

Canada's War on the Homefront

By 1916, the economy was booming thanks to war production

- Imperial Munitions Board: munitions factories building ships, planes and shells.
- Hundreds of thousands employed in these factories
- Production and export of goods reached an all-time highs
 - eg: nickel, copper, lead, wheat and beef
- Goods became scarce in Canada and prices rose!
 - this became an issue after the war.

Paying for the War:

Gov't unable to raise enough to fund the war effort

- New technology and large number of troops were expensive!

Solution... War Bonds, Taxes and Loans

War Bonds:

- appealed to patriotism and thrift
- bonds could be bought, and cashed in at the end of the war with interest.

Taxes:

- introduced income tax
- *supposed* to be temporary!
- 3% for “well-off” families; 4% for businesses

Loans:

- when these failed, and money was still short, Canada turned to other countries.

Role of Women:

With men overseas fighting, women took on new roles

- committees to send food and supplies overseas
- Red Cross
- contribution to the Labour Force
 - hired for all types of work:
 - eg: farming, fishing, factory work, etc.

Without women, wartime Canada's economy would have collapsed

- It was assumed that women would return to work at home after the war ended.

Women's Suffrage – the right for women to vote

- all women were given the right to vote by 1918 in recognition of their efforts during the war

Propaganda:

Propaganda was designed to persuade people to support the war – film, magazine articles, radio, speeches and posters.

- Encouraged people to:
 - join the military
 - buy war bonds
 - use less fuel
 - eat less meat
 - support the government

This information was selective, and often inaccurate:

- info about the conditions at the front
- number of casualties

Also used to portray the German troops as “the Huns” (a horde of barbarians intent on destroying the world).

- led to prejudice against Germans (and Austro-Hungarians)
- internment of Germans living in Canada
- eg: Berlin, Ontario was criticized despite large war contributions.
 - changed its name to Kitchener (after British War Secretary, Lord Kitchener)

Conscription Crisis:

Conscription – compulsory enlistment for military service

PM Robert Borden had promised there would be NO conscription at the beginning of the war

- However, British pressure convinced Borden that the war had to be won at all costs
 - to do this, Canada needed more troops!

Military Service Act – a bill that would make enlistment compulsory

- exemptions:
 - disabled
 - clergy
 - those with essential jobs / special skills
 - *conscientious objectors* (those who did not believe in war on religious grounds)

The issue divided Canada, mostly along cultural lines

Canadian Unity and the Effects of WWI

Plus

- The war strengthened Canadian identity
- Canadian soldiers distinguished themselves
- Gained international status at the Paris Peace Conference
- War stimulated the Canadian economy
- Women won the right to vote

Minus

- 60 000 Canadians killed
- 170 000 wounded
- Halifax destroyed by munitions ship
- Conscription debate divided the country
- War Measures Act caused tension in communities with immigrants from Eastern Europe
- Left a huge national debt

When war began

- Laurier tried to foster a Canadian identity
- Britain controlled Canada's foreign affairs
- Role of Government; limited to law, politics, foreign trade

When it ended

- Canadians were proud of their contribution and successes
- Our own seat at the Paris Peace Conference
- Government increasingly controlled many aspects of life; regulated the economy; propaganda; etc.