

Subject.....

Date..... 1958 Publication..... *Atlantic Citizen***MILLIONS OF WORDS****Papers From Past PM's
Tell Story Of Canada**By J. A. Hume
Citizen Staff Writer

A preliminary 27-page inventory of about 2,500,000 pages of official papers of 10 of Canada's 13 prime ministers now on file at the Public Archives of Canada has just been published.

The papers constitute "a miniature history of Canada" since they highlight events in terms of the prime ministers concerned.

The papers of Prime Minister R. B. Bennett, 1930-35, later Viscount Bennett of Mickleham, Surrey, Eng., are in the possession of the University of New Brunswick.

It is expected that, in due course, the papers of Prime Minister Louis St. Laurent, 1948-57, will be placed in the Archives.

Prime Minister John Diefenbaker is known to possess a keen sense and appreciation of history and no doubt he, too, will give his files to the Archives in due course. The inventory notes that Mr. Diefenbaker was instrumental in having Mrs. F. Kayser, Peterborough, give to the Archives last year an address to Sir Mackenzie Bowell, prime minister 1894-96, relating to his title as KCMG (Knight Commander of the order of St. Michael and St. George) in 1894.

Valuable History Source

The Archives' collection of prime ministerial papers, the inventory points out, constitutes "probably the most valuable single source on recent Canadian history."

The personal diaries of two prime ministers — Sir Robert Borden and Rt. Hon. W. L. Mackenzie King, OM—were not given to the Archives with their other papers. The Borden diary remains in the possession of his nephew, Henry Borden, QC, Toronto. The Mackenzie King diary is in the hands of his literary executors. It has been made available to the three successive authors of the King official biography — the late Prof. Macgregor Dawson, Prof. Blair Neatby of the University of British Columbia, and Hon. John W. Pickersgill.

The Archives — just recently — secured microfilm copies of the papers of Prime Minister Alexander Mackenzie, 1873-78. The copies were obtained from Queen's University to whom the Mackenzie papers had been presented last year. This summer, Dr. W. Kaye Lamb, Dominion archivist and national librarian, was able in the United Kingdom to secure for the Archives the papers of the Earl of Dufferin, governor-general, 1872-78, which embrace extensive correspondence with Prime Minister Mackenzie.

The collection of prime ministerial papers at the Archives occupies nearly 1,500 feet of shelving. Most extensive are the papers of Sir John A. Macdonald, 123 feet of shelving, Sir Wilfrid Laurier, 195 feet, Sir Robert Borden, 141 feet, and Mackenzie King, over 800 feet.

Set Record

The King papers run to about 1,000,000 pages. He was prime minister for more than 21 years, a Commonwealth and world record in that regard. He headed three ministries. And, by nature, he retained more papers than any other prime minister or Canadian public figure.

Public access to the papers of Prime Minister Arthur Meighen is still restricted while Roger Graham, formerly of Regina College, is writing an official biography.

The King papers will not be

available to the public until July 22, 1973, the 25th anniversary of his death at Kingsmere. Mr. King's literary executors will exercise direct control of access to his papers until January 1, 1964, and limited control for the subsequent 11-year period to 1975. As the gigantic task of sortation and cataloguing of the King papers proceeds, the literary executors may withdraw what appears "useless", but no document is to be destroyed without the consent of the Dominion archivist.

Parts of the prime ministerial papers, taken together with Archives papers of different governors-general, will prove specially interesting as to the selection of a prime minister on at least six occasions since Confederation.

These occasions concern, more particularly, Sir John Abbott, Sir John Thompson, Sir Mackenzie Bowell, Sir Charles Tupper, Mr. Meighen, after Borden resigned in 1920, and, of course, when Mr. King resigned in June, 1926, and Mr. Meighen became prime minister until he was defeated in the general election on September 14 that year.

"Letter Book"

In earlier times, prime ministers and others had copies of original letters kept in what was called a "letter book." It was not until 1898, under Laurier, that the method of keeping typed copies of letters, etc., was begun. Incidentally, Laurier's papers for the period 1912-15, while he was leader of the opposition, were lost when the Parliament Buildings were destroyed by fire in February, 1916.

Bowell had the most children, nine, with Thompson next with five. Bennett and King were bachelors. Laurier and Borden were married but they had no children. Prime Minister Diefenbaker, twice married, has no children.

Two prime ministers, Abbott and Bowell, were Senators when they held the office. Thompson was Commons leader under Abbott whom he succeeded as prime minister. Sir George Eulas Foster was Bowell's Commons' leader, but he never achieved the prime ministership. Bowell resigned his Senatorship in 1907, 10 years before his death.

Mr. Meighen was named to the Senate after he had been prime minister, as Conservative government leader in the Red Chamber, 1932-35, during the Bennett regime. He continued as Conservative opposition leader in the Senate until 1942 when he resigned in an unsuccessful attempt to be re-elected to the Commons as party leader in the Green Chamber.

Four Knighthoods

Knighthoods were conferred on four prime ministers—Macdonald, Thompson, Tupper and Laurier — before they were named members of the British (or Imperial) Privy Council with the designation, "right honorable."

One prime minister, Mackenzie, never was named an Imperial privy councillor though he held office for five years. Abbott was knighted in May, 1892, midway through his short term as prime minister from June, 1891 to November, 1892, but he never made an Imperial privy councillor.

Laurier and Borden were given the French Legion of Honor and

Borden also was given the Order of Leopold of Belgium.

Tupper was made KCMG in 1879, promoted to be GCMG in 1886, and a baronet in 1888, though he did not become an Imperial privy councillor until 1907. He was the last survivor of the Fathers of Confederation when he died in 1915 at the age of 94.

Three prime ministers — Macdonald, Mackenzie, and Laurier — were members of provincial legislatures before they were elected to Parliament.