

War on the Home Front

(Chapter 13)

Introduction

On May 17, 1939, King George VI and Queen Elizabeth landed at Quebec City for a whirlwind tour of the Canadian provinces. It was the first time that a British monarch had set foot in Canada. Everywhere the royal couple appeared, crowds gathered to cheer, Mounties in red tunics and carefully polished boots stood at attention, and young girls stepped forward to hand the visiting British queen a bouquet while the king looked on. But the royal visit had a special—and disturbing—significance. The king had come to rally support from his loyal British subjects. Hitler was on the move, and Britain might soon need every bit of help it could get from Canada.

In 1939, more than half of all Canadians were of British (English, Scottish, or Irish) origin, while another third were French Canadians. A growing number of English Canadians were starting to call themselves simply “Canadians,” but ties to Britain remained strong. Still, Prime Minister Mackenzie King, like many Canadians, was unhappy about Canada going to war. Canadians had enough problems at home. “The idea that every twenty years this country should automatically and as a matter of course take part in a war overseas,” the prime minister had grumbled, “seems to many a nightmare and sheer madness.” Mackenzie King never questioned that Canada would step to Britain’s side. However, he was determined to keep Canada’s commitment as moderate as possible.

Story Outline for Chapters 10-11: Prosperity and Depression

THE STORY	THE DETAILS	TERMS & PEOPLE
<p><i>The military success of Nazi Germany from 1939 to 1941 had made it impossible for Canada to play a limited role in the war.</i></p>	<p>Page 247: War Comes to Canadian Shores</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1). German u-boats (submarines) hunted Canadian and British shipping in so-called "wolf packs." 2). The subs were specifically targeting troop and resource transport ships. 3). In the first two years of the war, German submarines enjoyed a great deal of success; it was not until new detection, avoidance, and search and destroy tactics were adopted by Canada and its allies that the Battle of the Atlantic tilted in favour of the allied powers. 4). The port of Halifax was an important naval center for Canada during the war years. 	<p>Wolf Packs: the name given to the groups of German submarines that were used by Hitler to try and prevent Britain (and Russia) from being supplied by North America.</p> <p>Allied Powers: the allies included Britain, Russia, France, Canada and the eventually the United States.</p>
<p><i>Naval bases and air ports on Newfoundland were used to help coordinate both sea and air defences for allied shipping lanes to Britain.</i></p>	<p>Page 248: Newfoundland's Role in the War</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1). Newfoundland was still an independent British colony in 1939; however, the island proved to be important in the ultimate defence of North America from invasion/attack. 2). Newfoundland gave its consent to allow Canadian troops to be stationed on the island. 3). The RCAF also flew out of airports from Labrador/Newfoundland. 4). Newfoundland had gone bankrupt during the 1930s. The presence of the Canadian army helped improve the island's economic situation. <p>Note: as a consequence of Newfoundland's improved economic situation many of the island's people began to realistically consider union with Canada.</p>	<p>RCAF: Royal Canadian Air Force.</p>
<p><i>During the war, anti-Japanese and German feeling ran high. Canadians of Japanese, German and/or Italian descent, etc. were discriminated against despite their loyalty (and the absence of any evidence that people from these groups were plotting against Canada.</i></p>	<p>Page 248-249: Internment of Japanese Canadians</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1). While Germany threatened Canada's eastern coast the Empire of Japan threatened Canada's western coast. 2). The American and British navies in the Pacific had been crippled by Japanese surprise attacks in 1941; therefore, Canada was considerably exposed to attack. 3). Fear of Japan quickly pushed white British Columbians to pressure provincial and federal governments to intern the large Japanese population in BC. 4). Mackenzie King used the War Measures Act and the Defence of Canada Regulations to legalize the internment of all people of Japanese descent. 5). Japanese Canadians had their property confiscated and sold to white Canadians. 6). In 1988, the federal government officially apologized for the internment and gave every surviving member of the event \$20,000.00. 	

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<p><i>Despite PM King's hopes to keep Canada's role limited, the reality of all the German and Japanese victories in the early years of the war forced Canada to plan for "total war."</i></p>	<p>Page 253: Canada's Wartime Economy</p> <p>1). In 1939, Prime Minister King announced the creation of the British Commonwealth Air Training Plan.</p> <p>2). By 1941 industries across Canada were producing materials for the allied war effort. This led to an economic recovery and an end to unemployment (so ending the Great Depression in Canada).</p> <p>3). In fact, there was a labour shortage and the government created the National Selective Service.</p> <p>4). The drought of the 1930s was finally over. In 1942, Saskatchewan was producing bumper crops and other foodstuffs needed by Britain to continue fighting the war.</p> <p>5). The biggest change to the Canadian economy came in the form of manufacturing, e.g. We started to produce ourselves many of the items that we used to import from other countries.</p>	<p>Total War: a policy whereby a country's entire economy shifts from a peace to a wartime production economy, i.e. Producing tanks not cars, producing bullets not staplers, etc. Basically, the economy focuses upon producing anything that can be used to help win the war.</p> <p>British Commonwealth Air Training Plan: under the plan air crews from Europe were brought to Canada to be trained as pilots, gunners, navigators, bombers, etc. Canada provided the airfields, aircraft, etc. well out of reach of the German air force (<i>Luftwaffe</i>).</p> <p>National Selective Service: an organization whose sole purpose was to tell Canadian workers about the industries in which their labour was most needed.</p> <p>C. D. Howe: was the cabinet minister in charge of industrial production. He boasted that Canada could produce anything any other country could. In fact, many of the industries that emerged during the war continued to function in Canada in the years following the war, i.e. Aircraft manufacturing.</p>
	<p>Page 254-255: Government Controls</p> <p>1). Canadians called "dollar-a-year-men" helped re-organize Canada's peacetime economy to a wartime economy.</p> <p>2). By 1944 Canada was one of the world's leading producers of military items like tanks.</p> <p>3). C. D. Howe established the Department of Munitions and Supplies.</p> <p>4). A number of Crown Corporations were created during the war to help with the organization of the economy.</p> <p>5). King and American President Ferdinand Roosevelt signed the Hyde Park Agreement (1941).</p> <p>6). The <i>Hyde Park Agreement</i> was very important because it set the stage for greater Canadian-American cooperation; moreover, the agreement ended Canada's over-dependence upon Britain to act as a market for Canadian goods.</p>	<p>Dollar-a-year-men: Canadian businessmen who worked for virtually nothing to help improve Canada's industrial output.</p> <p>Department of Munitions and Supplies: an organization that could tell companies what to produce, where to produce it, and when it should be delivered.</p> <p>Hyde Park Agreement: an agreement b/n Canada and the USA whereby America agreed to purchase more products from Canada.</p>

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<p>Massive government intervention in the wartime Canadian economy seemed to have paid off. Canada had managed to keep inflation in check without slowing down the economy. In fact, the country's record on keeping inflation under control was the best in the world. The expanding web of government regulations, including the National Selective Service Rules, rationing, and wage-and-price controls, had severely limited Canadians' freedom of action. But scarce goods had been shared out fairly equally among Canadians, and many workers enjoyed a higher standard of living because of the government interventions.</p>		<p>Government Intervention: during the Depression the government avoided meddling in the economy of Canada and actually took the opposite attitude (<i>laissez-faire</i> approach). Following the end of the war, Canadians feared a return of the Depression; thus, the government continued to intervene and regulate the economy.</p> <p>National Selective Service Rules: a group that oversaw how labour (workers) were distributed within the Canadian wartime economy, e.g. Workers needed to be organized into specific factories, etc. to ensure that every industry had enough labour to complete their jobs. Note: a worker who did not find employment through this group could be jailed and/or fined.</p>
<p>By 1945 the Canadian Government had gone from having virtually no federal assistance programs to the creation of Unemployment Insurance (1940), Children's Allowance Program (1940), the Baby Bonus Program (1944), Veterans' Benefit Programs (1945), and numerous other programs designed to help improve the standard of living of Canadians. The measures proved popular and helped the Liberals under King to be re-elected following the war.</p>		
<p>The war effort opened new doors for women (at least while the war was on). The divisions between "women's work" and "men's work" were beginning to blur.</p>	<p>Page 256-260: Women's Contributions</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1). Women were actively recruited into the labour force because the majority of men were overseas serving in the armed forces. 2). Women drove taxies, worked in munitions plants, assembled tanks, etc. 3). Female workers were dubbed "Bren Girls." 4). Female farmers managed the challenge of raising kids and crops at the same time. 5). In 1939, women participated in the military as nurses; however, through the years 1941 to 1945 women began to actively participate in the military (not as fighting units) but assisted the fighting through the Women's Auxiliary Air Force and the Canadian Women's Army Corps. 	<p>Bren Girls: a nickname given to female workers related to their being involved in the manufacturing of Bren (machine) guns.</p> <p>Women's Auxiliary Air Force: did not serve as air-crew; however, they packed parachutes, managed barrage balloons, worked radars, radio, etc. Their activities greatly contributed to England defeating Germany in the Battle of Britain.</p> <p>Canadian Women's Army Corps: women who served as cooks, mechanics, etc. on the frontlines.</p>

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<p><i>Canada had been torn apart by the conscription issue during World War I. PM King was determined to avoid another disastrous conscription battle. He took Canada into World War II with the solemn pledge that no Canadians would be conscripted and forced to fight against their will. But Hitler's easy victories in Europe soon had many Canadians thinking that conscription might be necessary.</i></p>	<p>Page 260-261: The Fight Over Conscription</p> <p>1). As pressure mounted to re-introduce conscription, PM King introduced the National Resources Mobilization Act.</p> <p>2). Men conscripted under the National Resources Mobilization Act came to be viewed as less patriotic than the soldiers serving overseas. The NRMA men were nicknamed "Zombies" for their refusal to fight overseas.</p> <p>3). King organized a plebiscite on the issue of conscription and Canadians voted overwhelmingly to re-introduce conscription.</p> <p>4). French Canadians were outraged at King going back on his promise and English Canadians were pleased.</p> <p>5). The conscription crisis resulted in riots both in and outside of Quebec.</p> <p>6). PM King credited a Francophone politician named Louis St. Laurent with helping to prevent the crisis from turning too ugly.</p>	<p>Canadian Women's Army Corps: the act compelled Canadian men to train in the army for the <i>defence of Canada in Canada</i>. Men could only be conscripted to train and fight <i>inside</i> Canada. They could not be sent overseas.</p> <p>Plebiscite: a referendum or vote.</p> <p>Louis St. Laurent: justice minister within King's government. Laurent's support for conscription helped make King's reversal on the issue of conscription appear to be legitimate in the eyes of some French Canadians.</p>