

Name: Richards, Charles Dow (Hon.)

Riding: York, County of

Party: Conservative

Date Elected: GE 9 Oct. 1920. GE 10 Aug. 1925. BY-EL 26 Sept. 1925 (By ACCL). GE 19 Jun. 1930.

Positions Held: Leader of the Conservative Party, 1921 - 1925. Leader of the Opposition, 1921 - 1925. Appointed Minister of Lands and Mines, 14 Sept. 1925 - 18 May 1931. Premier of New Brunswick, 18 May 1931 - 2 Jun. 1933. Appointed Attorney General, 18 May 1931 - 2 Jun. 1933. Appointed a Justice of the Supreme Court of New Brunswick, King's Bench Division, 2 Jun. 1933 - 1 Oct. 1955. Appointed Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of New Brunswick, 3 Jun. 1948 - 1 Oct. 1955. Appointed a Justice of the New Brunswick Supreme Court, Appeal and Chancery Division, 3 Jun. 1948 - 1 Oct. 1955.

Cabinet Shuffle:

Retired: Retired from politics upon appointment to the Bench, 2 Jun. 1933. Retired from the judiciary due to old age, 1 Oct. 1955.

Defeated:

Died: Died at age 77 on 15 Sept. 1956 at Fredericton, N.B. Buried in Forest Hill Cemetery in Fredericton, N.B.

Notes: Born on 12 Jun. 1879 in Southampton, York County, N.B. The son of a York County farmer, Richards was educated at the Keswick public school, then the Provincial Normal School. He taught school briefly. In 1900, he enrolled in the University of New Brunswick to study philosophy and economics, and graduated with Class I Honours in 1904. He then taught school for a number of years. From 1906 to 1912, he was principal of the Woodstock Grammar School. He then studied law with the firm of Phinney & Crockett in Fredericton, and later with McLeod Vince of Woodstock from 1908 to 1911. Richards was admitted to the New Brunswick Bar as an attorney in 1911, and as a barrister in 1912. Relocating to Fredericton, he began his career as a lawyer in the capital.

From 1915 to 1933, Richards lectured in Contracts and Constitutional History at the University of New Brunswick Law School. He served as a member of the Memorial Building Committee at the university in 1923-1924, and was a long-time member of the university's Senate. He was eventually awarded an honorary L.L.D. in 1928 by this institution. In addition to his legal and educational involvement, Richards served on the local board of school trustees, and was a member of the local Board of Trade.

Richards entered provincial politics with his election to the Legislature in 1920. Shortly afterwards, when Conservative Leader John B. M. Baxter (q.v.) entered federal politics, Richards assumed the leadership of the party and was Leader of the Opposition. He acted in both capacities until Baxter's return to provincial politics in 1925. Following the election of 1925, when the Conservatives formed a government, Richards was appointed to cabinet as Minister of Lands and Mines. He held this portfolio until Premier Baxter resigned from politics upon his appointment to the New Brunswick Supreme Court. At that time, Richards succeeded Baxter as Premier of New Brunswick and Attorney General.

As Premier during the Great Depression, Richards dedicated much of his administration's time to focusing on unemployment relief and government construction projects, working with the federal government and municipalities to find solutions. His government also amended the Workmen's Compensation Act, introduced public bidding on Crown Land and fishing rights, and other administrative duties.

Writer Arthur Doyle described Richards as "'a dignified, straight-laced lawyer with a prim, dull personality.'" After months of unofficial rumours, in late May 1933, it became clear that Richards would be appointed to the Supreme Court of New Brunswick, King's Bench Division. The appointment was made official in Jun. 1933. He was later elevated to become the Chief Justice on 3 Jun. 1948. He remained on the bench until 1 Oct. 1955, when he retired due to age. Richards died less than a year later.

For more information see also: ""Prominent People of New Brunswick"" (Ref 920 M163); ""Prominent People of the Maritime Provinces in Business and Professional Life"" (Ref 920 P965.5); ""Premiers of New Brunswick"" (971.5 D754 NB Coll.); and ""The University of New Brunswick Register"" (378.715 N532R NB Coll.)

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