

thirty years after Confederation were characterized by racial, cultural and religious disagreements but when the period ended, Canada had a new leader. He was Sir Wilfrid Laurier, a French-Canadian Catholic.

The political rise of the federal Liberal Party in 1896 corresponded to the growth in Quebec of large enterprises, especially in such sectors as hydroelectricity, forest industry and mining. Laurier encouraged national unity and brought provincial statesmen from across Canada into his cabinet. He remained in power until 1911 and in that time helped to establish a Canadian presence in world affairs.

His successor, Robert Borden, leader of the Conservative party, guided Canada throughout the years of World War I. When Borden, who had committed a Canadian corps of volunteers to the fighting, ordered conscription of childless males, there was general dismay in Quebec and an immediate political crisis. The outcry was not confined to Quebec and there were serious misgivings throughout Canada. Borden was obliged to call an election at the end of 1917. He retained power, but Laurier's Liberals won in Quebec.

Quebec politics

In the 1930s Quebec provincial politics was characterized by polarization along religious, linguistic and cultural lines.

There were many clashes in the legislative assembly and debate was known for the stridency of its tone.

In 1936 a new political party came to power in Quebec's provincial legislature. The *Union Nationale* under the leadership of Maurice Duplessis proclaimed its commitment to promoting Quebec nationalism and supporting free enterprise and the church. In 1939 Duplessis lost a provincial election, but for the most part he and his party retained undisputed rule over Quebec until his sudden death in 1959.

Duplessis governed with the belief that Quebec should stand on its traditions — a culture founded on religion and an economy founded on agriculture. This system of social-religious-political control lasted until the "Quiet Revolution" of the early 1960s.

A renewed Quebec

Until World War II the power of the church was almost unquestioned in Quebec. But with the war, the winds of change blew hard and the church was unable to withstand the pressure. The church held its own in the rural elections, but Quebecers slipped from its influence in the cities and towns. The Liberal government of Jean Lesage, elected in 1960, carried through major reforms in education, labour relations (by permitting public employees to form unions and to go on strike) and social affairs. Several