

# War and Upheaval: 1914–1919

Nearly a half-century after the First World War ended, retired schoolmaster John Sudbury still vividly recalled the hell of Passchendaele. As part of the 9th Canadian Machine Gun Company, he arrived on October 25, 1917, at a quagmire resulting from weeks of rain and intense shellfire that had churned the earth into a muddy, seemingly impassable bog. Just before sunrise, still under the cover of darkness, he went over the top. Almost immediately, Sudbury heard a thump behind him. Fortunately for him, the mud had absorbed most of the shrapnel, but when he called out to his comrade Stephens, he heard nothing; turning around, he saw only a few chunks of flesh. Sudbury's company continued pushing ahead in "pouring rain and complete darkness," listening for "groans and puffings," so they would not fall over one another. He passed a waterlogged shell hole where he made out two Germans bleeding profusely, boys he judged to be no more than 16. "The look in their eyes I have never been able to forget," he said. "A look of abject fear mingled somehow

Source: Queen's University Archives. A.A. Chesterton Fonds, V007, Box 16-18, Album 2.



with pity.”<sup>1</sup> He took a swig from his water bottle, tossed it to his helpless enemies, and continued moving towards his objective, taking cover from enemy and friendly shellfire not properly sequenced with the advance. Suddenly, his leg was jolted by a sharp, searing pain; he had been shot. He found himself alone, crawling through mud, trying to keep his head above the water to avoid drowning. Miraculously, he slithered back a half kilometre until he heard English voices. He was relieved by his “blighty,” a term used by troops for a wound serious enough to take them out of action, hopefully back to England, but not permanently disfiguring. He languished for hours as medical personnel tried to cope with the deluge of wounded. Gangrene set in, and after six unsuccessful operations, Sudbury’s leg was amputated.

**After reading this chapter you will be able to:**

1. Appreciate the devastating human impact of the First World War on Canada.
2. Assess how democracy and civil liberties in Canada were compromised by the war.
3. Identify how the Canadian economy was changed by wartime needs.
4. Explain the evolution of Canada's military forces through major campaigns and battles.
5. Understand the ways in which the war was a nation-building experience.
6. Recall major political and social divisions that the war brought to Canada.

## Introduction

The First World War still holds iconic status as the most brutal, wasteful, and soul-destroying conflict in modern history. It evokes images of muddy trenches, the killing ground of No-Man's Land, pervasive rats and lice, men hurled *en masse* into storms of shell and machine-gun fire, and a legacy of lost idealism and the death of romanticism. When it was fought, it was called the “Great War for Civilization,” a struggle to save the world from Prussian tyranny and militarism. However, historians present a far more complex picture of its origins, tracing them to the emergence of new European states and growing nationalist sentiment, competing economic aims and an arms race between major European powers and rival empires, and a series of alliances that created obligations and suspicions and that seemingly had nations blunder their way into an orgy of destruction.

Under the “Iron Chancellor” Otto von Bismarck and Kaiser Wilhelm II, a newly unified Germany pushed harder throughout the late nineteenth century on industrial, military, and territorial expansion. It decided not to renew treaties with Russia, instead allying with the Austrian-Hungarian Empire and creating a non-aggression pact with Italy in 1881 to create the Triple Alliance. This eventually prompted France and Russia to enter into an alliance to offset Berlin. Britain, fearful of Germany's growing naval strength, established mutual defence agreements with Russia and France. Europe became divided into two camps: the Entente Powers (Britain, France, and Russia) and the Central Powers (Germany, Austria-Hungary, and Italy; though in 1914, with war clouds gathering, Italy negotiated a secret pact with France to stay neutral, and the next year declared Germany the aggressor and joined the Entente).

The spark that set off the powder keg came on June 28, 1914, when Serb nationalists assassinated the heir to the Austrian throne, Archduke Franz Ferdinand. Although the Archduke was not especially popular at home, his murder challenged Austria-Hungary's aim to control the Balkans. The manner by which Austria demanded that the perpetrators be brought to justice essentially denied Serbia's sovereignty; but the purpose was to provoke war so that Austria-Hungary could reassert its dominance in the region. The Germans backed Austria-Hungary despite the possibility of war with Russia because of Russia's strong ties to Serbia. Germany hoped to divide the Entente, believing that France and Britain would not come to Russia's aid. On July 28, Austria-Hungary declared war on Serbia. Russia mobilized its forces, and on August 1, Germany went to war against Russia; France followed on August 3 by declaring war against Germany. Germany invaded Belgium to bypass and encircle France's powerful *Maginot* defensive line on the French-

German border, but this violated Belgian neutrality, which Britain had pledged to defend in a 75-year-old treaty, thus bringing it into the war on August 4.

It was to be the “war to end all wars,” an event that initially sparked celebrations across the globe, especially among young men who clamoured to partake in this decisive struggle, and to test their mettle, and who foresaw a great adventure. By the time it ended on November 11, 1918, the war had claimed 10 million military lives and 6 million civilian ones. Canada’s 67 000 dead and 172 000 wounded represented 3 percent of its population of 8 million.

In August 1914, Canada was still a colony. When Britain declared war, Canada was committed, but its permanent military numbered just 5000. At the time, Canada’s economy was still largely dependent upon the production, extraction, and export of staples. Soon, heavy industry flourished to feed the country’s growing war machine. Income and corporate taxes and nationwide social programs debuted. Some 630 000 Canadians, or nearly 8 percent of the country’s population, donned a military uniform. Canadian military historians generally agree that Canada’s army evolved into one of if not *the* best among the forces fighting against Germany and its allies. Seventy Canadians were recognized with the prestigious Victoria Cross, the British Empire’s highest award for bravery. Canada rose in stature within and developed ambitions that extended beyond the realm of the Empire. Indeed, it has become a standard refrain to say that Canada went from “colony to nation” on the basis of its wartime contributions, the collective pride that resulted, and the new international recognition it received. But was this worth nearly a quarter million casualties? Did the war really change Canada’s status? By 1914, Canada had already made it clear it would not accept imperial federation. Moreover, the conflict precipitated unprecedented assaults on freedoms and produced deep and long-lasting cleavages based upon language, religion, region, and class. This chapter explores the many ways that the First World War affected Canada and asks readers to weigh its impact on national development.



August 4, 1914:  
Britain declares war  
on Germany, thus also  
committing Canada.

## A Glorious Adventure

To Canadians, the Balkans always seemed engulfed in turmoil; thus, when the Austrian Archduke was assassinated, Canadian newspapers took notice but paid more attention to the sensational murder trail of Madame Caillaux, the wife of a former French premier, who shot the editor of the Paris newspaper *Le Figaro* to stop slanders against her husband. Days before Britain declared war, Prime Minister Borden was still vacationing in the Muskokas.

News of Britain’s declaration reached Canada on the morning of a Monday bank holiday. With many urban workers enjoying the day off, large crowds gathered outside newspaper offices to hear the latest developments. Newspapers printed multiple editions because people quickly snatched up copies. Technically, Canada’s involvement in the war was automatic. Until the Statute of Westminster in 1931 provided Canada and the other British dominions with control over their foreign policy, Britain declared war on behalf of the Empire. However, the level and form of Canada’s commitment lay with its own Parliament.

For many Canadians, the answer was clear-cut. Reports from across the country described enthusiastic, celebratory crowds breaking into renditions of “O Canada” and “God Save the King.” Certainly, some were worried, but they were not mentioned in newspapers. Although it was known that people died in wars, not since the American Civil

War in the 1860s had North America suffered mass casualties in battle. Also, with a severe economic downturn persisting well into 1915, military service meant a job paying at least \$1.10 a day and the means to support one's family, as money that soldiers sent home was supplemented by a government separation allowance and support from the privately run Canadian Patriotic Fund. Young men rushed to recruiting centres, as conventional wisdom held that hostilities would end by Christmas, as many experts said that neither side could sustain total war for more than a few months. Even the *nationaliste* leader, Henri Bourassa, initially said, "It is Canada's national duty to contribute according to her resources."<sup>2</sup>

Canada's Parliament unanimously approved an overseas contingent of 25 000 men, by far the country's greatest military commitment to date, and a war appropriation of \$50 million. Ottawa also armed itself with new, and unprecedented, powers to keep Canadians behind the cause. On August 22, the Conservative majority passed the *War Measures Act*, and made its powers retroactive to the beginning of the war, thus establishing criminal conduct before it was defined as such. The Act permitted Ottawa to impose a command economy, namely one run by the government and not market forces, to intern suspected dissenters, and to censor all means of communication. Those contravening the Act were liable to receive a \$5000 fine—about six times the average annual salary—five years in jail, or both.

Two days after Canada went to war, Minister of Militia and Defence Sam Hughes dispatched telegrams to the commanders of the country's 226 militia units instructing them to send men to a new military base he had ordered constructed at Valcartier, a barren and sandy expanse of land located 30 kilometres north of Quebec City. There were many other existing and suitable training sites, but they would not suit Canada's highly driven, charismatic, but also impulsive and overbearing, militia minister. Hughes sought to create an army of citizen soldiers whom he hoped to personally lead into battle. Reflecting his longstanding passion for the militia, whose members he portrayed as more adaptable than those belonging to the permanent force, whom he characterized as "professional loafers," he went so far as to send one of Canada's two permanent force battalions, the Royal Canadian Regiment, to Bermuda for garrison duty, thus robbing green recruits of highly capable trainers. To his credit, Hughes would spot and promote good militia commanders, namely Lieutenant-Colonel Arthur Currie, whom he put in charge of the 2nd Brigade. However, he also championed less competent friends and supporters, as well as his son Garnet who was widely regarded as a poor military leader but made second-in-command in the 3rd Brigade (though it was Garnet who convinced Currie to accept his father's offer of command, as Currie, a Victoria land developer, considered staying in Canada to raise money to pay back \$10 000 in regimental funds he had transferred to cover for bad investments).

By September, Hughes's unrelenting efforts resulted in the appearance of a tent city at Valcartier housing in what had grown to be 33 000 members of the Canadian Expeditionary Force (CEF). The chaotic process of development generated many troubling questions, especially about cost overruns, such as for medicine, binoculars, and horses that seemed ready for the glue factory. Hughes also insisted on having men equipped with the Canadian-made Ross rifle. A decade earlier, he had convinced Laurier to adopt it for the militia, a sales job made easier since Charles Ross agreed to place his rifle factory in the prime minister's home riding of Quebec East. The Ross was accurate and powerful but could fire only five rounds

a minute, one-third the rate of the Lee-Enfield, the standard issue for British soldiers. The Ross was also expensive to manufacture; was too long for the confines of trench warfare; had defective sites; and easily jammed. Besides equipment problems, some two-thirds of the original CEF were British-born men who were eager to assist their homeland, but this portended future recruitment problems as the number of these expatriates dwindled.

Initially, it seemed everyone wanted to demonstrate patriotism. Soon after Canada joined the war, department store owner John Eaton donated \$100 000 for armoured cars equipped with Colt machine guns. By the end of August 1914, the Imperial Order Daughters of the Empire (IODE) raised \$100 000 to establish a hospital ship. Several businesses, no doubt anticipating a short war, continued paying the salaries of employees who enlisted to their families. Toronto's municipal government contributed 100 horses to the army, continued paying its employees who enlisted, and provided them with a life insurance policy, a gesture it quietly dropped in 1915. The first nationwide appeal for the Canadian Patriotic Fund at the end of August 1914, which was to provide money to the dependants of servicemen, quickly exceeded its \$6 million target. Canadians responded to the rallying cry that if one could not "fight," then they should "pay" to help those at home who had sacrificed through the enlistment of a loved one. Yet, to keep the fund solvent and to promote certain conduct, only women who demonstrated financial need, acted frugally, and remained beyond moral reproach received support. Assistance ranged from \$10 to \$20 a month and when added to money garnished from a soldier's pay to send home and the government separation allowance, the support provided was roughly equivalent to the salary of an unskilled male worker. Although Canadians responded well to periodic drives to replenish the Patriotic Fund, it struggled to meet the need as the number of recruits grew and wartime inflation mounted, and thus required increased government contributions. In the Second World War, the Patriotic Fund was dropped in favour of a government-financed dependants' allowance, whose monthly minimum was raised to \$35.



*Torontonians pitch in to raise money for the Canadian Patriotic Fund.*

## The Enemy Within

As Canada's first total war, many Canadians worried about spies and saboteurs, especially with a neutral United States containing millions of German Americans. Up to 16 000 Canadian militia personnel patrolled the international border and guarded arsenals and critical infrastructure. Soon after the war started, Canadian militiamen near Niagara Falls killed two American hunters; the jittery and inexperienced soldiers feared that the Americans were scouts for a hostile force. With time and no attacks, anxiety eased, though fears were periodically stoked by newspaper accounts of nefarious schemes afoot, such as in early 1915 when two German Americans were arrested in Detroit for plotting to destroy buildings in Windsor and Walkerton, Ontario. The February 1916 fire that demolished the House of Commons, which was caused by a combination of careless smoking, piles of paper lying about, and highly oiled pine desks, chairs, and panelling, was initially blamed in screaming newspaper headlines on German-American saboteurs. Parliament was transferred to the nearby Victoria Natural History Museum, where some joked that the "fossils were moved out and a new batch moved in."<sup>3</sup> Also in spring 1916, the majority Anglo population in the southwestern Ontario community of Berlin led a successful name-changing campaign to Kitchener to commemorate the late British minister of war. During the contest, soldiers with the 118th battalion stole a bust of Kaiser Wilhelm I from the German Concordia Club, dumped it into Victoria Lake, and sacked the premises, ignoring the fact that the club had ceased operations for more than a year and that almost half its members had volunteered to fight for Canada.



*October 1914:  
Internment of Ukrainian  
Canadians commences.*

One thing most German Canadians had going for them was that their long-settled status in Canada made them British subjects. This was not the case with some 60 000 more recently arrived Ukrainians from the Austrian-controlled province of Galicia, who were classified as enemy aliens. Canada's federal government promised them equal treatment so long as they obeyed the laws of the land, yet, within a month of the war starting, Sir William Otter, the first Canadian-born general officer commanding, was convinced to come out of retirement to become the director of internment operations. Authorities noted that in August 1914 the Western Canadian Ukrainian spiritual leader, Bishop Nicholas Budka, advised his followers "to support the peace-loving [Austrian] Emperor Franz-Joseph." Within a week, Budka recanted, insisting that all Ukrainians were "faithful citizens of ... the British Empire."<sup>4</sup> Understandably, many considered the second comment dishonest, but it was assumed that numerous Galicians would follow Budka's initial, and subversive, advice.

Enemy aliens were ordered to register their location with authorities. Those who tried to leave the country, such as to find work in the United States, were interned, as it was assumed they were attempting to get home to fight for the enemy. Canada interned 8579 individuals, though if the 3100 German reservists and the 800 prisoners-of-war sent to Canada by British authorities are subtracted, the remaining 4679 comprised about 8 percent of potential enemy aliens.

Twenty-four internment stations were established in British Columbia, Alberta, Ontario, Quebec, and Nova Scotia. Living facilities for the inmates included tents, railway cars, bunkhouses, armouries, barracks, forts, exhibition buildings, and factories. In Kingston, German POWs were housed in Fort Henry, a stone garrison built in the 1830s to defend

Canada from an American invasion that never happened. Others, especially Ukrainians, were sent to remote places, such as Kapuskasing in northern Ontario and Spirit Lake in northern Quebec, as well to work in Canada’s emerging national parks, such as Banff, where they built roads with pick-and-shovel, setting the groundwork for what politicians predicted would be a post-war tourist boom. Some 100 prisoners died from illnesses, and six were killed, including for trying to escape. In 1916, as Canada’s labour surplus transformed into a shortage, most Ukrainian internees were paroled, though only if they accepted certain work, such as farm labour.

## Into the Breach

In the first month of the war, German forces advanced rapidly, all the way to the outskirts of Paris. They were turned back in early September at the Battle of the Marne. Both sides then literally dug in, starting the construction of a trench network that would snake its way through France and Belgium all the way from the Swiss border to the North Sea. However, the Germans maintained control over higher ground and built their trenches on the reverse side of hills or slopes, which provided better protection against artillery fire.



Source: Veterans Affairs Canada.

On October 15, 1914, cheering crowds in Plymouth, England, greeted the first Canadian troops to arrive. Known as the 1st Division, its members were to continue training at Salisbury Plain, a plateau in south-central England. After a week of pleasant weather, rain came, and came—the rain fell for 89 out of 123 days, creating massive flooding as the chalky terrain could not soak up the water. Tents leaked, uniforms became sodden, Canadian-made boots disintegrated in the swamp-like conditions (which brought accusations of shoddy work and profiteering), and there resulted a massive influenza rate and an outbreak of cerebrospinal meningitis. Responding to growing outrage among the Canadians, a British division was moved from their huts at Shorncliffe camp near Dover to make room for them.

In February 1915, the 1st Division moved to France under the command of British General Edmund Alderson, who had experience leading Canadian troops in the 1899–1902 Boer War. They joined the British at Neuve Chapelle, where the Canadians experienced their baptism by fire from March 10 to 12. The British had borne the brunt in the sector, taking nearly 13 000 casualties over a much longer period, compared with only 100 for Canada.

But this was the proverbial calm before the storm, as in late April there came the 2nd Battle of Ypres. With Germany occupying nearly all of Belgium, the allies were determined to hold a 20 square kilometre salient in the country that protruded into enemy lines. The Canadians arrived on April 14 to relieve France's 11th Division. The enemy enjoyed superior firepower and was determined to make a breakthrough. April 22 dawned warm and sunny, but things soon turned ghastly as the Canadians saw French territorial soldiers from Algeria retreating in panic, some literally turning green from chlorine gas. A six kilometre breach was opened up in the allied lines, and the Canadians were the only thing standing in the way of a major German advance. On April 24, cylinders released a toxic cloud directed at Canadian lines. As the eerie green mist approached, Canadian soldiers, still a year away from receiving decent gas masks, were ordered to urinate into a cloth and hold it over their mouth and nose, as the ammonia would help neutralize the gas. To make matters worse, the Ross rifle failed in the heat of battle. Men frantically kicked away at its seized bolts; the lucky ones grabbed Lee-Enfield rifles from dead British soldiers. Over 16 days, the Canadians took 6000 casualties, one-third of their fighting force. Nevertheless, the battle became celebrated because Canadian defences ultimately held and the salient was saved. From this clash there also came Canada's most famous words about the First World War: the poem "In Flanders Fields." Written by Captain John McCrae, its poignant verses made the poppy into a symbol of remembrance for the Great War. A surgeon with the 1st Field Artillery Brigade, McCrae was badly shaken by the death of a personal friend. At first, his poem laments: "We are the dead. Short days ago / We lived, felt dawn, saw sunset glow / Loved and were loved, and now we lie / In Flanders fields." So that such sacrifice not be given in vain, McCrae implores readers to "Take up our quarrel with the foe / To you from failing hands we throw / The torch; be yours to hold it high / If ye break faith with us who die / We shall not sleep, though poppies grow / In Flanders fields."

Troops generally followed six- to seven-day rotating shifts between the forward firing line, support, and reserve trenches. Life at the front was often vile: Men frequently went without bathing for weeks; trenches were often waterlogged, and the dugouts in which men slept were usually ledges dredged into the dirt walls; rotting food, wet uniforms,



April 22–May 3, 1915:  
2nd Battle of Ypres.



Canadian soldiers draining trenches on the Western Front, July 1916.

Source: Library and Archives of Canada, PA-000396.

open-pit latrines, and sometimes decomposing bodies produced an indescribable stench; rats fed off corpses and army rations; lice infested uniforms, laying their eggs in the seams; and enemy shelling often seemed relentless. Even in a relatively minor battle like Neuve Chapelle, more shells were fired than during the entire Boer War. In many sectors, men dared not look over the trenches, lest a sniper pick them off. Thousands were immobilized with shell shock or what some military authorities sarcastically called “hysterical sympathy with the enemy.” Medical personnel often implemented electro-shock therapy to ferret out fakers, to prevent others from following suit, and to force men to conquer their fears. Men were sustained by close relationships forged with their comrades. They also coped by developing a sardonic sense of humour, as expressed in raunchy songs and in regimental and battalion newspapers that poked fun at authority figures and the sorry predicament of the “poor bloody infantry.”

Compounding difficulties was that Germany enjoyed air superiority during the first half of the war. Canada had no air force at the war’s outset because its leaders did not view the country as prone to aerial attack. The navy wasn’t much better. Canadian vessels were few, poorly armed, and obsolete. Soon after the war started, British Columbia’s government, fearing an attack on its unguarded coastline, bought two small and unarmed submarines from a Seattle company; the cost amounted to two times the federal government’s 1912–1913 budget for the navy.

## Rallying the Home Front

Long casualty lists were countered by inspirational press coverage. Most journalists were eager to do their bit. Canada’s most significant figure in providing battlefield accounts was William Maxwell Aitken, who, in March 1915, was appointed as the official *eyewitness*



June 1915, office of  
the chief press censor  
created in Canada.

for the Canadian press. After making a fortune in Canada by selling industrial bonds and by arranging corporate mergers, Aitken pursued broader horizons in England. By the outset of the First World War, he had obtained a controlling interest in the Rolls Royce Company and a substantial piece of the London *Daily Express*, and ran successfully for Britain's Parliament. Keen to promote Canada within the British Empire, he helped bankroll the creation of the Canadian War Records Office (CWRO), which was to collect documentation about Canada's war effort, and became its director in January 1915. He also established Canada's official war art program that seconded British and Canadian painters (including several who in the 1920s formed Canada's renowned Group of Seven), as Aitken envisaged such work as becoming a central piece of a future Canadian war museum. Based largely on his work for Canada, which also involved the production of photographic and film propaganda, in 1916 he was appointed to oversee the creation of newsreel propaganda for Britain, in 1917 was given a peerage as the 1st Baron of Beaverbrook, and in 1918 was made Britain's minister of information.

In Canada, the leakage of some sensitive news early in the war, such as troopship departure times, convinced Ottawa to create in June 1915 the position of chief press censor, who received authority to prohibit sources "preventing, embarrassing, or hindering the successful prosecution of the war."<sup>5</sup> The chief censor banned 253 printed sources, with 222 coming from the United States and 164 written in a foreign language, particularly those of Canada's enemies. Historian Jeff Keshen argues that Canadian civilians remained well sheltered from knowing the gruesome realities of war, not only because of censorship but also as a result of Canada's great distance from the battlefields of Europe. However, in his intensive study of Toronto newspapers, historian Ian Miller counters that civilians did read truthful, and sometimes graphic, accounts of battles, which were underlined by long casualty lists and honest letters sent home from Canadians fighting overseas.<sup>6</sup>

Given that before the war, Germany was a leading force in the development of art, music, literature, and other areas linked to an advanced civilization, much of the earlier discourse blamed its aggression and militarism on the ambitions of Kaiser Wilhelm II, but the message soon changed to indict all Germans. Starting in late 1914, information emerged reporting on German atrocities against Belgian civilians, which sparked the creation of citizen-run Belgian Relief Committees across Canada. Many accusations, such as Belgian women and babies being killed and mutilated, were issued and given legitimacy by the British government's 1915 Bryce Commission, though after the war they were shown to be based upon fabricated testimony by Belgian refugees.

In May 1915, the British passenger ship *Lusitania* was sunk, with a loss of 1198 lives, including 170 Canadians. Berlin's assertion that the vessel carried munitions, which was likely true, was denounced as a vicious lie spread by a brutal enemy accused of striking a medal to honour those who committed the monstrous deed. The Germans became called "Huns" after the fifth-century marauding warriors under Attila the Hun and were said to be motivated by the ethos of *kultur*, namely a belief in their superiority and their right to impose their will on others.

In Canada's churches, a common message became that Britain and its allies were providing "Christ's soldiers." Young Canadians were fed a steady diet of pro-war propaganda. New books on Ontario's high school curriculum included *How Britain Strove for*

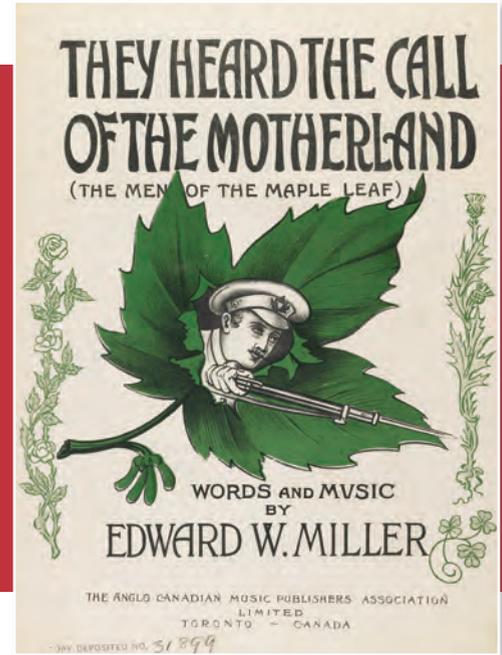
*Peace and Germany's Swelled Head.* The war also inspired some 300 patriotic tunes written by Canadians. For example, in Harry Taylor's "We'll Love You More When You Come Back Than When You Went Away," a young man's mother and his wife urge him to perform his duty to King and country.

Grassroots volunteer initiatives to support the war effort enveloped communities. Women, particularly those from the upper and middle class, who had more free time, influence, and connections, led numerous campaigns. The IODE, whose membership grew by one-third to 40 000 during the war, sent supplies to military hospitals and millions of books, magazines, and cigarettes to soldiers. In Ottawa, the Women's Canadian Club started a tea shop and second-hand store that raised thousands of dollars for various war charities. The volunteers the club recruited, including the wives of Prime Minister Borden and Opposition Leader Laurier, helped staff major retail stores, which, on specified days, turned over a portion of their profits to support the war effort. As well, fundraising efforts organized by the Local Council of Women included variety shows using local talent.

In the first third of the war, military recruitment remained strong. By early 1915, Canada had raised a 2nd Division, which, when arriving in England in September to join the 1st Division, resulted in the creation of the Canadian Corps. Prior to September 1915, 69 of 71 infantry battalions authorized by Ottawa attained full strength. In many cases, men were drawn into regiments on the basis of ethnic background, like the Toronto Scottish. There were Sportsmen or Pals Battalions promoting combat as a comparatively safe and manly game. Imperialistic sentiment was used, such as by Ottawa's 207th, which in one of its recruiting posters showed an officer pointing to the Union Jack that he proclaimed, "stands for liberty." Reflecting current conceptions of manliness and duty, the Niagara-based 98th Battalion advertised that to shirk military service was "to live in humiliation."<sup>7</sup>

During the earlier part of the war, it often seemed that men volunteering for military service were trying to join an exclusive club. Deluged with applicants, Toronto's Queen's Own Rifles said it would accept only those with militia experience. In August and September 1914, more than 5000 Canadian men were rejected for military service on medical grounds and through to 1916, the rejection rate was 25 percent, with the principal reasons being

- failure to meet height (5 foot 4 inches or 1.63 metres) and expanded chest (34 inches or 86 centimetres) requirements
- bad teeth (as men overseas often had to subsist on hard tack)
- flat feet
- varicose veins
- poor hearing or eyesight
- low intelligence
- tuberculosis and venereal disease



*Canada's loyalty to Britain was a theme in numerous war songs.*

Source: Library and Archives of Canada, Sheet Music from Canada's Past. Edward W. Miller, *They Heard the Call of the Motherland* (Toronto: Anglo-Canadian Music Publishers Assn., 1916).

Married men were required to get their wives' written permission to enlist, a policy advocated by Sam Hughes, who insisted it was a man's duty to properly provide for his dependants. Realizing that rejected men, in looking outwardly healthy, would likely face public scorn, the government issued a lapel pin with the initials A.R. meaning "applied, rejected."

As the war dragged on, recruiting problems became evident, and the pressure to enlist intensified, especially in English Canada. Citizen recruiting committees visited employers to identify men who could or should be pressed into uniform, and then arranged for follow-up appeals by military recruiters. Patriotic rallies turned into recruiting drives. At one massive gathering in Toronto's Riverdale Park in the summer of 1915, where the crowd was estimated at 200 000, a number of women walked through the throng with a torn pillow, placing chicken feathers on men in civilian clothes to shame them into service. Convinced of the unique ability of women to influence men to join up, the commanding officer of the Toronto-based 124th Overseas Battalion, Lieutenant-Colonel W.B. Kingsmill, implored women to shun those who refused to don a uniform: "Bar them out, you women. Refuse their invitations, scorn their attentions. For the love of heaven, if they won't be men, then you won't be women. Tell them to come in uniform. Tell them to join the colours while they can still do so with honour."<sup>8</sup> In Toronto, one estimate concluded that two-thirds of those who were eligible ultimately volunteered for military service, though this was in a city whose population was four-fifths Anglo and Protestant.

By contrast, many Francophones saw the First World War as Britain's conflict. Native-born Anglo-Canadians demonstrated less inclination to enlist compared with British expatriates. Lower recruitment in the Maritimes—9.96 percent of those aged 18 to 45, compared with 14.42 percent in Ontario and 15.52 in the Prairies—reflected less enthusiasm among Acadians, a long-settled Anglo population, and an economic boom in port cities, which meant more well-paying jobs in a region that had long suffered from a declining economy. Also in many Central Canadian urban centres, recruitment was hurt by expanding opportunities for decently paid war jobs, while in rural Canada young men were increasingly needed on farms to meet the growing demand for food. By the end of 1915, Canada had recruited nearly a quarter million volunteers for military service, but rising casualties, especially by Britain, which implemented conscription in January 1916, intensified pressure on Canada to do more. On New Year's Day 1916, Robert Borden publicly committed Canada to the lofty and symbolic (but also, many military leaders said, unrealistic) goal of raising a voluntary army of half a million men.

The greatest challenge with recruitment was in Quebec. Hughes, supremely confident to the point of self-delusion, brushed aside his membership in the Orange Order and support for *Regulation 17*, and believed that his Huguenot ancestry would rally Québécois to his side. When the war started, he had an opportunity to change negative perceptions of himself and the belief among Francophones that Canada's military was an Anglo institution, as, for instance, in 1912 only 27 of 254 Canadian officers were Francophones. This also meant that there were few French-Canadian officers to lead regiments and to help with recruitment. With French Canada initially demonstrating some enthusiasm for the war, enough Québécois volunteered for the 1st Division to start a French-speaking regiment, but Hughes, seeking to create a unified Canadian military, dispersed Francophones into Anglo-dominated

battalions. Only with considerable pressure from prominent French-Canadian politicians, and a \$50 000 donation from the Montreal doctor and militarist Arthur Mignault, was the French-commanded and French-speaking 22nd Battalion created within Canada's 2nd Division. To fill the ranks of the 22nd, it was necessary to recruit Francophones from across Canada.

The fact that French Canadians married younger and more often had families to support hurt their recruitment. Many were needed on farms, while in urban areas, particularly Montreal, well-paying industrial war jobs were a stronger attraction than \$1.10 a day as a private. Ontario's *Regulation 17* continued to sow bitterness and further damaged French-Canadian recruitment, especially as it generated well-publicized flashpoints. In October 1915, two French-speaking teachers were fired from Ottawa's Guigues School for not instructing in English. They re-established classes at a nearby private home, and Francophone students boycotted the provincially appointed replacements at Guigues. Francophone school commissioners, who had also been fired by the provincial government for defying *Regulation 17*, orchestrated an invasion of Guigues. Parents stormed the school and for several days women held off the police with long hatpins. In Quebec, many claimed that the real Prussians were next door in Ontario, not overseas. A petition from Quebec bearing 600 000 signatures demanded the repeal of the legislation. In Parliament, Laurier, so as not to alienate his Anglo supporters and MPs (who were starting to grumble about his opposition to conscription), had Ernest Lapointe, who since 1904 had represented the rural Quebec riding of Kamaouraska, introduce a resolution in Parliament asking that the Borden government urge Ontario to rescind *Regulation 17*. The federal government maintained that schooling fell under provincial jurisdiction, and, with its parliamentary majority, soundly defeated the Lapointe proposal.

## Economic Expansion

Rising demand for food, both in growing and increasingly industrialized Canadian cities and to feed troops and civilians overseas, provided for a major upsurge in agriculture. Canadian cheese and pork exports reached record levels. Between 1914 and 1919, the price of wheat tripled because of enormous demand, yet problems also emerged through a combination of overexpansion (to take advantage of high prices) and the federal government strongly encouraging Western farmers to solely emphasize wheat, a situation that soon tied the prairie economy more strongly to one crop and made it highly susceptible to a major downturn, which is what happened when wheat prices tumbled after the war.

Canadian farms had to deal with growing labour shortages as young men joined the military or took better-paying urban war jobs. Also in the West, there were complaints that the federal government overwhelmingly directed war contracts to Central Canada, bypassing Winnipeg, then Canada's third largest city. Ottawa claimed that its sole consideration was efficiency and that industries in Central Canada were larger, more mechanized, and had better access to labour, capital, and transportation. Playing a key role in developing the federal government's industrial mobilization strategy was Solicitor-General Arthur Meighen, who represented the Manitoba riding of Portage La Prairie.

By March 1915, 200 Canadian firms were involved in war production. Ontario produced 60 percent of munitions in Canada. Although out-migration occurred from the Maritimes



*December 1915:  
Imperial Munitions  
Board established.*

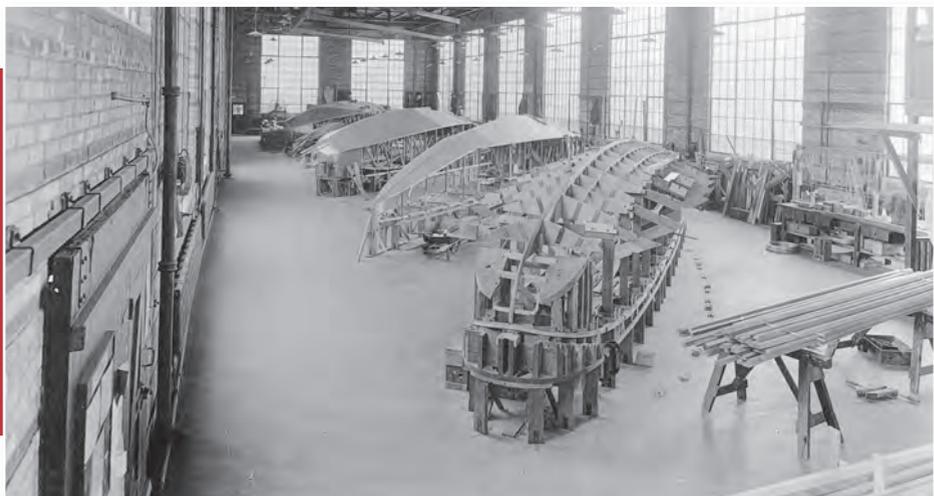
as people took war jobs in Central Canada, the value of exports passing through Halifax soared from less than \$20 million in 1915 to \$140 million two years later, while Cape Breton experienced a major upsurge in coal production in large part to feed war industries.

Initially, war contracts were arranged through the federal government's Shell Committee, but it was grossly mismanaged under Colonel J. Wesley Allison, an old militia friend of Sam Hughes. Complaints multiplied over defective products, including an abnormally high proportion of shells that were duds. The committee signed contracts for items whose price seemed exorbitant, and accusations multiplied about war profiteering and committee members being on the take. By the end of 1915, the British government became so disgusted with the state of affairs that it threatened not to purchase any more Canadian shells.

In December 1915, the Imperial Munitions Board (IMB) replaced the Shell Committee. Technically, the IMB was an arm of the British government, but in Canada a Canadian, Joseph Flavelle, president of the massive William Davies meat packing company, ran it. Under the IMB's direction, Canada became a significant arms producer and supplier, and did so with contracts that set down strict quality control, delivery deadlines, and maximum profits, typically in the 5 percent range. By 1917, Canada was producing nearly 30 percent of the ammunition used by Britain. Some 600 factories and 25 000 workers became linked to the IMB, which quickly evolved into Canada's largest corporate enterprise, which included chemical factories, shipyards, submarine construction at Canadian Vickers in Montreal, and aircraft production at the IMB's Canadian Aeroplanes Limited plant in Toronto.

Still, the IMB was not free from controversy. Its relations with labour were strained. Flavelle rejected a "fair-wage clause," fearing that if it were linked with the IMB, it would become a goal in every labour dispute and the additional costs could hurt war production. In 1916, Hamilton munitions workers at an IMB-affiliated company went on strike, which Canada's chief censor ordered newspapers not to report. Also, the IMB suffered a public relations disaster when Canada's new cost-of-living commissioner reported that William Davies made an 85 percent profit in 1916, partly from injecting water into bacon to exaggerate its weight. Flavelle became an object of scorn, sarcastically nicknamed "His Lardship" or the "Baron of Bacon."

*Canadian Aeroplanes Limited  
produced nearly 3000 trainers,  
most notably the JN4.  
Pictured here, however, are  
hulls being assembled for the  
far larger F-5 Flying Boat.*



Source: Library and Archives of Canada, PA-025197.

## Increasing Professionalism Overseas

In March 1916, Canada's still largely untested 2nd Division arrived at St. Eloi, just to the south of Ypres. On March 27, the British set off six massive mines underneath German trenches and advanced some 300 metres. The Canadians joined the battle on the night of April 3, but their communications broke down and large numbers could not locate themselves on maps because the terrain was so altered. They lost much of the British-captured ground, a failure that cost General Alderson his command.

Alderson's replacement was Britain's Lieutenant-General Julian Byng. He had commanded Canadians in the Boer War and in May 1915 supervised the successful British withdrawal from the doomed Gallipoli mission against Turkey. Nicknamed "Bungo" in his early years, some expressed doubts about Byng, who, it was said, got his breaks because his father, the Earl of Strafford, was a friend of the Prince of Wales. As head of the Canadian Corps, Byng proved to be a "cool and effective field commander"<sup>9</sup> and, with a friendly demeanour, was popular among the men; however, his first battles in June at Sanctuary Woods and at Mount Sorrel were disappointments. The Canadians fell back 700 metres, suffered 8500 casualties, and eight of Byng's battalion commanders were incapacitated with shell shock.

For the allies, the war reached a low point in mid-1916. To relieve pressure on the French, who were suffering massive casualties at Verdun, and convinced that German defences could be broken and the stalemate on the Western Front ended, Britain's Commander-in-Chief, Douglas Haig, prepared for a massive attack at the Somme. The Germans knew it was coming. Nearly 2 million shells were fired off in advance, but they failed to destroy well-fortified dugouts where the enemy waited. On July 1, British troops, many of whom were over-laden with equipment, struggled over trench parapets. Slowly advancing towards German lines, they were slaughtered, suffering 56 470 casualties, 19 240 of which were fatal, the bloodiest single day ever for the British military. That day, along with the entire Somme campaign that lasted until late November, came to personify for many the utter futility and carnage of the Great War, as over those five months the British advanced only 10 kilometres at the cost of 420 000 casualties, along with 200 000 casualties for the French and 500 000 for the Germans. Among those decimated on July 1 was the Newfoundland Regiment. In just half an hour at Beaumont Hamel, of 830 who went over the top, more than 700 became casualties, about half of whom were killed. Over the course of the Somme campaign, Canada suffered 24 000 casualties, including 8000 dead.

In spite of everything, Canadian forces learned, adapted, and improved. Training became more specialized, incorporating the bloody lessons of battle. The movement towards building a more professional army was further helped along by the declining influence of Sam Hughes as a result of recruitment problems and his worsening relations with Borden. Also reflecting the trend of professionalization, as well as the growing determination of the Canadian government to have a greater say over the use of the country's troops, was the creation of Canada's London-based Ministry of Overseas Military Forces in autumn 1916. It was to better coordinate with the British on standardizing and improving training, and to ensure that better-prepared Canadian officers took on broader leadership roles.



*July 1, 1916: Battle of the Somme starts.*

Canadian tactics and leadership became more effective. General Arthur Currie, who had risen to command the 1st Division, after having proven himself cool under fire and whose strategy at 2nd Ypres was key in turning back the German offensive, developed “bite and hold” infantry tactics in coordination with rolling artillery barrages that became a central feature in Canadian advances. In September, Canadian forces pushed forward 3000 metres to capture the village of Courcellette, the longest sustained advance by the allies in the Somme campaign. The battle became known for the first major use of tanks, something played up in newsreels, including in the CWRO film, *The Battle of Courcellette*, which had bilingual subtitles and toured extensively in Quebec, accompanied by two wounded French veterans because of the major role played by the 22nd Battalion in the advance. The *land ships*, as tanks were initially called, were presented to theatregoers as certain to crush the Germans, especially since the enemy was slow to develop them. While later versions of the tank were moderately effective, the Mark I, the model shown in this movie, moved only as fast as a man walking and also provided enemy artillery with an easy target because of its propensity to break down.

Canadian troops were acquiring a fierce reputation for trench raiding. These night-time operations involved a group of riflemen, bombers, and wire-cutters to attack a portion of the enemy lines to create fear, inflict damage, and gather information, including by capturing the enemy. Between November 1916 and the end of March 1917, the Canadians launched 60 raids, 48 of which managed to reach German trenches and take 338 prisoners. Also, though not publicized in Canada because of its association with German fiendishness, Canadians became proficient in the use of poison gas like phosgene. Moreover, better coordination was being achieved between artillery and advancing infantry; intelligence gathering became more effective; an expanding service corps that between 1916 and 1918 doubled to five metric tons the amount of shells delivered daily to the front was better supplying Canadian troops; and mass linear assaults that consistently produced high casualties were being replaced by synchronization between self-contained platoons of bombers and riflemen.

## Looming Crises at Home

Borden’s announcement of a half-million man military initially inspired more enlistments: 29 185 in January, 26 658 in February, and 34 913 in March 1916. However, in no month after June 1916 did more than 10 000 men volunteer, and in the 13 months before the first call-up of conscripts in January 1918, not one infantry battalion achieved full strength. Hughes’s political stock plummeted with waning recruitment and allegations of corruption involving the Shell Committee, which were confirmed by a 1916 Royal Commission. Hughes also openly denounced Borden’s decision to establish the Ministry of the Overseas Military Forces, which he saw as openly challenging his management of Canada’s military. He was convinced that he could bully Borden—whom he regarded as genial but weak—into reversing his decision. The gamble backfired, and on November 9 Hughes was fired and replaced by the more low-key, but competent, Toronto industrialist Edward Kemp.

As the demands of the war intensified, it created conditions for modest social change. In August 1914, the Red Cross established 100 spots for Canadian women to go overseas as nurses. Nurses were typically portrayed in terms that denied their professionalism by tapping into traditional notions of womanhood, namely the belief that women were

selfless, self-sacrificing “angels of mercy” that was even reflected in their quasi-religious uniform of a white nun-like dress. More than 6000 women applied, eager to contribute, show their patriotism, travel, grow within their profession, and experience adventure. All told, 2504 Canadian nurses, and roughly 2000 less-trained members of Voluntary Aid Detachments who performed medical, clerical, and driving duties, served in England, France, and the Eastern Mediterranean in Gallipoli, Alexandria, and Salonika. Unlike their British counterparts, Canadian nursing sisters were commissioned with the rank of lieutenant, though they did not have any power over males of subordinate rank. Many worked at casualty clearing stations, performing triage and administering basic care, sometimes within range of enemy artillery. Thirty-six Canadian nursing sisters died during the Great War while serving outside of Canada—15 at sea, 15 from disease, and 6 from enemy shell fire.

Women took an array of jobs to release more men for overseas service and to meet growing demands at home. Some 35 000 were hired in munitions plants, almost all in Ontario, and 6000 in an expanding wartime civil service, overwhelmingly in clerical positions. Women also assumed new roles as bank tellers, streetcar conductors, and as police matrons. However, convinced that female labour was temporary, many companies did not bother to create decent separate facilities. In 1918, the Ontario government distributed circulars telling women workers that they should prepare to leave their wartime jobs to make room for veterans.

The war also affected race relations. Aboriginal peoples were initially kept out of uniform because it was said that the enemy would not accord “savages” civilized treatment. The ban was never fully enforced and in December 1915 was formally removed, and 3500 Natives enlisted. Some saw enlistment as a means to escape poverty on reserves, others as a way to earn respect and better treatment for their people, and some perceived it as reflecting their treaty status in which they swore allegiance to the Crown in exchange for certain rights and privileges. Overseas, some Natives fought alongside whites, but large numbers were segregated into labour and forestry battalions that, though having the advantage of suffering lower casualties, were perceived as less important.

In Canada, the *Indian Act* was amended to make it easier for the federal government to take over or lease reserve land for war needs. However, later in the war, Natives claimed they could not legally be conscripted since they were not citizens and did not have the right to vote; and in January 1918 they were granted exemption from conscription, as were Asians because they too were denied the franchise. Native leaders hoped that loyal service would win greater rights for their people, but soon after the war, Fred Loft, a Mohawk veteran who rose to the rank of lieutenant, realizing that virtually nothing had changed, started the Pan-Canadian League of Natives, an initiative that spoke to growing frustration and activism among Aboriginals.

Chinese and East Indians were also initially excluded from the Canadian military, though enforcement was often lax, especially in areas where recruitment shortages became more serious. With Japan as a wartime ally, the Japanese were admitted into Canada’s army and many saw combat. Many black Canadians sought to enlist with the expectation that it would bring greater equality. Some were accepted into combat units, like the Black Watch of Montreal, but many more were rejected in what they were told was a “white man’s war.” In April 1916, the No. 2 Construction Battalion was created, an all-black and white-



April 1916:  
No. 2 Construction  
Battalion established.

commanded formation located in Nova Scotia. Attached to the Forestry Corps in France, its members worked as loggers and in lumber mills, and performed construction and shipping work, including the building and repairing of trenches. Although they worked alongside white soldiers, they remained segregated when it came to non-work activities.

By the time Canada's forces reached four divisions in 1916, it required 75 000 recruits per year to maintain its fighting strength. With rising casualties making the enlistment shortfall more critical, the military softened enlistment rules. In 1915, a married man no longer required his wife's written permission to enlist. The April 1915 creation of the Canadian Army Dental Corps meant that recruits with bad teeth could be admitted; for many men it was their first trip to a dentist. In July, the minimum height for infantrymen was lowered to 5 foot 2 inches (1.57 metres), and to 5 feet (1.52 metres) in early 1917, and the chest measurement was dropped to 33 inches (84 centimetres). In late 1915, minimal eyesight requirements were lowered, and the next year those with flat feet were admitted because of the recent development of corrective boots. Later in 1916, men were being admitted with varicose veins, partial deafness, and even missing fingers, so long as it was determined by doctors that they could still perform their duty.

Nevertheless, the growing crisis with enlistment led to more finger pointing, particularly at Quebec. By mid-1916, 27 percent of Canadians lived in Quebec, but only 14 percent of recruits came from the province, and a large number of those were from Quebec's Anglo minority. In April 1916, the Hamilton Recruiting League, a citizen-run organization, became the first of its type to formally demand the implementation of conscription, declaring it essential if Canada was to reach its goal of a 500 000-man army. They declared it was the fairest system because it exacted the same sacrifice from all those deemed eligible to fight. Soon, scores of organizations were pushing for conscription, as were newspapers, though they were overwhelmingly Anglo.

Some attempted to calm the mounting discord in French–English relations. In June 1916, John Milton Godfrey, a prominent Toronto lawyer and Liberal, but also an imperialist who was president of the Canadian National Service League (which was started in April 1916 to help Canada reach its target of 500 000 military volunteers), and Arthur Hawkes, a journalist and publicist for the Canadian Northern Railway, started the *Bonne Entente*, whose first meeting was at Toronto's prestigious National Club. The group contacted prominent French Canadians to create a public dialogue and better understanding, especially in light of a growing campaign in Quebec to boycott Ontario goods. In Quebec, Premier Lomer Gouin and Georges Garneau, chairman of the National Battlefield Commission, assumed the leadership of *Bonne Entente*. Thousands attended a number of travelling conferences, but things never got beyond platitudes, and the movement quickly faded. In February 1917, Godfrey formed the Win the War movement that endorsed conscription and promoted the creation of a coalition government to ensure its implementation.

In Quebec, some prominent Francophones tried to save the recruitment situation. The most public effort was that of Captain Talbot Papineau, the well-known and charismatic grandson of the *patriote* leader, Louis-Joseph Papineau, and Henri Bourassa's cousin. In August 1914, he joined as an officer with the Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry and two years later was awarded the Military Cross for bravery at St. Eloi. Before that battle,

he sent an open letter to Bourassa that appeared in newspapers across Canada. Designed to boost recruitment in Quebec—though curiously written in English—it stressed the grave threat posed by Germany, Canada’s legal obligation and sense of duty to Britain, Quebec’s moral responsibility to help France, and the unique opportunity the war presented to French Canadians to demonstrate their love of Canada and to forge a new sense of unity with their Anglo brethren. Bourassa was unmoved and so were most Québécois. Besides questioning Papineau’s authorship—“A brave and active officer as he is has seldom the time to prepare and write such long pieces of political eloquence”<sup>10</sup>—Bourassa’s published reply argued that by not rushing into uniform, French Quebecers were showing themselves as most attached to Canada, not Europe, a recruitment pattern he said was also evident among long-settled Canadian-born Anglos.

With options narrowing to reach enlistment targets, the government moved closer to conscription. During the last week of 1916, Ottawa’s new National Service Board launched a Canada-wide survey of available labour. When pressed, Borden refused to promise that the survey would not be used to help identify conscripts, but the Board’s director, R.B. Bennett, made such a pledge, especially in Quebec.



*December 1916: National Service Board established.*

## International Recognition and Military Success

Canada’s expanding contributions to the war strongly affected its external relations. From 1915 onward, Canada was borrowing greater sums from U.S. money markets to help finance the war. With the United States joining the conflict in April 1917, there came coordination in hemispheric defence, namely with naval patrols. Also in 1917, Canada sent its own representative to Washington, who worked out of the British embassy to better coordinate on resource allocation to maximize military production, and in February 1918, expanded this role by creating the Washington-based Canadian War Mission.

Although remaining tightly tied and loyal to Britain, frustration mounted in Ottawa over a lack of consultation, including on the use of Canadian troops. Borden was furious when British Prime Minister Herbert Asquith told him that sharing too much information could result in security breaches. Borden wrote, but after further reflection decided not to send, a letter to Canada’s high commissioner to share with the British government in which he threatened: “It can hardly be expected that we shall put 400,000 to 500,000 men in the field and willingly accept the position of having no more voice and receiving no more consideration than if we were toy automata.”<sup>11</sup>

Besides Canadian efforts to exert more control over the use of its troops, such as by establishing the Ministry of Overseas Military Services, important changes that affected Canada’s influence occurred in the British government. In December 1916, 102 British Liberals, frustrated by Britain’s lack of success against Germany, deserted Asquith and joined with opposition Conservatives to make War Minister David Lloyd George prime minister. Seeking greater mobilization of Empire resources, Lloyd George established an Imperial War Cabinet to involve the dominions in a consultative role. Borden arrived in London in March 1917 for initial meetings, and the next month—with Canada’s prime minister claiming much of the credit—the Imperial War Cabinet passed Resolution IX declaring the dominions as “autonomous members of the Empire.”



*March 1917: Resolution IX of the Imperial War Cabinet. Canadian autonomy recognized within the Empire.*

The trends towards greater recognition, influence, and autonomy were bolstered by success on the battlefield, particularly at Vimy Ridge, Canada's most celebrated clash in the First World War. Here, Canada's four divisions fought together for the first time. Although assisted by French and British forces, Canada took the brunt of the battle in capturing a position that had been in German hands since October 1914 and that previous attempts by the Europeans to retake had failed. The ridge was not especially high, 110 metres at its peak, but it was steep in certain areas and provided an excellent vantage point. Five German regiments—about 8000 men—were dug in where they had established a defensive fortress with “caves, tunnels, concrete machine-gun positions, fire trenches, and deep and elaborate dugouts.”<sup>12</sup>

Generals Byng and Currie had meticulously prepared Canadian forces, in many cases for months, for the massive attack. Practice fields were created, and men were assigned recognizable targets to capture, not lines on a map. The Canadians, expressing confidence and growing pride, began referring to themselves as “Byng's Boys.” For two weeks prior to the attack, 350 000 shells were fired to soften up German defences. The Canadians knocked out more than two-thirds of enemy guns by using aerial photography and a new cathode ray detection device (a forerunner of radar) developed by Colonel Andrew McNaughton, a graduate of physics and engineering from McGill University.

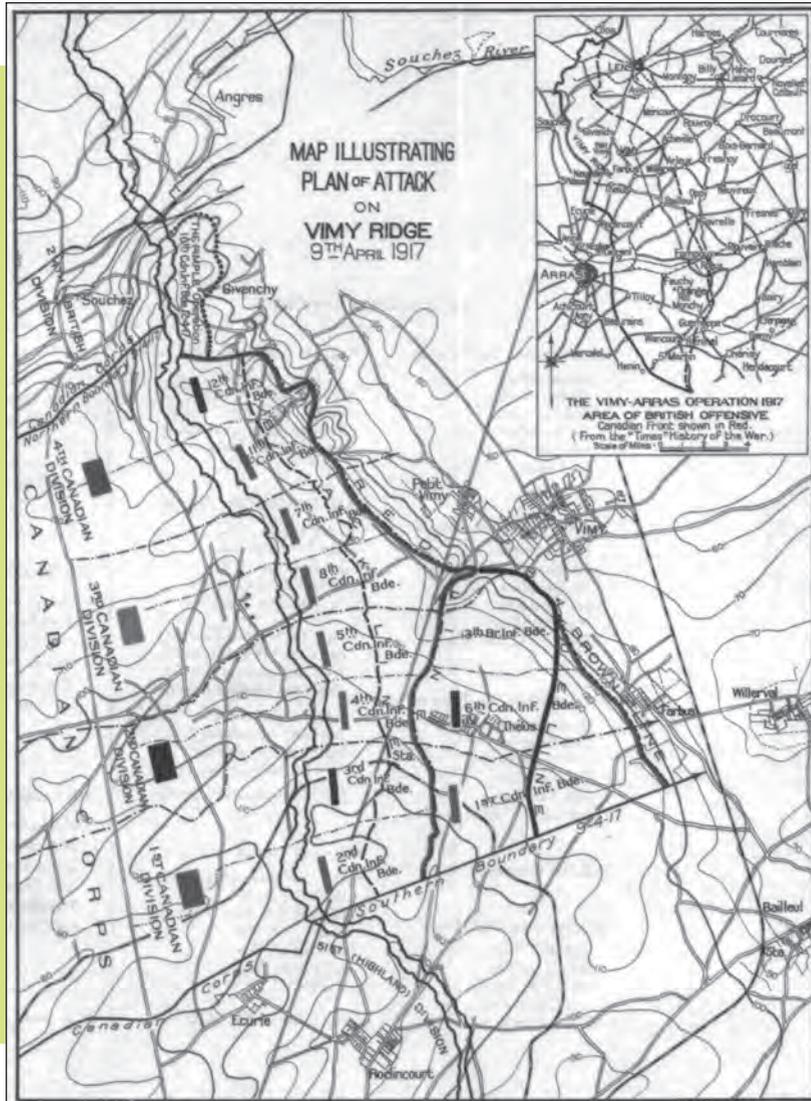
April 9, the day of the attack, was miserable, as sleet and snow fell during the night. The two sides exchanged furious artillery barrages; then, as dawn approached, Canadian guns fell silent to lull the Germans into resting. At 05:30, with some cover still provided by darkness, 1000 large Canadian guns opened up and 40 000 Canadians went over the top in precisely timed sequence. They followed closely behind an intense creeping barrage; many men simply put their head down and moved forward as if going through a hailstorm. In some sectors, the fury and accuracy of Canadian firepower was so overwhelming that the Germans barely managed to return fire. Canadian casualties mounted quickly, nonetheless, as enemy troops were experienced, well disciplined, and skilled, and their third major defensive line had time to compose itself. Canadian stretcher-bearers were so overwhelmed with wounded in some sectors that German POWs were forced to assist. Private William Green saw a shell tear off the head of a machine gunner a few metres away from him and the headless body with blood gushing out of the top still staggering forward a few steps.

The ridge was captured that first day and over three days the Canadians surged forward 4000 metres, the longest sustained advance by the allies to that point in the war. The victory gave the allies a commanding vantage point over the Douai plain. The French referred to Vimy as “Canada's Easter gift to the Allies.” King George V sent a congratulatory message to Canada, and news of the victory was carried on the front page of major newspapers, including the *Times* of London and the *New York Times*, where the United States had just declared war on Germany on April 2.

In later British historical accounts, Vimy typically received short shrift, cast as one part of the larger and much longer Battle of Arras. In Canada, it continued to be portrayed as a nation-building event that earned the dominion international respect and recognition. One newspaper, under the headline “Makers of Canada,” printed an illustration of Canadian troops charging up the ridge while underneath was the well-known painting of the Fathers of Confederation at the 1864 Charlottetown conference, a symbolic analogy



April 9–12, 1917:  
Battle of Vimy Ridge.



**Map 4.2**  
*The Order of Attack by Canada's  
Four Divisions on Vimy Ridge*

Source: Library and Archives Canada, nmc-111121-1.

reinforced by the upcoming 50th anniversary of Confederation, even though official celebrations of the event were postponed because of the war.<sup>13</sup> The costs of capturing Vimy were steep: 10 602 Canadian casualties, including 3598 dead, losses that pushed the country closer to implementing the very divisive policy of conscription.

Victory at Vimy resulted in Byng's promotion to lead Britain's 3rd Army. Command of the Canadian Corps finally went to a Canadian, Arthur Currie, whom Byng had groomed for the position. The pear-shaped Currie did not look like a commander and he wasn't overly popular with Canadian troops. He was far more comfortable around fellow officers than ordinary soldiers, wasn't an inspirational speaker, and believed in strict discipline. Some men griped that Currie drove the Canadians too hard and produced high casualties, presumably for his own glory, though, in fact, he always devised plans to minimize

Canadian troops looking over the crest of Vimy Ridge upon the town of Vimy, which they also captured.



Source: Library and Archives of Canada, PA-001446.

casualties, and on a percentage basis Canadian losses moved steadily downward. Currie ran his headquarters like a CEO, soliciting and weighing options presented by his commanders. He demanded competence and results, and upon taking over the Corps, he refused to give Garnet Hughes command of the 1st Division because he believed he had failed as a leader at Ypres and in the Somme campaign. Hughes was offered command of the yet-to-be created 5th Division, whose members would later be dispersed throughout the army. The two former friends became bitter enemies, as did Currie and Sam Hughes, something that played out after the war as Sam Hughes, until his death in 1921, continued to attack Currie's reputation. The personal vendetta was carried on by Garnet Hughes and in 1927 resulted in Currie launching a \$50 000 libel suit against the Hughes-controlled Port Hope *Evening Guide* for charging that he had needlessly wasted Canadian lives by attacking Mons on November 11, 1918, the last day of the war, a case that netted Currie only \$500 and exacted a great personal toll.

In mid-August, Currie had the Canadian Corps attack Hill 70, near Vimy. Artillery barrages and the release of chlorine and phosgene gas preceded the offensive, which was launched at 04:25 on August 15, securing the high ground that morning and the remaining objectives the next day. Over the following three days, the Germans counter-attacked 21 times, and released as many as 20 000 mustard gas shells, before finally conceding defeat.

Douglas Haig next focused on Passchendaele, which became known as the 3rd Battle of Ypres. He remained determined to achieve a major breakthrough. Enmity was growing between Haig and Lloyd George over lack of progress, and it was essential to provide some relief to battle-weary French forces, who were reported near mutiny in several areas. Millions of shells were directed against German lines to prepare for the thrust, but they destroyed the irrigation system on the low-lying ground; that and record rainfall turned the terrain into sludge where, in many parts, the muddy water was waist deep.



Source: Canadian War Museum, 19930013-509.

*The quagmire that was Passchendaele. Sometimes it took as many as eight stretcher-bearers to carry a wounded soldier through the mud.*

Haig tasked the Canadians with capturing the village of Passchendaele and the surrounding ridge. Currie resisted; he wanted to proceed to Cambrai and leave the Germans in the muck. He viewed the battlefield as a death trap and predicted, almost precisely as it turned out, 16 000 Canadian casualties. The Germans were well encased in concrete pillboxes, which were difficult to locate in the mangled terrain, even for observers in low-flying aircraft. The Canadians were given only two weeks to prepare their attack. Currie's plan was to overrun the ridge in four set-piece "bite and hold" offensives, because, unlike Vimy or Hill 70, conditions made it impossible to secure the objectives in one fell swoop. The Canadians also did not have the element of surprise as the Germans did from their higher vantage points where they could view Canadian preparations.

On October 26, the Canadians attacked, and over the 12-day battle, their artillery fired off an astonishing 1 453 056 shells. The Canadians lost 8400 men for every kilometre gained and in total suffered 15 654 casualties. Some called Currie a butcher, though Canada's casualty rate was far lower than at 2nd Ypres, and his strategy, combined with the battlefield proficiency of Canadian soldiers, brought victory. Out of this hellhole, Canadian troops began referring to the Corps as if it were a sacred institution, as they came to believe in its invincibility. Among the allied countries, Canada's army was becoming viewed as "shock troops" to be used in the more difficult cases. However, the gap between battlefield losses and enlistments at home continued to widen—totalling 115 170 and 60 418, respectively, from January to November 1917—a trend that moved Borden and his government towards implementing conscription.

Although the ground war remained the major dimension of Canada's military effort, its contributions to aerial combat also expanded notably. In Canada, airstrips were enlarged and new ones were constructed for training purposes, such as the one at Barrie. Even still, nearly 5000 prospective Canadian pilots took training in Texas because of superior facilities and more good flying days. In all, 22 812 Canadians served with Britain's flying



*November 1917:  
Battle of Passchendaele.*

services, the overwhelming majority with the Royal Flying Corps. Of 13 160 who were aircrew, 1388 were killed, 1130 were wounded, and 377 became prisoners of war. Whereas Canadians composed 6 percent of British flying casualties in 1915, that figure reached 16.8 percent by 1918. Canadian airmen were perceived by the public as “knights of the sky,” romanticized winged warriors who enjoyed celebrity status as they engaged in aerial dogfights in the wild blue yonder.

Eleven of 27 Empire aces that downed 30 or more enemy aircraft were Canadian. Some attained great fame, such as William Barker and Raymond Collishaw, with 50 and 60 air victories, respectively, though none more so than William Avery “Billy” Bishop of Owen Sound, Ontario, with 72 victories, second in the Empire, and third among all the allies (France’s René Fonck had 75 kills and Britain’s Edward Mannock had 73, though Germany’s Manfred von Richtofen had 80). Historian Brereton Greenhous insists that Bishop exaggerated his record, as many of his kills were not witnessed, though such a charge could also be made against most aces.<sup>14</sup> On the basis of its airborne contributions, Canada successfully pressured the British into accepting the creation of two separate Canadian squadrons, a development that, on September 19, 1918, was formalized into the creation of the Canadian Air Force.

The war at sea became significant to Canada. In October 1916, Germany’s U-53 arrived at Newport, Rhode Island, demonstrating that its armed submarines could cross the Atlantic. After leaving Rhode Island, the U-53 sank five allied steamers in international waters, thus raising fears over similar activity off the Maritime provinces and in the mouth of the St. Lawrence. The Canadian government ordered the construction of small anti-submarine vessels and ratcheted up that demand in early 1917 as Germany adopted unrestricted U-boat warfare to starve Britain into submission. However, Canadian vessels engaged in detection and avoided engagement; of modest size and often with wooden hulls, they were no match for the Germans. Starting in 1917, American vessels patrolled off Nova Scotia’s southern shore and in the Bay of Fundy. Convoys protected by American and British naval vessels were organized from several Maritime ports, especially Halifax. The convoys were highly successful because U-boats had to surface to attack, and the flotillas were well armed. In spring 1917, 25 percent of merchant vessels leaving North America for Britain faced a U-boat attack, but between May 1917 and October 1918, that figure plummeted to 0.5 percent.

*The devastation in Halifax following the harbour explosion.*



Source: Library and Archives of Canada, C-019950.

Sharply increased port activity in the Maritimes brought many jobs to a region that had experienced declining economic prospects for decades, but in Halifax, the largest and most significant port, rapidly increased activity combined with slipshod procedures for handling the extra traffic, also brought disaster. On the morning of December 6, 1917, the Belgian relief ship *Imo* collided with the *Mont Blanc*, a French munitions vessel carrying 600 barrels of aviation fuel and over 2700 metric tons of TNT. The result was the greatest human-made explosion to that point in history. Damage extended some 16 kilometres inland; buildings shook in New Glasgow 125 kilometres away; and the explosion was heard in North Cape Breton 360 kilometres away. Out of a population of 45 000, 2000 Haligonians were killed, 9000 were injured, and 10 000 were left homeless, and the city's north end and large parts of Dartmouth were levelled. Flying glass was responsible for killing and injuring many of those people. Aid poured in from across Canada, as well as from Newfoundland, Britain, and the United States, but it was delayed by a major winter storm the next day that dumped 40 centimetres of snow on the city, which left homeless survivors, and those in windowless accommodation, freezing.



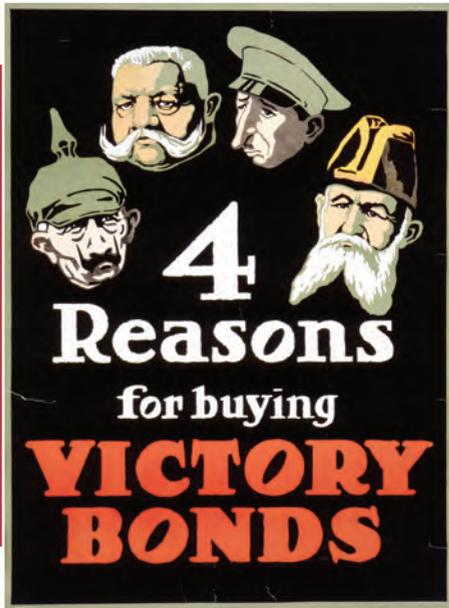
December 6, 1917:  
Halifax explosion.

## Intensifying Demands at Home

Canadians were not simply being asked to sacrifice more; their federal government would play an increasing role in extracting contributions. By the winter of 1916–1917, there were fuel shortages from soaring demand from war industry, and labour shortages were taxing the poorly paid mining sector. Brownouts came to Ontario as the province's hydro-electric generating capacity struggled to meet demand from factories on both sides of the international border. In June 1917, the federal government appointed a fuel controller who was given the power to enforce cuts in public consumption. Buildings deemed non-essential, such as theatres, were forced to close an extra day per week. Across Ontario, streetlights were turned off between 5 P.M. and 8 P.M., and every second light remained on for the rest of the night. A sense of duty, or fear of fines or public shaming, convinced most Canadians to respect heatless Mondays during February and March 1918 by not burning coal, turning instead to sources like wood stoves.

The federal government also appointed a food controller in June. Between 1913 and 1917, France's wheat crop plunged by 57 percent, and Germany's U-boat campaign forced Britain to implement coupon rationing. Canadians faced moderate restrictions, namely meatless days in restaurants and fines for hoarding. Many who lived in urban areas responded to calls to grow "war gardens" in their yard or in designated city lots. Urban Canadians helped out on farms to try to compensate for labour shortages, though farmers sometimes hesitated to accept the volunteers, viewing them as too soft and inexperienced. The federal government, and several provincial and municipal ones, provided a week's paid holiday to their employees if it was used to provide farm labour. Young people pitched in as *Soldiers of the Soil*, a federal–provincial farm labour program that in 1918 attracted 20 000 high school boys and 2500 young women.

Financing the war became more challenging. Defence expenditures rose from \$13 million in 1913 to \$311 million in 1916 and continued to climb. Adding to costs was the federal government's purchase in 1917 of the heavily indebted Grand Trunk, Grand Trunk Pacific,



*Stereotypes of militaristic and unsavoury enemies were used to inspire contributions to the 1918 Victory Bond drive.*

Source: Archives of Ontario, I0016191.JPG.

and Canadian Northern railways to create the Canadian National Railway, a reorganization that took five years to complete. Finance Minister Thomas White was advised to borrow from Canadians, but he feared draining what he saw as a small domestic financial market. In November 1915, the federal government tested the waters by seeking \$50 million through the sale of war bonds offering 5 percent tax-free interest. The result far exceeded expectations, raising \$100 million from corporations and \$79 million from individuals. In February 1916, another war bond drive topped its goal of \$250 million, which was 10 times more than what was raised through a new, albeit modest, Business Profits Tax introduced that same year. In 1917, Ottawa added a new “temporary” tax on personal incomes, though it did so cautiously in a country that had never before had such a levy. At a time when the average income was \$600 per year, only single people making more than \$2000 a year and families earning more than \$5000 a year would pay income tax.

With war bonds, caution was thrown to the wayside. A National Executive Committee based in the Department of Finance arranged for banks, along with stock and bond houses, to receive a 0.5 percent commission on each bond sold. A Dominion Publicity Committee that also operated through the Department of Finance organized public appeals. Branches of the committee supervised by prominent individuals were established in each province, city, and town of worthwhile size. The Committee signed agreements with the Canadian Press Association to publish upbeat stories about Victory Bond drives. Commencing six weeks prior to the Victory Bond issue date, and especially during the three-week purchasing period, it became virtually impossible for citizens to open a newspaper or magazine, or walk down the street, without confronting posters and advertisements telling them that duty, honour, and loyalty—to King, country, and Canada’s sons sacrificing overseas—compelled them to purchase a bond. For those moved by more narrow concerns, propaganda also reminded them that at 5 percent interest, government securities constituted a better investment than putting one’s money in the bank. The results were extraordinary: In November 1917, 820 000 Canadians loaned Ottawa \$398 million, and in November 1918, more than 1 million people provided \$660 million.

## Moral and Social Reform

To numerous Canadians, the spirit of duty and self-sacrifice that had evidently manifested in millions of citizens was viewed as proof that the war was divinely guided in that good was vanquishing evil and civilization was moving forward. Many in the adoption of prohibition saw further evidence of that process. Abstinence became linked with patriotism and the spirit of sacrifice. Prohibition would save grain, allow distilleries to be converted to war production (such as for making shell propellants and disinfectants for the Medical Corps), and, with people forced to give up drink, they could better commit their full mental and physical abilities to the war effort. Ontario’s Methodist Church gathered signatures from 64 000 mothers pleading with the federal government to protect young men in uniform

from the corrupting influence of drink, which many linked to rising venereal disease rates, by allowing only dry canteens—a suggestion that produced angry responses from soldiers. In early 1916, Saskatchewan adopted prohibition following a strong endorsement in a public plebiscite (a non-binding vote), and the other Prairie provinces quickly followed suit. Nova Scotia joined in late 1916, with the exception of Halifax, which had long enjoyed a lucrative liquor trade to serve garrisoned military personnel. In 1917, New Brunswick and Newfoundland went dry, and Prince Edward Island strengthened its 1901 prohibition legislation. That same year, the *Ontario Temperance Act* was passed shortly after the provincial government received a petition with 825 000 signatures demanding prohibition. Quebec moved more slowly in part because wine played a role in Catholic mass. In early 1918, its legislature abolished retail sales of spirits, but still allowed wine, light beer, and cider. On April 1, 1918, the federal government settled matters by declaring Canada dry for at least one year after the war ended.

Growing support for female suffrage was also in part premised on a link between the war and social uplift. More Canadians warmed to the idea that women would use the vote to produce a better post-war world; women's many contributions to the war effort helped this cause. The Canadian Suffrage Association, like its British counterpart, created a war auxiliary and declared that its first priority was to help achieve victory. In 1916, Robert Borden declared that women had raised \$50 million for the war.

The first breakthrough for women in attaining provincial suffrage was in Manitoba, where rural women had proven themselves as indispensable on farms; where women had long participated in politics through their own auxiliaries of groups like the Grain Grower's Association; and where Nellie McClung had emerged as a major leader in the suffrage movement. McClung was part of the Ontario migration to the West, arriving in Manitoba in 1880 at age seven. She became a best-selling novelist and was widely known as "rip-roaring public speaker."<sup>15</sup> Rejecting the idea of women's lives being biologically destined to revolve around family, and as subordinate to men, she expressed the hope that "the time will come ... when women will be economically free, and mentally and spiritually independent enough to refuse to have ... food paid for by men; when women will receive equal pay for equal work, and have all avenues of activity open to them." As head of the Women's Political Equality League, which focused on improving conditions for working-class women, McClung said that women would use the vote as "a tool to ... elect candidates interested in ... a minimum wage law, mothers' allowances ... women factory inspectors ... [and] prohibition,"<sup>16</sup> as she was also a long-time member of the Women's Christian Temperance Union, who saw male drunkenness as bringing great hardship to women and children.

Before the outbreak of the war, McClung effectively lampooned Conservative premier Rodmond Roblin, a strong opponent of female enfranchisement, in a satirical play called *The Parliament of Women* that warned against the perils of giving men the vote. With the May 1915 election of the Liberals under T.C. Norris, who had gone on record as supporting female enfranchisement, in January 1916 Manitoba women received the provincial vote. The other Prairie provinces followed suit later that year. In 1917, a provincial plebiscite extended the vote to women in British Columbia. Ontario's Conservative government, in



September 1917:  
The Wartime Elections  
Act provides the federal  
franchise to women,  
21 or older, with a  
husband, brother, son,  
or father in the military.

trying to appear more progressive than the opposition Liberals, also came on board that year. The Maritimes were more cautious: Nova Scotia gave women the vote in 1918; New Brunswick, in 1919 (but did not allow women to run for provincial office until 1934); Prince Edward Island, in 1922; and Newfoundland, in 1925. In Quebec, where the powerful Catholic Church portrayed female enfranchisement as threatening family stability, women were denied the provincial vote until 1940.

In September 1917, the die was cast for women to obtain the federal franchise. Two months before a federal election, the Borden government forced the *Military Voters Act* and the *Wartime Elections Act* through Parliament. The first provided nursing sisters with the vote, and the latter did the same for the wives, widows, mothers, sisters, and daughters of servicemen. The government enfranchised women whom, it logically figured, would support its policy of conscription. Soon after being re-elected, Borden's government passed the *Women's Franchise Act* that extended the vote to all female British subjects aged 21 and older. Canada acted before Britain and the United States, though Asian and Aboriginal Canadian women had to wait until after the Second World War before receiving the vote.

## Conscription

While women's suffrage was controversial, the campaign to implement conscription that played a key role in providing them with the federal vote was even more divisive. While in London in the spring of 1917 to participate in meetings of the Imperial War Cabinet, Borden was presented with a gloomy situation. In March, Russian Czar Nicholas II abdicated following widespread rioting in Petrograd, the capital. The economy was in freefall, and starvation was spreading with some 15 million Russians having left farms. Social Democrats under Alexander Kerensky established a provisional government and agreed to back the allies, but Russia's military was also in disarray, with many defecting to the Bolsheviks, under Vladimir Lenin, who were rapidly gaining strength. At the same time, Italy's army was collapsing before Austrian forces, and mutinies were spreading among French soldiers. America's entry into the war on April 2 offered great hope, but its mobilization would take months. Many military analysts predicted the war would continue until the end of 1919. Visiting wounded Canadians while in England, Borden wrote in his memoirs about being moved by the experience and becoming more determined that Canadian soldiers be provided with the support they needed.



May 1917: Military  
Service Act introduced.

Canada remained short of its target of a 500 000-man army. The National Service Board survey suggested that some 300 000 men were still available for military service. Upon returning to Canada in May, Borden instructed Solicitor-General Arthur Meighen to prepare a *Military Service Act* (MSA). Presented to Parliament on May 18, it demanded that all single men and childless widowers age 20 to 32 register for possible compulsory service. Certain groups, however, were provided with exemptions: those whose military service would produce great hardship to their family, those whose civilian work was deemed essential for Canada, and those recognized as conscientious objectors, namely clergy, and Mennonites or Doukhobors, whom the Canadian government had officially excluded from military obligations in 1873 and 1898, respectively.

Borden appealed for national unity and bipartisan support of the MSA. Stating it was essential that political partisanship be cast aside in the prevailing crisis, he offered to form

a coalition government with Laurier. A year earlier, Laurier had agreed to extend the government's term for a year beyond the legal five-year mandate to avoid a wartime election, but this time he rebuffed Borden. Besides his personal conviction against compulsion, Laurier feared that if he joined Borden, it would hand over French and Liberal Quebec to Bourassa's *nationalistes*, with the fallout being more intense French–English discord, the potential for violence, and irreparable damage to the Canadian federation. Some Liberals believed their party had an excellent chance of defeating Borden in an election. The Conservatives had lost several recent federal by-elections in part because of corruption connected to the Shell Committee, the fiasco of the Ross Rifle (which was officially dropped as the standard issue for Canadian troops in mid-1916 in favour of the Lee-Enfield), the open political warfare between Borden and Hughes, and rising wartime inflation. Some Liberals were also convinced that conscription would not be an easy sell, even in English Canada. Many farmers opposed conscription, given mounting labour shortages, while most of organized labour, though urging patriotism and counselling against wartime strikes, stressed the need—and fairness—of truly conscripting wealth as well as men, namely in the form of taxes. The TLC resolved only not to actively “resist the implementation of the *Military Service Act*,”<sup>17</sup> though more radical unions, especially in Western Canada, advocated open defiance of conscription.

When the MSA came up for vote in Parliament, Quebec Liberals unanimously opposed the bill and were joined by nine Quebec Tories. By contrast, Ontario Liberals supported the MSA 10–2. It became law on August 28, but implementation was largely delayed until after the December federal election. In Quebec, some young men joined a paramilitary group called *Les Constitutionnelles*, and in the summer of 1917, a bomb that the group targeted for the pro-conscription owner of the *Montreal Star*, Hugh Graham, killed Graham's chauffeur.

Before dropping the election writ, Borden's government imposed closure on Parliament to ensure passage of the *Military Voters Act* and the *Wartime Elections Act*. The former, besides enfranchising nurses, empowered the government to distribute, as it saw fit, the ballots cast by military personnel—logically considered as overwhelmingly pro-conscription—in provincial constituencies where servicemen did not indicate their riding. The latter stripped the vote from conscientious objectors and those of enemy background naturalized after March 31, 1902. As nearly all these immigrants came to Canada while Laurier governed, they, like conscientious objectors who opposed conscription, were assumed to be Liberal supporters.

Numerous Liberal MPs in English Canada agonized over whether to stand by Laurier, as they believed in conscription or were convinced that their constituents favoured it. Realizing that many Liberals were ready to defect, Borden reconstituted his Conservatives into the Union party just before Parliament dissolved for the December 17 election, a change he cast as being in the spirit of non-partisanship. By November, many Liberals became Union candidates, including Manitoba's former premier Arthur Sifton and Ontario's Liberal leader, Newton Rowell. Of the Unionists who were elected, 115 were Conservatives and 38 were former Liberals, the latter all being Anglophones.

The election was arguably the nastiest and most divisive in Canadian history, with the Unionists setting the tone, even portraying Laurier as a friend of the Kaiser. Nearly all

Francophone newspapers reiterated support for the war but also portrayed conscription as breaking previous promises and as trampling their rights. On the other side of the linguistic divide, the usually Liberal-aligned Manitoba *Free Press* said that Quebec had “failed Canada,” while the Conservative Toronto *Mail and Empire* cast the prospect of Laurier’s election as “pleasing to the Kaiser.”<sup>18</sup> In Toronto, there were several incidents of soldiers breaking up meetings of Laurier supporters, while in Quebec, Union candidates had to have police escorts. To solidify its hold on English Canada, Unionists promised that conscription would not be applied to families that already had a man in uniform. Seeking to improve prospects in rural areas, Borden pledged that those needed on farms would not be conscripted. Organized labour was promised more representation on government war boards. The TLC gave only tepid support to independent labour and Liberal-Labour candidates, not one of whom was elected.

The Unionists won 151 seats to the Liberals’ 82. The breakdown of support pointed to a fractured country and was the greatest threat to national unity until the 1980 Quebec referendum on sovereignty association. The Liberals took 62 of 65 seats and nearly 73 percent of the popular vote in Quebec. The only Unionists elected in Quebec—Justice Minister Charles Doherty in St. Ann, Herbert Brown Ames in St. Antoine, and Naval Minister Charles Ballantyne in St. Lawrence-St. George—represented Montreal ridings with a heavily Anglo population. The Maritimes returned 21 Unionists and 10 Liberals, compared with 19 Liberals and 16 Conservatives in 1911. Liberal support remained strongest in ridings with a significant Acadian presence, like Restigouche-Madawaka in New Brunswick, and in areas where port activity, and hence good civilian jobs, had grown substantially, like Inverness and Lunenburg in Nova Scotia. In Ontario, the Unionists took 74 of 82 seats, with 63 percent of the vote, and in some Toronto ridings they topped 80 percent. The Liberals retained some strength in parts of eastern Ontario, like Prescott and Russell, where Franco-Ontarians were concentrated. In Western Canada, where a large number of recent immigrants were stripped of the right to vote, 54 of 56 seats, and 71 percent of ballots, went Union.

Ultimately, some 125 000 men were conscripted, 47 049 went overseas, and 24 132 were taken on strength in France—hardly enough, as J.L. Granatstein and J.M. Hitsman argue, to tip the scales against Germany, and, as such, not worth the grief and division brought to the country. If forcing an equal sacrifice from Quebec constituted a major aim, then the government came up short. Only 23 percent of those conscripted were French-speaking, as most Québécois, particularly those from agricultural areas, successfully convinced conscription tribunals of their need at home. Historian J.M. Willms contends that critics of conscription are reading history with the benefit of hindsight. He points out that when Borden implemented the MSA, Canada’s casualty rate far exceeded new recruits, and the best intelligence predicted nearly two more years of bloodletting.<sup>19</sup>

The implementation of conscription proved as difficult as its passage. On January 19, 1918, the day after the first conscripts reported for duty, representative J-N Francoeur proposed to the Quebec Legislature that the province secede from Canada. Of those conscripted, 6.7 percent in the West, 9.3 percent in Ontario, and a whopping 40.8 percent in Quebec did not report for duty despite a possible five-year jail term. Federal authorities



December 1917: Union government elected.

raided places like theatres, dance halls, pool halls, and roller-skating rinks, arresting young men without exemption papers. By March 6, 3085 had been apprehended, with the largest number, 605, located in Montreal. In Sherbrooke, a military policeman was found guilty of manslaughter after shooting a man trying to evade arrest. The most serious incident occurred over the Easter weekend in Quebec City. It started with the arrest of a conscription resister named Mercier, which precipitated a large protest rally in the working-class district of Saint-Roch. A Dominion Police station was set ablaze, as well as the offices of the *Quebec City Chronicle* and *L'Evenement*, both of which supported conscription. The army was called in and the mayor read the *Riot Act*. On Easter Sunday, the two sides confronted each other. Rioters threw snowballs, ice, rocks, and chunks of pavement, and there were reports of gunshots being fired at the soldiers. Troops fired into the crowd and the cavalry charged, leaving five civilians dead and more than 50 wounded.

Of those who reported to conscription boards, 93.7 percent sought an exemption, and 87 percent were successful, being able to show that their absence would bring great hardship to their family or that military service would take them from a job essential to the home front. Still, local boards were sometimes inconsistent in their application of the rules and in some cases applied a heavy hand to force men into uniform. Some members of religious denominations unfamiliar to conscription tribunals—like Plymouth Brethren—were rejected for exemption. Because many Mennonites were not baptized until 21, and thus not full-fledged members of the faith, they too sometimes faced problems obtaining exemptions. In Winnipeg, Jehovah's Witnesses who refused service were taken to the Minto Street barracks, stripped naked, and sprayed with ice cold water to compel them to change their mind; the account made it into newspapers after several had to be hospitalized. By the end of the war, 117 conscientious objectors were behind bars.

Outside of Quebec, dissenters received little backing and much condemnation. Support for conscription remained solid, bolstered by difficulties that the allies continued to have overseas. By early 1918, British casualties had reached the point where 18-year-olds were being conscripted, but the situation in Germany was growing desperate with labour unrest, riots, and tens of thousands dying from starvation. German generals planned for a massive push to turn the tide. Preceded by a colossal bombardment and the release of poison gas, and using what remained of its best fighting formations, Germany launched its last major offensive on March 21. Within three days, it had recaptured virtually all its losses on the Somme, and once again threatened to take Paris. However, German supply lines were badly overstretched, and within weeks, the offensive collapsed. Initially, the thrust generated much alarm among the allies, so much so that on April 19 Borden's government cancelled conscription exemptions, including for those working on farms, a decision that prompted 5000 farmers from Ontario and Quebec to march on Parliament in protest.

As the war against Germany moved into its final phases, the threat perceived from Bolshevism became far more ominous. In October 1917, Bolsheviks seized power in Petrograd. On March 3, 1918, Russia signed the treaty of Brest-Litovsk with Germany, which took Russia out of the war and allowed Germany to devote more resources to the Western Front. Canada became involved in attempts to re-establish anti-communist forces, first in early 1918 by sending 40 officers and men to Archangael, near Murmansk,



April 1918:  
Anti-conscription riot  
in Quebec City.

as military trainers. In October, Canada contributed some 4000 soldiers to a more substantial allied intervention in Siberia to support the Czech Legion that had seized control of the Trans-Siberian railway and had set out for Vladivostok where anti-communists remained in control under the brutal dictatorship of Alexandr Kolchak. The Canadians saw very limited action. In late 1918, two Canadians were killed in a battle against some 600 Bolsheviks by the Dvina River near Archangael. In Vladivostok, the Canadians did not lose any men in battle, as they were mostly assigned to patrols and labour fatigues, but three died in accidents and 16 from disease. The overall mission was a failure: Kolchak grew increasingly unpopular; the allies could not agree on strategy; and there was little popular support for the intervention in Canada after the war in Europe ended. In April 1919, Borden pulled the plug, and by June the troops were home.

The decision to get involved reflected mounting fears over the potential export of Bolshevism to Canada. Communists held important positions in many unions, particularly in Western Canada. Anger was being fed by growing inflation; between 1916 and 1918, Canada's cost of living rose by 42 percent. Conscription drew considerable criticism from the labour movement, as did the continuing absence of legislation guaranteeing unions collective bargaining rights. In July 1918, the federal government announced a policy giving workers the right to organize, but at the same time it outlawed strikes and lockouts for the duration of the war.

Labour militancy was on the rise. In April of that same year, there occurred an illegal walkout by Winnipeg civic employees and in the summer a nationwide strike by letter carriers. In July, Albert "Ginger" Goodwin, the socialist vice-president of the British Columbia Federation of Labour and secretary of the Mill and Smeltermen's Union in Trail, was shot and killed by a Dominion Police officer while resisting arrest for evading conscription. The officer claimed self-defence and was never charged, which, in August, touched off a 24-hour general strike in Vancouver.

Division within Canada's labour movement between radicals and moderates was coming to a head. At the September 1918 TLC convention in Quebec City, more Central Canadian delegates defeated every militant resolution put forward, nearly all by Westerners. Tom Moore, a Niagara Falls carpenter and well-known moderate, was elected as TLC president. Before departing from Quebec City, Western delegates met as a caucus and agreed to reconvene the next year separately from the TLC. The federal government moved to clamp down on radicalism. In autumn 1918, an Order in Council banned more than a dozen communist and socialist organizations and stipulated that anyone advocating, teaching, advising or defending "the use of force, violence, or physical injury to person or property in order to accomplish governmental or economic change"<sup>20</sup> could face five years in jail.

In the final months of the war, Canada's home front also confronted an unseen, but far deadlier, invasion from the Spanish influenza epidemic. Historians Mark Humphries and Eysyllt Jones link its spark, and nationwide spread, to soldiers transported across Canada for service in Vladivostok.<sup>21</sup> In this pre-antibiotic period, the flu killed an estimated 25 million people worldwide, and in Canada some 50 000, with a shockingly high proportion between the ages of 20 and 40. It also hit Aboriginals particularly hard. For example, in Norway



*Autumn 1918: Influenza epidemic in Canada.*

House, a largely Cree and Métis community in northern Manitoba, one-fifth of the population died within six weeks of the epidemic hitting. City theatres and other public venues closed down, and public events, including church services, were cancelled. Rural residents were also hard hit because they were isolated from health services and often from neighbours who could help them. In Saskatchewan, the province's Bureau of Public Health received reports of livestock left untended and entire families found dead in their homes.

## Triumph and New Trials

Canadian troops played a decisive role in the final push to victory, which became known as the “last 100 days.” Starting at Amiens, and over the following 12 days, the Canadian Corps reclaimed 173 square kilometres, liberated 27 villages, and captured 9000 Germans. Currie continued to forge ahead to prevent the enemy from regrouping. Casualties and battle exhaustion rates rose, but the Canadians still broke through German defences at Drocourt-Quéant and Canal du Nord and then led in the liberation of Cambrai and Valenciennes. On November 7, they crossed into Belgium and four days later symbolically ended the war at Mons, from where the allies had fled at the outset of hostilities in August 1914. During those final 100 days, the Canadian Corps reclaimed 1300 square kilometres; liberated 228 villages, towns, and cities; and captured 623 heavy guns, 2842 machine guns, 336 trench mortars, and 31 537 Germans. It was a remarkable feat, but the butcher's bill was high—from August 8 to November 11, the Canadian Corps sustained 45 835 casualties, almost one-eighth the losses suffered by British forces, but Canada had one-fiftieth the number of troops in the field.

Canadians awoke on November 11 to news of the Armistice. Celebrations continued throughout the day and into the night with fireworks, street dancing, and Kaisers burned in effigy. Canadians rightfully took pride in their country's contributions towards achieving victory. Befitting its accomplishments and sacrifices, Borden demanded that Canada have a separate signature on the Treaty of Versailles that formally ended the First World War and a separate seat at the new League of Nations, an international intergovernmental organization created by the Treaty of Versailles and based in Geneva. Britain was opposed to separate Canadian status, arguing that the Empire, to retain its international clout, had to speak with one voice. Borden was offered a spot among the five British representatives at Versailles; in this capacity, he was to represent all the dominions (as Canada was the senior dominion), but he declined. The United States argued that separate Canadian representation would mean an extra voice for British interests; Borden shot back by saying that proportionately Canada had done more than the United States to defeat Germany. It was finally decided that at Versailles, Canada, Australia, and South Africa would each be allowed two representatives—the same as Belgium—and New Zealand one representative at the conference's plenary sessions and a signature on the treaty. It was a change in international status from the pre-war period, though it was generally known that the most important decisions were being made in private by the leaders of the four principal powers: Great Britain, the United States, Italy, and France. Canada also obtained its own seat at the League of Nations, though this, too, was granted to other self-governing dominions like Australia and New Zealand.



*November 11, 1918:  
Armistice ends the  
First World War.*

There was a growing sense that Canada's role in the war had given birth to a new national spirit. In describing the return home of the 19th Battalion, the Hamilton *Spectator* dwelt upon a "path of glory ... across the craters of St. Eloi, over the shell-swept areas of the Somme basin, up the scarred heights of Vimy Ridge and the slopes of Hill 70, through Passchendaele's slough and mud and blood to the epic days of 1918 ... which released the world from the yoke of Prussian militarism."<sup>22</sup> Millions of Canadians flocked to a series of post-war battle trophy shows to see items captured by Canadian soldiers. At Toronto's Canadian National Exhibition, the best-attended pavilion, attracting over 200 000 people in ten days, was a war trophy display billed by the Toronto *Star* as "living evidence of Canadian valour in France and Flanders."<sup>23</sup>

But the joy of victory, and the national pride that manifested, did not mean the end of difficulties and divisions linked to the war. There was the immediate and formidable challenge of transitioning Canada from war to peace. Some 400 000 servicemen had to be reintegrated. Tens of millions were spent on veterans' programs—an unprecedented amount for social welfare—but it was still not enough. Although stressing its commitment to care for those who had fought for Canada, the federal government operated with minimal tax revenues, feared adding significantly to a war debt of \$1.3 billion, and, still harbouring the perception of welfare as something that should be discouraged as too costly and for sapping people of initiative, suggested that ex-soldiers, as Canada's best and strongest, could get back on their feet with minimal help.

Back in 1915, the federal government created the Military Hospitals Commission to provide medical care and pensions for wounded veterans. In early 1918, it became part of the new Department of Soldiers' Civil Re-establishment that administered a broader range of programs. On paper, Canada provided the most generous pensions among allied countries for wounded veterans, but only 5 percent of claimants obtained the top-paying category, compared with more than 50 percent who received remuneration in the bottom 20 percent of the award structure. Pension commissioners, most of whom were not veterans, tended to approach their job as guardians of the public purse rather than as advocates for veterans. Veterans were disqualified from retraining programs if it was felt they could return to their pre-war line of work. At training facilities, there were numerous complaints by veterans over poor equipment and ill-qualified instructors. Under the Soldier Settlement scheme, veterans received assistance to buy a farm each: The deal was that they would provide a 10 percent down payment and could borrow up to \$4500 for property that would be amortized over 20 years at 5 five percent interest. By the end of 1921, the program had placed more than 25 000 veterans on farms, but their failure rate was very high because of declining crop prices, the government's unwillingness to ease repayment terms, and men assigned land in remote areas with poor access to markets. Within five years, 80 percent of veterans who participated in the farm program went broke.

Discord from the war also continued to reverberate from rural Canada; for some farmers, though, things had improved. The war brought record demand for numerous commodities and good prices. By the end of the decade, some 150 000 farms had a car, and nearly 50 000 a tractor. Between 1911 and 1921, improved farmland in Canada rose from 19.5 million hectares to 28.7 million hectares. Still, many farmers remained angry

over the government's decision to cancel conscription exemptions for agricultural labour. The nationalization of bankrupt railways resulted in the Crow's Nest Pass rate being suspended as a cost-saving measure. In the closing months of the war, the Canadian Council of Agriculture demanded that Ottawa adopt its "New National Policy," whose planks included lower tariffs, steeper progressive taxes, and, in reflecting growing distrust towards major political parties, the introduction of a system of direct democracy under which voters could initiate and ratify legislation and recall representatives seen as no longer serving the people's interests. Also rankling was the federal government's regulation of wheat prices. Towards the end of the war, as the price of wheat reached a record high, the federal government created a Board of Grain Supervisors to control prices and oversee distribution. Soon after the war, it became the Canada Wheat Board, but it was dismantled as grain prices began tumbling. Farmers demanded that the Wheat Board be re-implemented to guarantee a minimum price but were rebuffed. Following a Union government budget in June 1919 that failed to deliver tariff concessions as previously promised, Manitoba's T.A. Crerar, the minister of agriculture, and eight other Union MPs from the Western provinces defected to sit as independents.

The trend among farmers towards creating their own political movement quickly gained momentum. In autumn 1919, farmers, though not yet having decided upon a name for their emerging party, won federal by-elections in Assiniboia, Saskatchewan, and in the rural New Brunswick constituency of Victoria-Carleton. In October, farmers in Ontario achieved a remarkable breakthrough when their former lobby group, the United Farmers of Ontario (UFO), decided to contest the 1919 provincial election. Ontario farmers were mobilized not only by lingering anger over the elimination of conscription exemptions, as well as by high tariffs and railway rates, but also by growing fears over a loss of power brought on by accelerated urbanization during the First World War. The UFO won only 22 percent of the popular vote, but this translated into 44 seats in a legislature of 111 because of rural overrepresentation. To form a government, the UFO joined forces with 11 Labour representatives whose strong showing in the 1919 Ontario election reflected yet another source of discontent.

More workers were drawing motivation from the idea that the war had been fought to defend freedom and advance civilization and that this should include full rights for workers. Such ideals were evident in the March 1919 Reconstruction Program of the New Brunswick Federation of Labour, which demanded collective bargaining rights, an eight-hour workday, freedom of speech and assembly, public ownership of utilities and resources, public housing, better educational opportunities, and cooperatives to protect workers from profiteers.

A growing segment of labour was coming to the conclusion that social justice would result only from the destruction of capitalism and the establishment of a communist or socialist government. For those who believed in revolution, never before did it seem so possible. Communist forces consolidated in Russia and in the chaos and despair of post-war Germany, the radical leftist Spartacus League threatened to seize power. In Australia, a sizable segment of organized labour became part of a single One Big Union, whose power, it was said, would bring capitalists to their knees. Strikes spread across North America, in



*October 1919:  
United Farmers of Ontario  
form a government.*

Canada totalling a record 2.1 million workdays in 1919. In most cases, strikers were trying to catch up to high inflation. As well, with union membership more than doubling during the war from 143 000 to 249 000, and peaking at 378 000 in 1919—with more people employed and labour shortages making workers less fearful of joining a union—many new labour organizations were trying to prove their worth to workers who, now that the war was over, did not feel the same pressure to stay on the job.

In March 1919, Western Canadian unionists met separately at Calgary’s labour temple. Although many delegates hoped to remain affiliated with the TLC, a larger number of radicals were determined to create a new, separate, and more militant labour body. Delegates endorsed having a 30-hour workweek, allowing general strikes, and establishing One Big Union, and declared themselves as favouring “proletarian dictatorship.”<sup>24</sup> On May 1, Winnipeg metal trade workers went on strike to achieve union recognition, something for which they had battled for more than a decade. The next day, building and construction trade workers who sought better wages joined them. On May 6, both groups appealed to the Winnipeg Trades and Labour Council for support. Influenced by the success of sympathy strikes to back Winnipeg municipal workers the previous year, the result (announced on May 13) saw trade council members endorse a general strike by an overwhelming margin of 11 000 to 500.



May–June 1919:  
Winnipeg General Strike.

The walkout started at 11 A.M. on May 15 and within 24 hours, 22 000 workers left their jobs and Winnipeg ground to a halt. Federal authorities feared that the strike could inspire a revolutionary wave, as smaller walkouts developed across Canada to show solidarity with Winnipeg workers and to address local labour grievances. Walkouts occurred in some 25 Canadian communities, including Halifax, Montreal, Toronto, Calgary, Edmonton, and Vancouver.

Winnipeg manufacturers, lawyers, and bankers formed a Committee of 1000 to help maintain basic services and order. While the provincial Liberal government of T.C. Norris, which was elected on a reform platform—and in 1916 introduced workman’s compensation and minimum wage legislation—generally kept out of the dispute, municipal and federal politicians, particularly Canada’s chief lawmaker, acting Minister of Justice Arthur Meighen, cast the strikers as intent on seizing power and establishing a Bolshevik government. Foreign radicals were blamed for the strike despite its Anglo leadership. The *Manitoba Free Press* referred to strikers as “bohunks” and the *Winnipeg Tribune* told its readers: “Remember, behind ... this strike is a group of revolutionaries—its most active followers are undesirable aliens.”<sup>25</sup>

After five weeks, a dawn raid by authorities nabbed the eight principal strike leaders. Four days later, on June 21, there came *Bloody Saturday*. It started with a rally by strikers against the resumption of streetcar service. When the crowd failed to disperse as ordered, the mayor read the *Riot Act*. Mounties on horseback with revolvers drawn charged into the crowd, leaving two strikers dead. Fearing another, and deadlier, confrontation, the strike committee ended the walkout on June 26. Seven of the eight arrested strike leaders were convicted of “seditious conspiracy” and received jail sentences ranging from six months to six years. Still, the federal government was convinced that existing legislation did not provide an adequate enough deterrent.

In June, the government added section 41 to the *Immigration Act* that made the deportation of radicals easier, including those from Britain, though the measure was applied only against Slavs and Finns. The next month, section 98 was added to Canada's *Criminal Code*. Its severity exceeded any wartime attack on free expression as it established a maximum penalty of 20 years' imprisonment against anyone who printed, published, wrote, edited, issued or sold "any book, newspaper, periodical, pamphlet, picture, paper, circular, card, letter, writing, print, publication, or document of any kind in which it is taught, advocated, advised or defended ... that the use of force, violence, terrorism or physical injury be used as a means of accomplishing any governmental, industrial, or economic change."<sup>26</sup>



July 1919: Section 98 added to Canada's Criminal Code.

## A New Liberal Leader

On February 22, 1919, 50 000 people, half of Ottawa's population, lined city streets to pay their final respects to Sir Wilfrid Laurier, who died five days earlier at the age of 78. Although vilified in English Canada for opposing conscription, in death Laurier attained iconic status, as he had sat in Parliament for 45 years, served as Liberal leader for more than three decades, and had been prime minister for 15 years. However, his party had been out of power since 1911. The Liberals began a process of renewal by announcing a national leadership convention to take place in Ottawa in August. It was to be the first of its kind to reflect a new democratic spirit coming out of the war. Similar to modern political conventions, some 1000 delegates were to be selected from constituencies across Canada to choose the next leader, rather than using the past practice where the party's parliamentary caucus made the choice behind closed doors.

The Liberals would turn to William Lyon Mackenzie King. To many, he was an odd choice: a podgy, balding bachelor, who was rather stiff, standoffish, and socially awkward, and had a penchant for using platitudes and cloying flattery towards those he wanted to win over. In an era before television and image-makers, this mattered less than the fact that King was a master political tactician with an astonishing ability to read the public mood, build coalitions, impress the right people, make the right friends, and demolish his enemies.

First elected in 1908, King served as minister of labour, but was defeated in the 1911 Tory sweep of Ontario. He established himself as a labour relations expert and made a great deal of money by spending most of the war years in the United States working for the famous multi-millionaire John D. Rockefeller, Jr. He helped resurrect Rockefeller's image and established labour peace—though by creating a company-controlled workers' association—following the April 1914 Ludlow Massacre, when, in a union recognition fight against the Rockefeller-owned Colorado Fuel and Iron Company, 20 men, women, and children evicted from company housing were killed by private guards.

Throughout his years in the United States, King maintained ties with the Liberal party, though the distance enabled him to evade public commentary on the contentious issue of conscription, which he opposed. As the 1917 election approached, he returned to the political fray. He considered jumping to the Union party, but decided to stay loyal to Laurier, whom he considered his political mentor and because like Laurier he feared the consequences of conscription on French–English relations. Nevertheless, King tried to stake out a more nuanced position than Laurier, claiming that he did not reject con-

scription in principal, but for reasons not entirely clear, opposed the specific legislation advanced by Borden’s government. King lost the riding of North York, just outside Toronto, by 1000 votes, but did better than most Liberals in the area.

At the Ottawa convention, the Liberals were looking for a fresh start, for someone who could project an image of reform and heal bitter rifts left from the war, as many had bolted from the party to the Unionists. Anglo members were determined that the leadership go to one of their own after 28 years of Laurier at the helm. King trumpeted his reform past—his personal lineage to rebel leader William Lyon Mackenzie and his long involvement in progressive causes—and the fact that he was a labour relations expert, which meant he could present himself as a conciliator who could build bridges between opposing forces. At 45 years old and with a boyish face, he also came across as youthful, at least when compared with the initial front-runner, 70-year-old William Fielding, the former premier of Nova Scotia and federal finance minister, who many considered a man of the nineteenth century, and whom numerous Liberals never forgave for abandoning Laurier and supporting the Unionists on conscription. In his convention address, King, while avoiding specifics, declared his support for the right of workers to organize unions and for the creation of government unemployment, old age, sickness, and disability insurance programs. He also presented himself as favourable to freer trade—though not to the extent to completely alienate high-tariff supporters—and won favour for having stuck by Laurier in 1917, especially among Quebec’s 297 delegates, 207 of whom backed King. It took five ballots to make King the new leader, and in that final vote, he barely squeaked in over Fielding by a count of 467 to 439.



*August 1919:  
William Lyon Mackenzie  
King becomes federal  
Liberal leader.*

## Conclusion

The impact of the First World War on Canada was profound and multi-faceted. Canada’s annual defence budget soared from \$72 million (29.3 percent of total government expenditures) in 1914 to \$439 million (59.3 percent) in 1918. The government managed the lives of Canadians as never before, establishing new taxes, imposing compulsory military service, implementing food and fuel control, curtailing basic freedoms, and introducing the first nationwide social welfare program for veterans. Organized labour grew more powerful, aggressive, and to many, threatening. Women gained the vote. Prohibition triumphed. Canada’s contributions to the war effort generated tremendous pride and nationalism and considerably raised the country’s profile and international status.

It has become almost axiomatic to state that during the First World War Canada transformed from “colony to nation.” Yet, by 1914, was it not already moving from the Empire? Did Canada gain anything denied to other dominions, such as Australia and New Zealand? Was the war truly nation-building? Contrasting with the triumph at Vimy, Canada’s decisive role in the last 100 days, and the innumerable contributions and sacrifices made at home were the divisions caused by conscription, the persecution of ethnic minorities and political dissenters, the manipulation of the voting system, and nearly a quarter million Canadians killed or wounded and countless others psychologically scarred for the rest of their lives.

In many ways, the road ahead for Canada did not seem as clear in 1919 as compared with the heady and enthusiastic days of August 1914. Growing disenchantment during the war played a key role in the genesis of third-party politics and in a larger segment of organized labour moving towards radicalism. By the November 1918 armistice, French and English Canada were more divided than at any other time since the 1837 rebellion. Throughout the 1920s, legacies from the First World War would continue to reverberate loudly on Canadian society and culture, politics and the economy, and Canada's relations with the outside world.

## Questions to Consider

1. How did the First World War affect civil liberties?
2. How did the First World War impact French-English relations?
3. How did the First World War affect Canada's economy?
4. To what extent did the First World War change Canada's relations with Britain?

## Critical Thinking Questions

1. How well did Canada's military perform in the First World War?
2. Did Canada emerge from the First World War as a stronger country?
3. What Canadians might have been left disillusioned by the First World War?

## Suggested Readings

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## Notes

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- <sup>3</sup> Lita Rose Betcherman, *Ernest Lapointe: Mackenzie King's Great Quebec Lieutenant* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002), 3.
- <sup>4</sup> Joseph Boudreau, "The Enemy Alien Problem in Canada, 1914–1921," Ph.D., University of California, Berkeley, 1965, 45–46.
- <sup>5</sup> Ottawa, Government of Canada, *Order in Council, PC 1330*, 10 June 1915.
- <sup>6</sup> Jeff Keshen, *Propaganda and Censorship during Canada's Great War* (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 1996); and Ian Hugh Maclean Miller, *Our Gory and Our Grief: Torontonians and the Great War* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002).
- <sup>7</sup> Metropolitan Toronto Library, Baldwin Room, *World War One Broadside Catalogue*, n.p.
- <sup>8</sup> Miller, *Our Glory and Our Grief*, 119.
- <sup>9</sup> J.L. Granatstein and Desmond Morton, *Marching to Armageddon: Canadians and the Great War, 1914–1919* (Toronto: Lester & Orpen Dennys, 1989), 112.
- <sup>10</sup> <http://www.thesacredvoicegallery.com/papineau2.htm>.
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- <sup>22</sup> *Hamilton Spectator*, 9 May 1919, 1.
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- <sup>25</sup> *Manitoba Free Press*, 17 June 1919, 2.
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