

## INTRODUCTION

The time covered by this volume of *Documents on Canadian External Relations* corresponds almost exactly with that of the Bennett régime in Canada. It was the misfortune of R. B. Bennett and the Conservative Party that their period in office coincided with the worst years of the Great Depression. The failure of the Conservatives to deal with the resulting domestic problems that were all but impossible of solution led, in 1935, to the return to power of W. L. Mackenzie King and the Liberal Party. The return of Mackenzie King to office ushered in 22 years of uninterrupted Liberal rule. When that period is joined to the nine years of all but uninterrupted Liberal rule under Mackenzie King which preceded the Bennett years there is created the impression of a continuous régime in Canadian affairs.

This long reign of Mackenzie King Liberalism in Canada has given rise to the Whig myth of Canadian Historiography. Nowhere has that myth been more widely promulgated nor more generally accepted than in the history of Canadian external relations. There a straight line theory of Canadian development from colony to nation has provided the philosophical structure for the examination of Canada's foreign policy.

Unfortunately, there was no place for R. B. Bennett in this scheme of things. As a result he and his government have been treated as an aberration, a temporary wandering from the straight and narrow path of the true Canadian destiny, a flight into madness brought on by the stress of economic hardship in 1930. The only reasonable thing to do in such circumstances was to ignore the period completely. With regard to Canadian external policy there developed the truism that there were really no foreign affairs of any note conducted between 1930 and 1935. So deeply had this part of the myth penetrated our society that, when the chronological range of this volume was first settled upon within the Department of External Affairs, one official warned the Editor that he might not find enough documentary material to justify a full-scale volume in the series. In fact, however, the Editor's task remained what it had been in the earlier volumes—the disciplined cutting back of material until it came to fit the format of this series. It is hoped that the selection of documents contained herein will stimulate others to look more closely at some of the questions of that half decade; to look at the material necessarily rejected by the Editor; to conduct research in less official papers than those used in the preparation of this series; and to search out the public and private foreign reaction to Bennett's policies particularly in London, Washington, Geneva and Tokyo. Thus may a blatant imbalance in Canadian scholarship be corrected.

The preceding volume told the story of R. B. Bennett at the 1930 Imperial Conference. There he strongly urged that it was time for the Empire to show