

K BENNETT, RT. HON. RICHARD BEDFORD (1870-1947)

Microfilm, 1878-1947, 597 reels. Finding Aid No. 434.

Richard Bedford Bennett was born at Hopewell Hill, New Brunswick, 3 July 1870. He taught at Douglstown, New Brunswick, 1888-1890. After having studied law at Dalhousie University, 1890-1893, he became a partner in the law firm of L.S. Tweedie in Chatham. In 1897, Bennett moved to Calgary as a junior partner of Senator James Lougheed. The partnership was dissolved in 1922 and Bennett established the firm of Bennett, Hannah and Sandford. He remained a member until 1937. Bennett was a member of the Legislative Assembly of the North-West Territories 1898, and the Alberta Legislative Assembly, 1909-1911. In the House of Commons, Bennett represented Calgary West, 1911-1917 and 1925 to 1938. He was Federal Minister of Justice and Attorney General for three months in 1921 and was Minister of Finance for two months in 1926. At the first convention of the Conservative Party in Winnipeg in October 1927, Bennett was elected leader. Following the defeat of the King government in July, 1930, he became Prime Minister. Bennett also held the offices of Minister of Finance, 1930-1932 and Secretary of State for External Affairs, 1930-1935. After the Conservative defeat in 1935, Bennett served as Leader of the Opposition until 1938 when he retired from active political life. In 1939, he moved to England and settled on an estate in Surrey where he lived until his death, 27 June 1947. In 1941, he was created Viscount Bennett of Mickleham, Calgary and Hopewell. He never married.

The Bennett Papers were given to the University of New Brunswick in 1949 by Ronald V. Bennett, who inherited them from his brother R.B. Bennett. In 1965, the University loaned the papers to the Public Archives of Canada to be arranged, microfilmed and indexed. The papers were returned in 1976. The papers mainly cover Bennett's period as Prime Minister, 1930-1935. There is only one reel of political papers for the period up to 1919. The papers contain material for most of Bennett's adult life, but they are weakest for the New Brunswick and Alberta periods.

The finding aids to the Bennett Papers consist of four parts. Part 1 contains file lists to the Political Series and Personal Series. Part 2 contains file lists to the Invitations Series and Clippings Series. Part 3 is a detailed computer index to the Political, Personal and Invitations Series, arranged alphabetically by keyword. Part 4 is a variation of part 3. Instead of being sorted alphabetically, the computer index is arranged by volume number. This last finding aid will be of particular assistance to researchers using material in consecutive volumes, since it is in effect an extremely detailed file list, showing the significant contents as well as the titles of each file. All of the parts of finding aid 434 are also available on microfilm, and the Public Archives makes them available on interlibrary loan. Parts 1 and 2 are filmed together on reel C-4495, part 3 is on reels C-10855 to C-10858 and part 4 is on reel C-10859. Researchers are urged to read carefully the introductions to each part of the finding aid to determine which part will be of most help to them.