administration. The work projects and government spending were also not on the scale envisioned by Manion. In the early years of the administration, Bennett was greatly interested in balancing the budget. As far as the work camp was concerned Bennett showed no keen interest in it at that time and did not take any action. However more than one year later, after having heard General McNaughton's unemployment relief camp scheme, Bennett approached the General on October 6, 1932 and explained that the cabinet was interested in his recommendations. Bennett wanted a detailed report of the scheme.⁶² McNaughton's plan was put into effect but it differed very little from the Manion suggestion. Single men were to work in camps and would receive a dollar

⁶¹PAC, Manion Papers, Vol. 4, "Personal Correspondence", R. J. Manion to R. B. Bennett, July 1, 1931.

⁶²PAC, Finlayson, p. 135.

per day to include food, clothing and accommodation. Twenty cents per day would be left for spending money.⁶³

McNaughton was placed in charge of implementing and looking after this unemployment relief camp project.

As the depression continued, Manion repeatedly pressed the "chief" for more relief and reform. As early as August 18, 1933, Manion claimed to have urged upon the Prime Minister the implementation of a "Bennett Recovery Program" which would involve the borrowing of one hundred million dollars for public works by the government. It would also involve industry by having the government call in the leading industrialists and inviting them to do the same. Another recommendation was that the interest rate on Dominion loans be reduced.⁶⁴

Apparently Bennett's reaction to the suggestion was unenthusiastic at this time for he apparently acknowledged receiving the letter by indirectly sneering at it to Manion on one or two occasions.⁶⁵

Manion, seeing the necessity of developing a sound program met with W. G. Herridge, the Canadian representative to Washington on August 22, 1933 to cooperate on formulating

⁶³John Swettenham, McNaughton, 1897-1939, Vol. 1 (Toronto: Ryerson Press, 1968), p. 271.

⁶⁴PAC, Manion Papers, Vol. 18, "Family Correspondence", R. J. Manion to James Manion, Jan. 12, 1934.

⁶⁵Ibid.

a reform program and having Bennett implement it. Manion was to put the proposals to "the Chief" in writing and Herridge was to press to have them carried out.⁶⁶ Manion followed this meeting up with written proposals to Bennett which were quite similar to those stated on August 18. Also included was the suggestion that the government issue "Recovery or Loyalty Loans" at a low rate of interest. Manion believed that people would accept them like the war loans and the proceeds could be used for useful and necessary public works. The necessity of providing more jobs through constructing buildings, piers, docks and dredging was stressed. U. S. President Roosevelt's proposed expenditure of 3.3 billion dollars to stimulate business was used as an example of the type of effort required in Canada. He stressed that the time was ripe to advance a well reasoned plan to lift the economy out of its present state.⁶⁷

Bennett however, was in no hurry to accept the offered program. The government was clearly not spending enough to ease the problem at hand. With one eye on the electoral future, Manion stated that Bennett "must wake up pretty soon in regard to this and or two other matters or the Party will be wrecked". However Manion was still

⁶⁶
Ibid., Aug. 23, 1933.

⁶⁷
Manion to R. B. Bennett, Vol. 4, "Personal Correspondence", R. J. Bennett, Aug. 24, 1933.

hopeful that "the Chief" would finally take action for there were clear indications that Bennett had finally begun to consider the program seriously. Bennett was then speaking about the scheme and had stated the pros and cons of the plan before a number of colleagues. However, Manion felt that Bennett had backslid since that discussion.⁶⁸ Bennett seemed to be wavering on the issue.

In the meantime Manion and Herridge kept corresponding in their efforts to get their plan of public works, lower interest rates and agricultural relief into operation. Manion felt that the inactivity was the result of Bennett not being interested in a reform program and felt that this was the only explanation.⁶⁹

Despite Manion's pessimism, the Prime Minister gradually began to move in Manion's direction. Bennett began to favour an increased expenditure of twenty to thirty million dollars on public works. He also agreed with the Fort William M.P. that the interest rate on Canada's debt would ultimately come down but not until 1937. Manion claimed to have stated this desirability of a lower interest rate more than a year previously in Council, but at that time Bennett accused him

⁶⁸Ibid., Vol. 18, "Family Correspondence", R. J. Manion to James Manion, Jan. 12, 1934.

⁶⁹Ibid., Vol. 9, "Personal Correspondence", R. J. Manion to W. Herridge, Jan. 26, 1934.

of "talking a lot of damn Communism." By the end of January 1934, Bennett sided with Manion on the necessity of the measure.⁷⁰

Again in a letter to the Prime Minister on February 1, 1934, Manion pressed for the initiation of the "Bennett Recovery Program" with the same stress on public works, private construction programs and the lowering of government interest rates. Greater emphasis was placed on agriculture in this letter. Manion advocated the lowering of long term obligation interest rates on Canadian farmers to ease them over these difficult times. Since the insurance companies were not receiving full payment then, he wanted the government to help the farmers by arranging with the insurance companies a new lower rate on outstanding obligations. He recommended a reduction from 7 or 8% to 5 or 6%. Manion emphasized that these recommendations were necessary for building a unified platform for Canada's recovery.⁷¹

As the depression continued Manion became increasingly convinced that the government must intervene to correct the balance between the producer and the distributor in the economic system, by implementing such schemes as unemployment insurance. Manion expressed these ideas nearly

⁷⁰Ibid., Vol. 18, "Family Correspondence", R. J. Manion to James Manion, Jan. 27, 1934.

⁷¹Ibid., Vol. 4, "Personal Correspondence", R. J. Manion to R. B. Bennett, Feb. 1, 1934.

two years previously on October 15, 1932 in Windsor, Ontario but they encountered nothing but disgust at that time from Bennett. However, by March of 1934, Manion felt with a great deal of impatient irritation that the Chief was coming around to his point of view at last;

If I did not have pretty good common sense and a fair sense of humour, I might almost lose my head over the number of times in which the Chief has finally come to my viewpoint, months or perhaps a year after I have decided the facts myself.⁷²

Another example of Bennett's acceptance of Manion's advice at a later date occurred when Rhodes, Minister of Finance placed a ten per cent tax on gold in the 1934 budget. Manion claimed to have recommended this action almost a year previously. However, Bennett and most of the cabinet were against the proposal at that time.⁷³

However, despite Manion's lengthy efforts to entice Bennett into venturing into a recovery plan, the Prime Minister did not consult Manion in any capacity when he decided to present a "New Deal" for the Canadian people. According to Manion, Bennett did "this off his own bat entirely, at least so far as we are concerned"⁷⁴ W. G.

⁷²Ibid., Vol. 18, "Family Correspondence", R. J. Manion to James Manion, Mar. 26, 1934.

⁷³Ibid., May 8, 1934.

⁷⁴Ibid., Jan. 10, 1935.

Herridge, Bennett's brother-in-law was the man with whom Bennett wanted to work. It was Herridge who finally convinced Bennett that he should take some decisive action. Herridge played an important role in recommending programs based on Roosevelt's New Deal in the United States and also in drawing up Bennett's New Deal speeches which were delivered in a radio series during January 1935. R. K. Finlayson and General McNaughton also played key roles at the beginning of the New Deal period.

Although Manion was not consulted by Bennett on initiating the New Deal program, he was quite satisfied with Bennett's reversal of attitude. He found Bennett's addresses quite effective and felt entirely in accord with Bennett's initial New Deal speeches.⁷⁵ Manion then worked hard to get as much of Bennett's reform legislation through the House as possible. He was very much interested in bringing in a public works program and pushed very hard for it.⁷⁶ Manion was also drawn into more active participation in the New Deal scheme by its chief instigator, W. D. Herridge who required Manion's help in pushing ^{the New Deal} through the critical stage of cabinet discussion. He wanted Manion to consult McNaughton, and several leading civil servants for technical advice,

⁷⁵Ibid.

⁷⁶Ibid., Vol. 9, "Personal Correspondence", R. J. Manion to W. G. Herridge, Mar. 25, 1935.

and to recast the bill that was designed to reorganize the Department of Transport and Communications and prepare it for discussion in cabinet. Because of the illness of Bennett and his subsequent absence from cabinet meetings, Herridge was quite pessimistic about progress in the cabinet body because all "the reactionary elements will be against it".⁷⁷ Herridge needed an enthusiastic reformist cabinet member to push the New Deal through the pitfalls of lengthy cabinet discussion, and Manion was one minister upon whom he could rely. Herridge continued to keep in close touch with Manion discussing the prospects and the fate of their reform program throughout the rest of the New Deal period in 1935.⁷⁸

R. J. Manion also was extremely concerned about the lack of political organization within the party after political headquarters had been shut down following the 1930 Conservative victory. Manion, along with other cabinet and party colleagues continually pressed Bennett to show more interest in party organization⁷⁹ but according to Manion " . . . all we have received in reply has been a stare".⁸⁰

⁷⁷Ibid., W. G. Herridge to R. J. Manion, Apr. 3, 1935.

⁷⁸Ibid., May 23, 1935.

⁷⁹Ibid., Vol. 8, "Personal Correspondence", R. B. Hanson to R. B. Bennett, June 28, 1932.

⁸⁰Ibid., Vol. 18, "Family Correspondence", R. J. Manion to James Manion, Jan. 12, 1934.

This was an overdramatized statement for Bennett did appoint a Committee consisting of R. J. Manion, Wesley Gordon, and H. H. Stevens to look into the matter of party organization before Bennett left for the Economic Conference in London in June of 1933.⁸¹ It does appear that it was only a half-hearted gesture on the part of Bennett, who wanted an end to this cabinet pressure. According to Manion, Bennett set up the committee and gave it instructions all in a single sentence and then promptly proceeded to change the subject.

Nevertheless Manion and Stevens took the initiative and met half a dozen times. They framed a policy of organization, planned where they might get rooms, and contemplated who could be found to staff the organization. Together they estimated expenses, and wanted twenty-five thousand dollars to keep the organization going. All this was done without the help of Wes Gordon who never attended any of these organizational meetings. It was left to Manion and Stevens to get the organization started. Manion lamented

. . . so far this "great Conservative Party" which is supposed to be the friend of the big interests, has not one dollar in its treasury; and no one has been successful in getting the Chief to appoint a treasurer, whose duty it would be to supply us; as a result of which Stevens and I have got nowhere.⁸²

⁸¹Ibid., Vol. 13, "Personal Correspondence", H. H. Stevens to R. B. Bennett, Dec. 28, 1933.

⁸²Ibid., Vol. 18, "Family Correspondence", R. J. Manion to James Manion, Jan. 12, 1934.

More than these two however were concerned about the lack of party organization and a committee of half a dozen of the cabinet favoured a direct approach to Bennett regarding organization.⁸³ As a result of this party agitation, the wishes of caucus in regard to organization predominated. An invitation was sent to Major-General McRae to accept the position of Dominion Organizer for the party in the next election. However, the organization problem remained unsolved for McRae declined the appointment in a letter to the Prime Minister, insisting that his decision was consistent with their past understanding and that health reasons were also significant.⁸⁴

With this refusal, matters drifted and Bennett did not proceed to appoint anyone else to collect party funds although Stevens had contended that there were competent people available who would undertake the job if instructed by the Prime Minister.⁸⁵ The cabinet felt on numerous occasions that Bennett did not care and would not fight the next election. He talked of quitting and acquiring an English estate.⁸⁶

⁸³Ibid., and also Vol. 9, "Personal Correspondence", R. J. Manion to W. G. Herridge, Jan. 26, 1934.

⁸⁴PAC, Bennett Papers, "Notable Persons", General McRae to R. B. Bennett, Mar. 2, 1934.

⁸⁵Ibid., H. H. Stevens to R. B. Bennett, Dec. 28, 1933.

⁸⁶PAC, R. J. Manion Papers, Vol. 18, "Family Correspondence", R. J. Manion to James Manion, Jan. 27, 1934.

Despite Bennett's inaction, Manion continued to press for party organization and sought to bring his proposals before the Chief. Finally, Bennett asked him what he was going to propose. Having received the green light, Manion eagerly set forth the proposal of the old organizational committee of which he had played a leading role. He recommended Dr. Morand as Chief Organizer, Earl Rowe or Dr. Hodgson as field man to balance party feelings and also a financial man to elicit party funds. Manion also favoured the idea of appointing an advisory committee of three or five men with a Senator as chairman. At least one of the members of the committee should be a cabinet minister. Manion believed that this was a sensible plan and one that would not be too expensive.⁸⁷

Manion was so convinced of the necessity of setting up an organization program immediately that he recommended that Bennett make the organization a fait accompli before he entered the caucus room the following week. The organization could then be announced. Manion felt that there had "already been far too much talk on organization and no conclusion".⁸⁸ Bennett however, continued his own way and did not take any decisive action. As far as Manion was

⁸⁷The organizational committee's recommendations also found in PAC, Bennett Papers, "Notable Persons", H. H. Stevens to R. B. Bennett, Dec. 28, 1933.

⁸⁸PAC, Manion Papers, Vol. 4, "Personal Correspondence", R. J. Manion to R. B. Bennett, Apr. 27, 1934.

R. C. Matthews, Minister of National Revenue, had also pressed for more organization because of the serious situation in the 1933 by-elections. He claimed that Conservative supporters were pleading for more information and publicity.⁹²

Bennett's complete failure to heed the immediacy of Manion's advice helped produce the Conservative rout in 1935. Bennett did not proceed to appoint his Chief Organizer until the end of December, 1934 and by then it was far too late. In the appointment of Earl Rowe as the chief organizer for the federal party he had accepted Manion's recommendation of appointing Rowe to an important organizational post.⁹³ Manion's recommendation of Dr. Morand for the post was not accepted by Bennett but circumstances had changed since the recommendation. By then Dr. Morand was no longer a logical man for the post. By December of 1934 the Bennett-Stevens relationship had deteriorated very seriously and Morand was a well known Stevens supporter. Later in 1935, Morand was active in promoting Stevens for the Conservative leadership when Bennett's illness placed his future in doubt.⁹⁴

⁹²UNBL, Bennett Papers, Reel 242, R. C. Matthews to R. B. Bennett, Aug. 18, 1934, pp. 297,625.

⁹³Canadian Annual Review, 1934, p. 34.

⁹⁴PAC, Manion Papers, Vol. 18, "Family Correspondence", R. J. Manion to James Manion, June 4, 1935.

In addition to serving capably in his own portfolio and acting as a sparkplug of ideas for reform and recovery, Manion served in other capacities during the course of the Bennett administration. In July of 1932, Bennett appointed him as press liason officer for the Imperial Conference at Ottawa. It was Manion's job to sit in on the Conference meeting and release the news to the public press.⁹⁵ This was a responsible appointment for a minister whose portfolio did not entitle him to be on Canada's negotiating team at the Conference. Bennett was desiring good publicity for the conference and the party which was struggling so desperately to combat the depression. In the following year, Bennett appointed Manion as a representative of Canada in Geneva at the League of Nations. Manion worked energetically and made periodic reports back to the Prime Minister.⁹⁶ Manion was also directed on occasion to handle other departments. During Harry Stevens' absences, Manion had often performed as Minister of Trade and Commerce. When Stevens retired permanently from the cabinet, there was speculation that Manion

⁹⁵
Ibid., Vol. 96, "Press Clippings Scrapbook",
Mail and Empire, July 12, 1932.

⁹⁶
Ibid., Vol. 4, "Personal Correspondence", R. J.
Manion to R. B. Bennett, Sept. 26, Oct. 2, Oct. 3, Oct.
12, 1933.

might be given the post permanently because he was so conversant with the mechanics of the department.⁹⁷

Probably, one of the most important jobs that Manion was asked to do outside his department was to meet the ever increasing numbers of discontented workers who in 1935 were trekking to Ottawa by freight car to register their complaints. Bennett appeared to be frightened by the events and suggested that Manion go to Regina to meet them. Although this task should have logically been performed by the Minister of Labour, Wes Gordon, Manion observed wryly that Gordon was not working very much and thus Bennett loaded the work on Manion "as usual".⁹⁸ Manion took Robert Weir, the Minister of Agriculture with him to Regina and together they met the workers in a boisterous and chaotic setting in a Regina hotel while hundreds of people sang "The Red Flag" outside the building.⁹⁹ The leaders presented their demands to the two ministers and confirmed their intention of continuing their trek en masse to Ottawa to present their demands. Manion saw the situation in Regina as "exceedingly critical" and wanted the trek stopped there.¹⁰⁰ The trekkers had

⁹⁷Ibid., Vol. 97, "Press Clippings Scrapbook", p. 120, Border Cities Star, Oct. 27, 1934.

⁹⁸Ibid., Vol. 18, "Family Correspondence", R. J. Manion to James Manion, June 21, 1935.

⁹⁹R. J. Manion, Life is an Adventure, p. 344.

¹⁰⁰UNBL, Bennett Papers, Reel 396, R. J. Manion to R. B. Bennett, June 20, 1935, p. 496622.

picked up more supporters all along the way from Vancouver and would have been an unmanageably large discontented group by the time they reached Ottawa.

After Manion and Weir had heard their demands, Manion as spokesman for the two seized the initiative and presented a proposal which he claimed had not been directed by Ottawa. He recommended that the strikers should appoint from five to eight men to serve as a deputation to Ottawa to meet the government and present their grievances. This delegation would go under government expense and the remaining strikers who were to remain in Regina would be provided with food.¹⁰¹ Manion told the strikers that he could not give them a statement on their demands for he had only learned of their demands in the Winnipeg papers the day before. He claimed that since the government was a democratic organization, he and Weir could not settle the issue nor agree to all or anyone of the points for which the strikers were bargaining.¹⁰² This argument served as the justification for the delegation proceeding to Ottawa to meet the government. The strikers agreed to the proposal.

¹⁰¹PAC, Manion Papers, Vol. 98, "Press Clippings Scrapbook", p. 36, Ottawa Journal, June 18, 1935.

¹⁰²Ibid., p. 37, Regina Daily Star, June 18, 1935.

After concluding this arrangement with the strikers, Manion promptly wrote to Bennett to acquaint him with the situation and offer suggestions with regard to the coming meeting between Bennett and the workers. Manion stated that a Communistic group was leading a rather innocent bunch of unemployed men. He felt that this group was determined to stir up trouble, almost on a revolutionary scale and that strong measures would have to be taken to check this movement. He contended that the delegation was not interested in arriving at a satisfactory agreement and therefore Bennett should make a few proposals with that objective in mind.

Manion believed that the strikers' first proposal for work and wages was impossible for it would cost over one million dollars per day. The Railways minister suggested that Bennett could reinforce what he had already told the workers at Regina with regards to the proposal. Manion then went on to state that the other demands were more moderate and that the government with a few modifications could possibly accept them to show the public that the government was reasonable. He wanted Bennett to point out to them and the public that the government was about to begin an eighty to ninety million dollar public works project throughout the country. Manion also wanted Bennett to announce the initiation of sewer construction in Winnipeg to ease tensions in that city. Apparently the Winnipeg mayor, Ralph Webb had claimed that the project would practically eliminate unemployment

in the city. Manion also wanted Bennett to stress the significance of the Government's new housing Bill and to issue a public statement urging "reasonable Canadianism" as an approach to Canada's problems.¹⁰³

When Bennett met the workers' delegation, his attitude and approach to the meeting was virtually the same as advised by Manion. Like Manion, Bennett regarded the situation of the discontented trekkers as serious and said so in the House when he related the outcome of the meeting with the delegation.¹⁰⁴ Bennett drew the same conclusion as Manion had that the workers were generally young, inexperienced men, not evil, but simply misled by leaders who represented organizations which were dedicated to the destruction of constituted authority. Bennett explained to the House that the leaders in their last threat, called upon the strikers "to resist to the full any effort to maintain law and order".¹⁰⁵

Manion had recommended in his letter that strong measures were necessary and Bennett responded exactly this way at his meeting with the workers' delegation and its

¹⁰³UNBL, Bennett Papers, Reel 396, R. J. Manion to R. B. Bennett, June 20, 1935, pp. 496622-3.

¹⁰⁴Hansard, 1935, Vol. IV, p. 3901.

¹⁰⁵Ibid., p. 3899.

aftermath. Bennett presented a strong front to the workers' delegations and like Manion, he told them that the government could not give in to the first demand. The workers wanted work and wages for a five-day week with a six-hour day at fifty cents per hour.¹⁰⁶

Although Manion had stated that the other demands could possibly be accepted with a few government modifications, Bennett refused to grant any of the demands. This deviation from Manion's observations could probably be partially explained by the developments which occurred during the meeting itself, for Bennett seemed to indicate that there was some room for negotiation when he told the House of Commons that "the delegation made certain demands upon the government which I think beyond question it was realized were incapable of being granted by any government in whole at least."¹⁰⁷ The meeting between the Prime Minister and the workers' delegation erupted into a fiery confrontation when Bennett mentioned the criminal record of the group leader, Arthur Evans. Before the meeting was over Evans had called the Prime Minister a liar and threatened him with future labour unrest by declaring that Bennett's government would have to take full responsibility

¹⁰⁶The Globe, June 24, 1935.

¹⁰⁷Hansard, 1935, Vol. IV, p. 3899.

for whatever might develop.¹⁰⁸ This outburst further convinced Bennett that strong measures were necessary to stop the movement. He refused their demands and told them to return to camp. Bennett would provide a temporary camp near Regina where the strikers could go if they desired. They would receive food and shelter there and arrangements would be made to return them either to their former camps or to their homes. Until the temporary camp was set up, the men would continue to be provided for in Regina.¹⁰⁹

Bennett acted quickly with his strict measures and gave definite instructions to the R.C.M.P. to prevent the workers from moving east by means of the railway by charging the men with trespassing if necessary. Bennett declared in the House that the government was "determined to maintain law and order by all the means within its power . . ."¹¹⁰ Additional reinforcements of R.C.M.P. were sent from Ottawa to see that the men dispersed and returned to their former camps. If they refused, Bennett stated that they would ^{be} handled by the police force with backup assistance from the military if necessary.¹¹¹

¹⁰⁸The Globe, June 24, 1935.

¹⁰⁹ Hansard, 1935, Vol. IV, p. 3900.

¹¹⁰Ibid, p. 3901.

¹¹¹The Globe, June 25, 1935.

Bennett did not play the political game of dramatizing the government's existing efforts to combat the unemployment problem at the meeting or in the House for the benefit of the public as Manion had recommended, but did respond to Manion's suggestion that he should issue a public statement urging "reasonable Canadianism" as an approach to Canada's problems. In the House of Commons, as a result of the crisis Bennett appealed to the public: ". . . We asked as I now do that all good citizens in this country who believe ⁱⁿ the maintenance of law and order shall use their influence and their power and their authority to that end."¹¹²

Manion's role in handling the crisis was thus quite significant. Bennett had relied upon him to meet the strikers, hear their demands and recommend some action. Manion arranged the interview between the strikers and Bennett and also recommended the appropriate course of action to meet the situation. Bennett responded to Manion's initiatives and recommendations by agreeing with and following most of Manion's recommendations throughout this difficult period. Despite Manion's accomplishments in handling the problem in Western Canada, Manion, on his return to Ottawa, confided

¹¹²Hansard, 1935, Vol. IV, p. 3900.

to his son that Bennett had "not passed any opinion, good, bad or indifferent--as usual".¹¹³

Later in his book, Manion contended that it was this failure on the part of Bennett to ever give the cabinet collectively or as individuals due credit or praise for their good work which led many people to believe that the cabinet consisted of lightweights dominated by a tyrant. Manion believed that this less than felicitous attitude gave support to the belief that Bennett headed a "one-man Government". Manion contended that the story of Bennett dominating and domineering over all his cabinet was just "balderdash" and that most of the individual ministers handled their own departments without either Bennett's direction or interference.¹¹⁴

Manion's statement that Bennett never gave his cabinet credit or praise is exaggerated. It is more accurate to say that Manion felt slighted by the infrequency of Bennett's praise. According to Manion, the ignoring of his cabinet in his public addresses gave substance to the Liberals' portrait of Bennett as a "rich intolerant despot" and their success in convincing the public of this image helped them in winning the 1935 election.¹¹⁵

¹¹³PAC, Manion Papers, Vol. 18, "Family Correspondence", R. J. Manion to James Manion, June 21, 1935.

¹¹⁴R. J. Manion, Life is an Adventure, p. 293.

¹¹⁵Ibid., pp. 293-4.

In addition to his departmental work, and other tasks which Bennett wanted Manion to perform, the Prime Minister and the party heavily utilized Manion as a public speaker. He was a colourful speaker and an individual who could win friends easily and for these reasons Manion was asked to address many different organizations and groups throughout the life of the administration. He gave more important addresses than any other individual in the cabinet with the exception of Bennett himself, and perhaps Harry Stevens.

During the 1930 election Manion was a featured speaker for the party in all the nine provinces. On the western tour, Manion stayed two days behind Mackenzie King to answer the Prime Minister's speeches wherever they were delivered. Manion thus played the role of a flying wing in supporting Bennett's campaign from one coast to the other.¹¹⁶

During the Conservative period of office, Manion again was presented as one of the main speakers at many of the by-elections.¹¹⁷ As the depression deepened, Bennett called upon Manion more heavily than before, in an attempt at maintaining the party's popularity in the country. Manion complained to his son about this delegated responsibility

¹¹⁶Ibid., p. 288.

¹¹⁷PAC, Manion Papers, Vol. 18, "Family Correspondence", R. J. Manion to James Manion, Oct. 5, 1932.

that "the old war horse is doing the work . . ." ¹¹⁸ Besides speaking in various areas during by-elections, Manion was also called upon to give important addresses at certain key times, sometimes accompanying Bennett and sometimes with other ministers. ¹¹⁹ Again in 1935, Bennett and Manion combined as leading spokesmen of the cabinet in the election campaign. Manion toured seven of the provinces and claimed to be the only other cabinet minister who campaigned outside of his own province except for William Ernst and Robert Weir who made much shorter tours. ¹²⁰

The Bennett government was weak in debating strength in the opinion of certain Conservatives and the Opposition, a factor which presented Bennett as a dominant figure in the House thus helping to brand the Prime Minister as a one-man government. However Manion's speaking and debating skills were also considerable and he took a heavy load of the speaking in the House. He was one of the most talkative of Bennett's cabinet colleagues in the House as a reading of Hansard will testify. Manion largely looked after the affairs of his own department by himself in the House and replied quite adequately to the Opposition's

¹¹⁸Ibid., Apr. 7, 1934.

¹¹⁹Ibid., Apr. 24, 1933 and Jan. 17, 1935.

¹²⁰Ibid., Oct. 17, 1935.

criticisms. On occasion, he would hold the fort for the government against all opposition. In the evening of March 16, 1933 in piloting the Duff Railway Cooperation bill through the House he was the only Conservative to speak on the subject, as he answered question after question from a wide variety of sources.¹²¹ Not only could Manion adequately defend his department but he could also attack the Opposition on their positions. Manion's heated attack on Mackenzie's King's railway policy on March 9, 1932, won him words of approval from Bennett.¹²² The Toronto Telegram saw Manion as an important member of the Bennett team acting in the role of an army of manoeuvre, at times assaulting the opposition or defending the government. His versatility in the House made him important in debate for he could speak on departments other than his own and did so. At times he defended expenditures¹²³ and also upheld the interests of the Department of Trade and Commerce. On occasion he also spoke out on financial and banking questions.¹²⁴

¹²¹Hansard, 1933, Vol. III, pp. 3074-88.

¹²²PAC, Manion Papers, Vol. 105, "Diaries, 1914-42", Mar. 9, 1932.

¹²³Ibid., Vol. 97, "Press Clippings Scrapbook", p. 141, Toronto Telegram, Mar. 11, 1935.

¹²⁴Ibid., Vol. 98, "Press Clippings Scrapbook", Vancouver Province, Aug. 13, 1935.

On Manion's electoral defeat in 1935, R. B. Bennett paid him tribute as being "one of the finest fighters in the House".¹²⁵

The Bennett-Manion relationship, because of the fiery temperamental natures of both men, had several explosive moments but this never really interfered with their ability to work together in the interests of good government, unlike the Stevens' case. On the contrary, their relationship was generally amicable throughout the Conservative period of government. Manion was not intimidated by Bennett's explosive moods but pursued his opinions with the tenacity of a bull dog. Manion found that Bennett had a certain degree of flexibility and could be moved with persistent effort, for a large number of Manion's suggestions were gradually accepted by Bennett after much deliberation and reinforcement of other pressures.

Although the Prime Minister kept his fingers on the affairs of the railway department in this time of crisis and played an important part in the major policy changes, Manion was not dominated in the department and his role in the portfolio was both dynamic and important. He played a leading role in re-organizing the department, administering it and defending the portfolio and its bills

¹²⁵Ibid., p. 62, Toronto Star, Oct. 15, 1935.

virtually alone in parliament. He even took important initiatives on occasion, which Bennett accepted. The most notable of these initiatives was Manion's definitive statement of no railway amalgamation as Conservative policy.

Not only did Manion look after his own department, but he was relied upon by Bennett to assume many other duties outside of it to facilitate the work of the government. He was imposed upon by Bennett to handle the "On to Ottawa" trekkers and handled the job capably and on his own initiative. His advice to Bennett on the meeting with the workers' delegation was followed almost verbatim by the Prime Minister on this occasion.

Bennett, thus had a valuable cabinet colleague whom he used in various different capacities. Manion was active in handling his own department's affairs, assuming special tasks of government under the direction of the Prime Minister, and speaking publicly in parliament and outside. He also was an important force for change in the cabinet, an essential ally for Bennett to override the strong voices of discontent within the party after the New Deal was initiated.

VI

ONE-MAN GOVERNMENT: AN OVERSIMPLIFICATION

Few governments in Canadian politics have been attacked as severely as the regime of R. B. Bennett, who throughout his years of office continuously encountered the charge of running a "one-man government". His style of government was said to be characteristic of a prima donna, an autocrat and a dictator. It was one of the themes which Bennett's opposition constantly stressed and which was so effective in contributing to the collapse of the Conservative government in 1935.

On the surface, the charge of "one-man government" was convincing. Critics pointed to Bennett's all encompassing desire to be simultaneously Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Secretary of State for External Affairs. They were able to dramatize Bennett's tendency to do much of the speaking in the House, defending a particular government department instead of delegating the task to the minister of that department. More dramatically, they could point to certain disturbances which periodically erupted in the Bennett cabinet. The Bennett-Stevens confrontation was the most sensational incident, but other minor cabinet clashes periodically reached the press. It

was also evident that the Meighen-Bennett relationship was rather cool. Thus, many critics tended to conclude that Bennett was unable to work with any men of great ability because he wanted to dominate completely. The opposition built up a very convincing argument that Bennett was truly a "one-man government", for they had a convincing array of evidence to substantiate this charge.

Certainly, Bennett was a powerful leader, one who considered it his duty to make key decisions and lead in a certain direction. However this is exactly what his party had demanded in 1927 in order to unite a fragmented and dispirited political party. Robert Borden and the rank and file of the Conservative party presented a united front in demanding strong leadership at the 1927 National Convention. Furthermore, the electorate wanted a strong, energetic and highly vocal leader at the helm of government to guide the country through an economic crisis.

When Bennett responded to the call of leadership, he gave all of his remarkable energy to the task, criss-crossing the country in a series of public speaking tours. He also buttressed the finances of the party organization with substantial personal donations. So much did he contribute to the 1930 election victory and so well did his party and the country respond to his energetic leadership, that he could justifiably feel that he had received a

strong mandate to lead the country with vigour in this time of financial crisis.

Bennett undeniably assumed a strong posture as leader of the government; however, his relationship with his cabinet indicates that his government was not a one-man operation. Certainly there were those in the cabinet who felt that Bennett was too dominant a figure in the government and that he did domineer over most ministers. Disenchanted Harry Stevens contended that Bennett as a council chairman was " . . . a bit dictatorial, and as a matter of fact exercised over his ministers a rather dogmatic attitude".¹ Some people felt that many in his cabinet were even afraid of him.² It seems evident that many did use extra caution when confronting Bennett for he often exercised a rather cutting and belittling form of humour at the expense of his associates. R. K. Finlayson, Bennett's secretary, explained Bennett's behaviour as his "means of mental relaxation in the midst of a busy day's work." It was humour which only his office staff really understood.³ Bennett's complex personality was a problem to be handled individually by every member of his cabinet.

¹PAC, Stevens Papers, "8th Interview", p. 8.

²PAC, John E. Read Interview, p. 30.

³PAC, Finlayson, p. 113.

Despite the fact that many in the cabinet might have been wary of what might be the prevailing Bennett mood, this does not necessarily signify his dominating of the cabinet. As convincing as the charge then seemed, the image of Bennett, "the one-man government", was a severe oversimplification of the Bennett style of government and a highly successful campaign of political propaganda. R. J. Manion contended that the story of Bennett dominating his cabinet was " . . . so much balderdash". He claimed that most of the ministers worked their departments without any direction or interference from the Prime Minister. He felt that the cabinet had very capable men and could compare favourably with any of the cabinets that he had seen in the course of his political career.⁴ Even Harry Stevens admitted that the Bennett cabinet compared favourably with the calibre of the Meighen government in 1921.⁵ He further contended that R. J. Manion, Edgar Rhodes and himself were particularly successful in overcoming any tendency of Bennett to domineer over their portfolios.

In addition many other ministers enjoyed very satisfactory working relationships with Bennett. According to

⁴R. J. Manion, Life is an Adventure, p. 293.

⁵PAC, Stevens Papers, "7th Interview", p. 30.

Bennett's personal secretary, various cabinet colleagues always were favoured with Bennett's "unwavering confidence and respect". Hugh Guthrie, as Minister of Justice, was described as being able to get his way with Bennett. C. H. Cahan also was admired by Bennett for his intellect and professional status. Hugh Stewart, Minister of Public Works, Colonel Donald Sutherland, Minister of National Defence, and A. J. MacDonald, Minister without Portfolio were all in the same category as trusted and respected colleagues.⁶ Although the working relationship between Bennett and Arthur Meighen was not always an easy one, Bennett was certainly not the dominant partner. It was Meighen, rather than Bennett, who often tended to dictate the terms of their working relationship.

The oversimplification implied in the charge of "one-man government" is revealed in the relationship of four important cabinet colleagues with the Prime Minister: Arthur Meighen, C. H. Cahan, Harry Stevens and R. J. Manion. All were men of ability, energy and ambition, qualities which they shared with R. B. Bennett. Stevens, Manion and Cahan had such strong personalities that they were bound to clash with the temperamental Prime Minister from time to time. Of these men, however, only Stevens bolted

⁶PAC, Finlayson, p. 347.

from the party; and, in the final analysis, the rift was not the result of one-man government. Stevens himself acknowledged that Bennett interfered little in his department and that Stevens was the one who formulated the policy for his department and brought it to the cabinet for discussion. Stevens was particularly active in supervising all trade agreements at the 1932 Imperial Conference in Ottawa, even drafting the British agreement--a task which was delegated to him at the last moment. Any unusual involvement that Bennett had in Stevens' department of Trade and Commerce certainly can be justified in the light of the serious deterioration of international trade during the period and Bennett's electoral pledge to open up new trading avenues.

In the actual rift between Bennett and Stevens, Bennett was not the unyielding autocrat that he has been stereotyped. When Stevens first resigned on the Price Spreads issue, Bennett yielded to Stevens and initiated a Select Committee to investigate "sweating-practices". While the Committee investigated, Bennett did defend and praise Stevens' work, despite a lack of cabinet sympathy towards Stevens. Bennett even extended the inquiry by appointing Stevens as head of a Royal Commission to study the Price Spreads issue. Stevens then continued his crusade and embarrassed the government by allowing certain addresses

to be printed in the public press. Until Stevens' final resignation, Bennett gave him considerable freedom in the Price Spreads Inquiry, but could not satisfy Stevens without risking the support of other key members of his cabinet. To a very great extent, Stevens was responsible for alienating himself from Bennett and many of his cabinet colleagues.

Like Stevens, R. J. Manion was an energetic, extroverted, progressive, and emotional individual, but these traits never prevented him from being able to work productively with the Prime Minister. Granted, he was not as influential as he would have liked to have been; but certainly he played a valuable and active role in government. As well as capably administering the routine details of his department, Manion actively worked with Bennett on railway policy formulation and at times, he defined it without consultation with Bennett. Because of the many severe problems created by the depression, Bennett had to rely upon important, capable members of his cabinet. Manion was one of these individuals who was delegated such important roles as meeting the Ottawa trekkers of 1935 in order to propose a reasonable course of action. In many ways, Manion became the reliable trouble-shooter of the Conservative cabinet.

C. H. Cahan was another individual whom Bennett esteemed highly and relied upon heavily concerning the

various pieces of Companies Act legislation which were brought to parliament yearly throughout Bennett's period of office. Cahan worked virtually alone without any direct Bennett interference except when there was some fundamental policy change as occurred in the 1935 revision of the Companies Act. Cahan also proved to be a valuable colleague and was even actively involved in Bennett's own department of External Affairs. Bennett soon found that he had little time for the affairs of this department and gradually gave more of his work in this area to Cahan and some of the civil servants of the department.

Bennett not only gave responsible duties to various members of his cabinet, but was willing to listen to their advice, and on many occasions actively sought it. Arthur Meighen, for example, could have enjoyed a much more important role in formulating government policy if he had been willing to take advantage of Bennett's pleas for assistance. Meighen was a lonely figure in the Bennett cabinet largely because of his own choice. He entered the cabinet on the condition that he be given meaningful work in the Senate and be allowed to pursue these activities independently. As Senate leader, Meighen conceded that Bennett had given him a free reign.

Although Bennett constantly sought advice from his colleagues, he was seldom quick to respond to the advice that he received. This trait often tended to

produce some frustrated cabinet ministers. He also consulted with non-political experts more often than most Prime Ministers had done previously, and this caused some observers to feel that Bennett quietly directed a one-man government outside of the regular political channels. Every indication points to the fact that these civil servants felt the same frustrations as Bennett's cabinet did. W. G. Herridge, Bennett's main New Deal confidante, typified the exasperation from this quarter in a telephone call to Rod Finlayson: "Oh, God pity us, Rod. We'll never get anywhere as long as that 'stupid stubborn bastard' is the head of the government".⁷

To a certain extent, the image of Bennett, the "one-man government", was one that Bennett himself enjoyed. According to R. K. Finlayson, Bennett's apparent decision to do everything himself was really "nothing more than a pose to please or fool the public". He apparently liked the sympathy that he received when he was overworked, and "would wear the mask of the weary Titan".⁸ Similarly from 1933 to the defeat of the government in 1935, Bennett continuously talked about giving up all the work and retiring to Britain, but he never took this course of action until 1938.

⁷Ibid., p. 83.

⁸Ibid., p. 125.

R. K. Finlayson contended that it was Bennett's style of government that made it appear so authoritarian. Finlayson believed that Bennett was no more dictatorial than Mackenzie King. Both Prime Ministers ran the government but did so with opposite styles. King was the introvert who could keep his feelings towards his colleagues under control until it was appropriate to let them be known. King's dismissal of Colonel Ralston during the Second World War illustrates this trait. Bennett, however, was the extrovert, who would explode in an angry fury. These outbursts were often publicized and the domineering image of R. B. Bennett was strengthened considerably as a result. Bennett, however, would apologize to those who served with him, and in most cases the working relationship would gradually return to normal.⁹

The Bennett government was thus led by a strongly emotional individual who worked in a flurry of activity. On other occasions with his cabinet ministers, this tendency was replaced by reticence and careful deliberation. His failure on these occasions to make decisions was often interpreted as a rejection of cabinet advice. This did nothing to alter his authoritarian image. However, the attack upon Bennett as a temperamental "one-man government",

⁹Ibid., pp. 344-5.

was a distorted oversimplification of the Bennett style of government. This criticism was a slick and effective piece of political propaganda which has been uncritically accepted until the present day. Bennett was a leader who guided the framework of government policy and left the detailed and essential work to his cabinet and advisers. Once trusted and proven reliable, many cabinet ministers were given independence to operate within and sometimes outside their cabinet jurisdiction.

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