

## Chapter Nine

## LEAD-UP TO WAR



**Figure 9-1** Both the Summer and Winter Olympic Games took place in Germany in 1936. Adolf Hitler, the German leader, used both events as propaganda opportunities. In the top photograph, the huge international crowd that filled the Olympic stadium honours Hitler with the Nazi salute. In the bottom photograph, Hitler (centre) and Josef Goebbels (left), a key figure in Hitler's government, sign autographs for the Canadian Olympic figure skating team.



## CHAPTER ISSUE

## Why are the 1930s judged a dark time in history?

The 1936 Olympic Games stood out as a memorable international event during the bleak years of the Great Depression. This was, in part, because Adolf Hitler transformed the Games into a spectacle that he used as a propaganda opportunity.

Hitler made sure that the Germany presented to the world radiated power, confidence, and success. He wanted no reminders that Germany had been defeated in 1918 and humiliated by the Treaty of Versailles in 1919 — or that many Germans, like people everywhere, were suffering the effects of the Depression.

Examine the two photographs on the previous page and respond to the following questions:

- What message does each photograph send?
- What does the fact that the Canadian figure skaters were seeking Hitler's autograph suggest about the way he was viewed in 1936?
- If you had seen these two photographs in 1936, how might they have shaped your opinions about Hitler? Is this different from the way you view the photographs today? Explain your responses.
- By 1936, Hitler was already persecuting minority groups and expanding German territory. Should other countries, such as Canada, have used the Olympics as an opportunity to voice concern about Hitler's policies? Or should such matters be kept out of the Olympics?
- What uses might these photographs have as primary source evidence?

## Key Terms

Great Depression  
isolationism  
regional disparities  
socialism  
countervailing tariff  
pools  
urbanization  
totalitarian  
fascist  
appeasement  
anti-Semitism

## Looking Ahead

The following inquiry questions will help you explore why a second world war became almost inevitable.

- What was life like during the Great Depression?
- How did Canada's relationship with the United States change?
- Why did nationalism grow in Québec?
- Did Canada respond to increased international totalitarianism?

## LEARNING GOALS

In this chapter you will

- describe some key economic changes in the 1930s, including the Great Depression, and their impact
- describe some developments in culture and technology during this period
- analyze ways in which Canadians came together or came into conflict in the 1930s
- analyze developments in Canada's relationship with the United States and Britain
- investigate and explain some of the causes of World War II



# What was life like during the Great Depression?

Throughout the 1920s, many people had believed that the good times would continue. Therefore, they had borrowed money to buy homes, farms, automobiles, household appliances, and stocks. And many manufacturers had produced more than was needed to meet the market demand.

But in 1929, a depression started that got so bad and lasted so long that people started calling it the **Great Depression**. Many people lost their jobs and could not pay their debts. When this happened, companies that had lent the money also suffered. They could not pay their bills, and many went out of business. Manufacturers were left with large inventories of products that few people could afford to buy.

Farmers and companies that relied on sales to the United States were equally hard hit. The U.S. economy was also suffering, so American markets for Canadian goods were disappearing. The economic hard times became a worldwide phenomenon.

Young people were particularly affected. Many were forced to put their lives on hold when they couldn't find jobs or afford to get married.

Nobody could tell exactly when it began and nobody could predict when it would end. At the outset, they didn't even call it a depression. At worst it was a recession, a brief slump, a "correction" in the market, a glitch in the rising curve of prosperity. Only when the full import of those heartbreaking years sank in did it become the Great Depression.

— Pierre Berton, writer and historian, in *The Great Depression: 1929–1939*

## The Stock Market Crash of 1929

The Great Depression had many causes, but historians generally agree that the 1929 stock market crash was one of the most immediate. That September, people had begun selling their stocks on the New York, Montréal, and Toronto exchanges, but financial experts had said that the markets were "fundamentally sound" — and politicians repeated these reassurances.

On October 4, the Toronto stock exchange lost \$200 million in value. Again, experts and politicians reassured the public. On October 24, 400 000 shares were traded on the Montréal stock exchange, which sold about 25 000 shares on a normal day. Most stocks sold at a loss as sellers began to panic. On the same day in New York, 12 million shares were sold.

On October 28, the value of shares on the Toronto stock exchange fell by \$1 million a minute. The next day — known as "Black Tuesday" — the price of stocks in New York, Montréal, and Toronto continued to plummet as sellers tried desperately to cut their losses.

### CONNECTIONS

Not everyone suffered during the Depression. James Henry Gray, a reporter with the *Winnipeg Free Press*, earned \$20 a week. Low prices meant that his family of three could live well on this amount. "Rents were depressed, and clothing prices were unbelievable," Gray wrote in a memoir. "Our three-roomed suite cost us \$15 a month, and later we were able to pick and choose among five-room bungalows renting for \$25 a month."

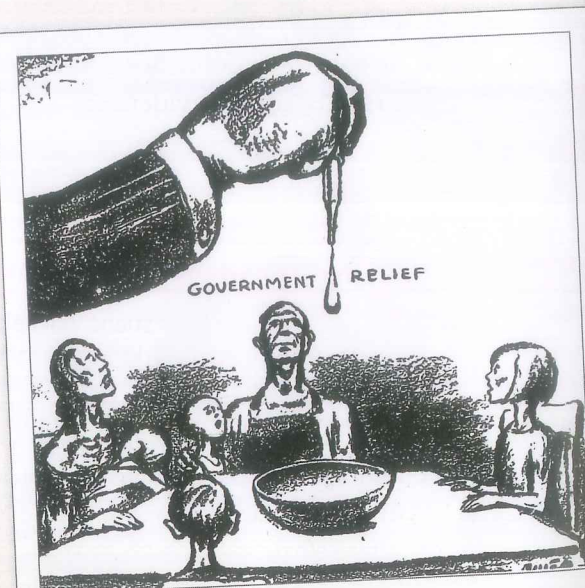
## PICTURING SOCIAL CHANGE

- /// Not a safe place.
- Kind man lives here.
- Dangerous neighbourhood.
- Kind woman lives here.
- Tell a sad story.
- Good place for a handout.
- Nasty dog here.

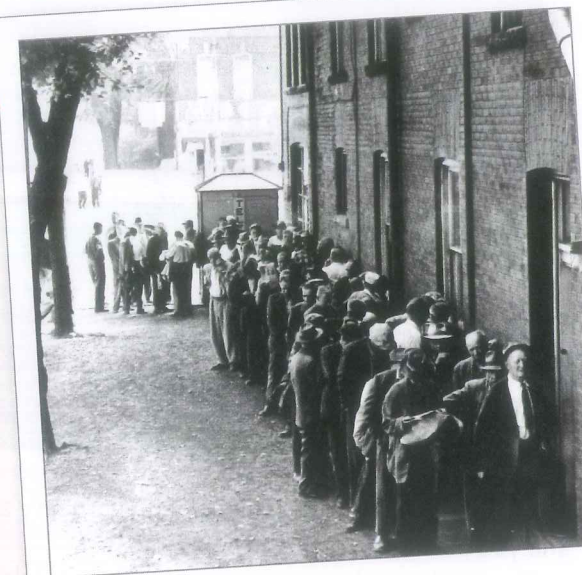
### Communication and Community

**Figure 9-2** During the Depression, people who were homeless wandered the country looking for work. Called tramps or hobos, they would use chalk or charcoal to draw symbols on fences, the walls of buildings, and railway bridges to tell others about conditions in a neighbourhood. What conclusion(s) about community could this evidence help you reach?

**Figure 9-3** Canadian governments — federal, provincial, and municipal — offered little help to desperate families. In July 1933, a Toronto newspaper called *The Worker* published this cartoon. What does this cartoon reveal about the cartoonist's values and worldview?



### Government Relief



### Lining Up for Meals

**Figure 9-4** In 1934, 130 000 people in Toronto were on relief — government support — at a time when the city's population was about 631 000. The people in this photograph were lined up for a free meal prepared by a charity. Why would the great human need increase calls for social change?



### Work Camps

**Figure 9-5** The government set up relief camps, like this one in Harrison Mills, British Columbia, for single, unemployed men. The men lived in bunkhouses and were given three meals a day, work clothes, medical care, and a 20-cent daily wage. They worked long hours at jobs such as building roads and planting trees. How did the Depression force society to become more responsible for its citizens?



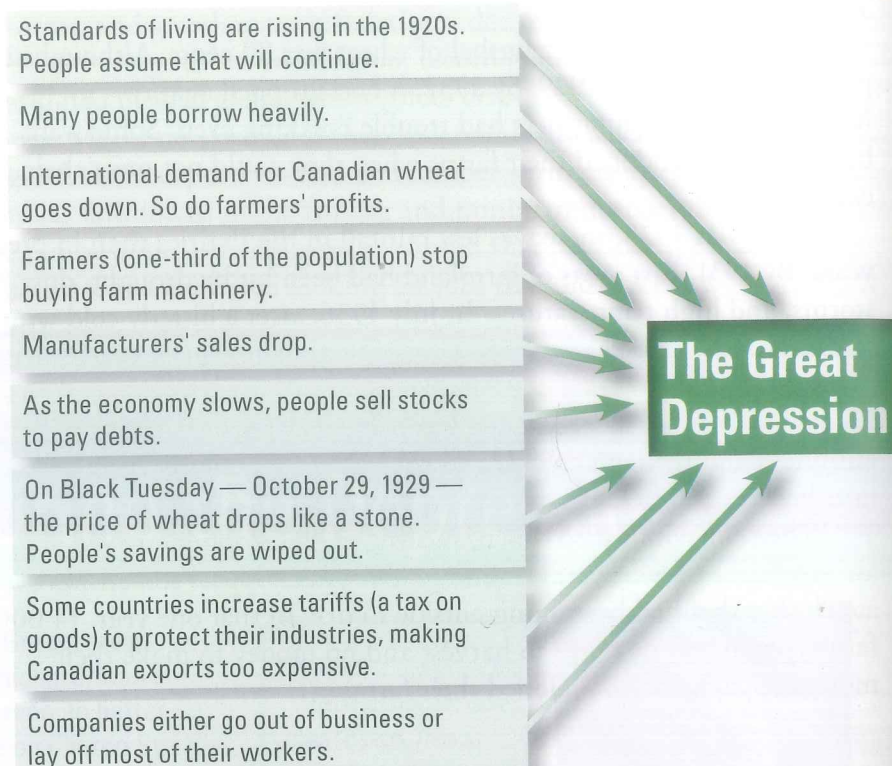
# Causing a Depression

When investigating an historical event, a natural question to ask is “Why?” What made this event happen just the way it did, in that particular year, in that particular place, and involving those particular people? In virtually every case, many causes have to come together in just the right way for the event to happen.

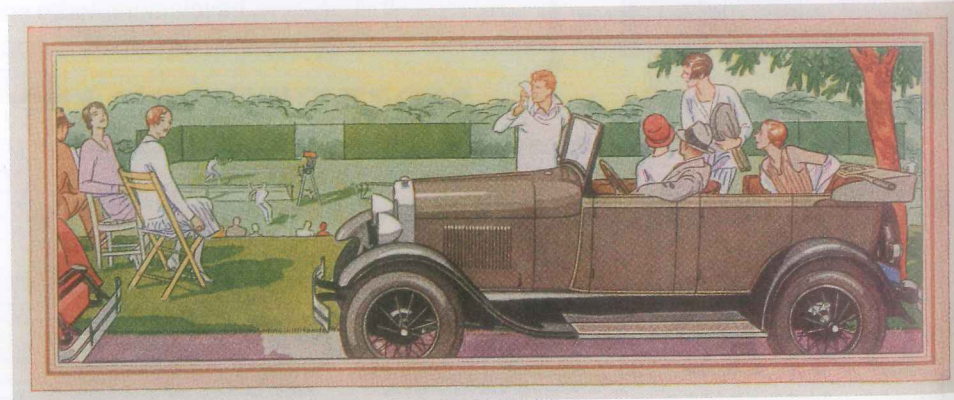
If you were to brainstorm “Causes of the Great Depression” with your class, you might generate a whole list of possible causes. You might even come up with a list like the one in the graphic shown. But not all causes have equal influence. Some causes are like snow ploughs, seeming to push the event to happen. Others are like obstacles, forcing the event to happen one way instead of another. To better understand an historical event, we can ask which causes were most influential, and why.

**Figure 9-10** Causes of the Great Depression

This graphic does not show the relative importance of the various causes of the Depression. How could you show that?



**Figure 9-11** This advertisement for a new Ford automobile appeared in 1928. What is the message of the ad? Many people were so captivated by this message that they bought cars on credit—they didn't pay for the car up front but got a loan instead. What happens when people cannot make their payments? How is this connected to the causes of the Great Depression?



## Explorations

1. Create your own graphic showing the causes of the Great Depression. Communicate the relative importance of various causes.
2. As you read the rest of this section, take note of consequences of the Great Depression. Then create a graphic that shows the relative importance of consequences.

## Government Responses to Economic Conditions

When the Depression began in 1929, Prime Minister William Lyon Mackenzie King's Liberal Party was in power. In the campaign leading up to the 1930 federal election, unemployment was a major issue — and R.B. Bennett, the Conservative leader, promised to fix the problem. The Conservatives won the election by a large majority, and Bennett remained prime minister for the next five years, the worst years of the Depression.

Bennett opposed spending federal money on relief programs for unemployed workers and their families. His government claimed that providing relief was a provincial and municipal responsibility. Provincial governments claimed that it was a federal and municipal responsibility. And municipal governments said they did not have the resources to handle the problem on their own. They pleaded with the provincial and federal governments for help.

To protect Canada's manufacturers, Bennett's government raised the tariff on imports. But the United States and other countries also increased their import tariffs. As a result, Canadian exporters of resources such as wheat, lumber, and fish were unable to sell their products.

As the economic situation worsened and hundreds of thousands of workers, farmers, and fishers lost their income, some Canadians began to demand government action.

## The On-to-Ottawa Trek

During the 1930s, thousands of mainly young, unmarried men rode freight trains across the country looking for work. In 1932, General Andrew McNaughton, a World War I veteran who had fought at Vimy Ridge, suggested that relief camps be set up in remote locations, especially northern B.C. and Ontario. Bennett followed this advice, and men who had no alternative began working to clear trees, build roads, and carry out other manual labour. But they were paid little and had to live in cold, crowded, poorly constructed shacks.

In April 1935, many of the men in the B.C. camps staged a walkout to demand better working conditions and higher wages. They left the camps and walked or hitched rides to Vancouver. There, they planned to jump on freight trains to take their case to the prime minister in Ottawa. Over the next two months, 1500 men gathered in Vancouver, where they held rallies and collected money for food.

Many people in Vancouver and along the route across the West supported the men. When the trekkers arrived in Golden, B.C., for example, townspeople were waiting with huge pots of stew. In Calgary, people donated food and supplies, and CPR officials showed the trekkers how to board the trains safely.

## CONNECTIONS

The Canadian Great Depression by the Numbers

Unemployment Rate

- 1929: less than 3 per cent
- 1933: 27 per cent

Business Profits and Losses

- 1929: \$398 million in profits
- 1933: \$98 million in losses

Exports

- 1933: had dropped by half since 1929

**Figure 9-12** Hundreds of unemployed workers climbed onto freight trains for the On-to-Ottawa Trek. How does this photograph provide evidence of the workers' desperation?

