

Mackenzie King papers released

The diaries, memoranda, public and personal correspondence of the late Prime Minister Mackenzie King for the year 1948 were opened to the public recently at the Public Archives in Ottawa. Photographs, sound recordings and films of the former prime minister's activities that year are also available.

The diaries for 1948, in over 1,100 pages, describe in detail Mr. King's public and personal life. That year marked the end of the Mackenzie King era in Canadian politics, introducing Louis St. Laurent as new leader of the Liberal Party and to the prime ministership after Mr. King's retirement. It was also an interesting period internationally, with the acceleration of the Cold War and the evolution of the British Commonwealth.

From 1893 to 1950, in approximately 64,000 pages, Mackenzie King recorded his public and private life as a university student, Minister of Labour, leader of the Liberal Party, leader of the Opposition, and Canada's Prime Minister for 21 years. Mackenzie King best described the diaries in 1902 as "...the story of a human life, its ambitions, its beliefs, its failures and its broken achievements, all or any of which may be right or wrong, none of which are without their influence...". In the 1948 diary, the story of his life is continued.

The manuscript has been divided into several sections: Mackenzie King's private life; Canadian events; international events; and significant personalities.

Private world

On several occasions the 1948 diary catches Mackenzie King in a reflective mood concerning his failure to marry and to make friends. The loneliness led him into a belief in spiritualism and the ready acceptance of mystic explanations for day-to-day coincidences.

At the same time, the diary related happy occasions which contrast with worries about health and retirement. Mackenzie King took particular pleasure in meeting the film actress Mary Pickford and Canadian Olympic gold medalist Barbara Ann Scott.

Canadian events

Internal events throughout 1948 were dominated by Canada's continuing financial problems, the entry of Newfoundland



Prime Minister Mackenzie King addresses the national Liberal convention, 1948.

into Canada as its tenth province and the nomination of new leaders for both the Liberal and Conservative Parties.

Newfoundland's second referendum on Confederation passed on July 22 by a majority of 6,000 votes. Mackenzie King, though plagued by doubts as to the benefits of Newfoundland's entry, prided himself on the fact that he could be considered a Father of Confederation.

On August 6, Mackenzie King gave his final address to the Liberal convention as leader. Louis St. Laurent was chosen as King's successor on August 8 by an overwhelming majority. Another important



Mr. King (right) congratulates Louis St. Laurent, his successor as Liberal Party leader and Prime Minister. Mrs. St. Laurent stands centre.

event in Canadian politics and for the Liberal Party was the entrance into Parliament of Lester B. Pearson, who succeeded St. Laurent as Secretary of State for External Affairs in September.

International events

The pace of the Cold War rapidly accelerated that year. The Communist take-over of Czechoslovakia in February, the Soviet blockade of Berlin in April and June, and the May proclamation of an Israeli State amidst Arab-Israeli fighting produced an overwhelming sense of impending war. Mackenzie King's fear of a world war resulting from attempts to spread Communism permeates the diary. On March 2 and 3, Mackenzie King records the Cabinet's discussion about the restriction of Communists in Canada.

The concern over the possibility of war led many Western nations, including Canada, to consider the formation of defensive pacts. On January 2, Mackenzie King received a communication from British Prime Minister Clement Atlee proposing a union of Western nations. From March 22 to April 1, Canada participated in secret meetings with British and U.S. officials to negotiate an "Atlantic security pact" which eventually led to the formation of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization in April 1949. At the same time, Canadians were involved in secret meetings with the United States to negotiate a reciprocity treaty. Mackenzie King was initially enthusiastic about its possibi-