

the ability of the RCN to carry out its assigned tasks in the mid-ocean; the RCN's reaction to the defeat was to mount an immediate effort to replace its lost destroyer and accelerate the installation of the 271 radars on its vessels.

As early as mid-December, the Admiralty had started pressuring Churchill to request that Ottawa pull the Royal Canadian Navy out of the North Atlantic battle and take over the UK-Gibraltar run under decent air cover. They were becoming convinced that the important North Atlantic convoys could not be left in the hands of the C groups any longer—or not until the C groups had been properly trained and their equipment brought up to a par with that aboard Royal Navy ships. They were all too aware that the vast majority of ships being lost at that point in the war were being escorted by Canadian groups. Nelles and the senior RCN staff bitterly resented the suggestion that the RCN was not up to par and they were not entirely wrong. The Canadians, after all, had the short end of the stick with the slow convoys; no one will ever know if Royal Navy escort groups might have done any better. But then, the Canadians had the slow convoys because of the calibre of their training and equipment.

After ONS 154, the Royal Canadian Navy could no longer deny that its contribution to the battle left much to be desired. Nelles gave in and, on January 9, 1943, the government at Ottawa acceded to the British request. For the hard-pressed RCN, the withdrawal from the mid-Atlantic battle was the lowest point of the war.

CHAPTER 7

ROLL UP OUR SLEEVES FOR VICTORY: THE HOME FRONT

By August 1943 William Lyon Mackenzie King had been in power for eight years—through the last half of the Great Depression and the first four years of the Second World War. In the 1940 federal election, he had humbled the opposition, winning one of the largest majority governments in Canadian history. He had challenged the electorate to give him a mandate to lead Canada through war and had received it. But in a mere nine days in August 1943—“black week” the Liberal Party called it—all those accomplishments seemed to be on the verge of evaporating. On Wednesday, August 4, 1943, the Liberal government of Ontario was swept from power and replaced by the Conservatives under the leadership of George Drew, who had no love for Mackenzie King and who believed that the federal government was simply not doing enough to move ahead with the war. The shock was not that the Liberals lost—former Liberal premier Mitchell Hepburn had virtually run Ontario into the ground—but that the Cooperative Commonwealth Federation (CCF), the forerunner to today's New Democratic Party, increased the

size of their contingent from zero to thirty-four seats, becoming the official opposition. Five days later, King's own federal party lost four by-elections in ridings they had carried in 1940; the CCF won two of the seats, the Communists won another, and the Bloc Populaire, a Quebec nationalist party, took the other.

The Ontario provincial election and the four federal by-elections were only the first and most obvious signs that Canadians were growing increasingly unhappy with King's war leadership. From roughly December 1942 to June 1944 the rising popularity of the CCF (which gained power in Saskatchewan under Premier Tommy Douglas on June 15, 1944) and the leftward swing of the Conservative Party of Canada (which selected Manitoba Progressive Party premier John Bracken as leader in December 1942 and changed its name to the Progressive Conservative Party of Canada) showed significant voter disaffection with King's Liberals. One national poll during this period even showed that the CCF was leading both the Liberals and the Conservatives in voter preference.

What had happened was simple enough to explain, but harder for King to respond to. The war had changed Canadians as much as it had changed Canada. As the nation did all it could to meet the military demands for war—more and more advanced ships, planes, tanks, radios, radar, and other military gear—its people began to change, too. The role of government transformed overnight. Canadians put their shoulders to the wheel—at least most of them did—but grew increasingly dissatisfied with the political status quo. In Europe, Canadians were dying and being wounded in large numbers, while Canadians at home were being rationed and taxed virtually everywhere they turned. Most were willing to undergo the sacrifices necessary to support the war, but they did not want to return to the status quo when the war was over. King had adamantly refused to consider postwar reform until the

war was won; his opponents slipped by him to the left in 1943–44, and the Liberal Party was nearly left in the dust. But in one of the fastest and most politically astute transformations in Canadian political history, the King government, pushed by a number of progressives in its own caucus and Keynesian-thinking mandarins in the burgeoning civil service, shoved the Liberal Party and the government to the left. The process began with the September 1943 meeting in Ottawa of the Advisory Committee of the National Liberal Federation—which adopted sweeping recommendations on issues ranging from national health care to family allowances and compulsory collective bargaining. It progressed in January 1944 with the adoption by King's Cabinet of family allowances and continued with the January 27, 1944, Speech from the Throne, which promised Canadians sweeping changes, including a number of key veterans' benefits. Political fox that he was, King promised the implementation of almost all of these measures after a Liberal victory at the first postwar election (which was held in June 1945). But the promises, backed by a modern and sophisticated advertising and public relations campaign, were enough to give the Liberals a wide margin of victory in 1945 and launch the welfare state in Canada.¹

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Whereas Mackenzie King's government was slow off the mark in setting war aims for Canada's military (other than that the country's war effort should be identifiable both to Canadians and to Canada's allies), it was rather quicker in taking steps to organize society and the economy for war. Naturally enough, the process began with the War Measures Act, which had been initially used in the First World War and which was actually anticipated on August 25, 1939, when the government declared

a state of "apprehended war," initiated the mobilization of the navy, and designated army reserve units. The Defence of Canada Regulations, a set of emergency security measures set up under the War Measures Act and put in place on September 3, 1939, allowed the waiving of jury trials and *habeas corpus*, the interning of enemy aliens and those hostile to participation in the war, the prohibition of subversive publications and organizations, and the censoring of media (especially bits of information that could be useful to the enemy or damaging to Canadian morale or recruitment). These were just first indicators of the degree of federal government control over the lives of Canadians; by the end of the war, it would be heavily pervasive.

To enforce these measures and the literally thousands to come, federal civil service appointments began to grow rapidly from approximately 9,000 in 1939 to nearly 53,000 in 1946. Many appointments were temporary, and those who fulfilled them were housed in Ottawa in clapboard "temporary" buildings, many of which were still standing decades later. (Appointment figures are not the same as the number of persons in the service, a number that is difficult to ascertain since people moved in and out of the civil service throughout the war.) But in all, the Civil Service Commission oversaw some 300,000 assignments from 1939 to 1946.

The government established more than fifty independent organizations during the war, some industrial, some regulatory, which hired their own personnel and set their own pay scales. In fact, some people regarded working for the federal government as part of their civic duty. Minister of Munitions and Supply C.D. Howe enlisted a group of business executives to volunteer their services to help set up and manage some of these new organizations. They became known as "C.D. Howe's dollar-a-year men," or "Howe's boys," whose salaries were paid by the

corporations they had been employed by prior to the war but who worked full-time for the federal government.²

The most important of the new federal agencies established at the outset of the war was the Wartime Prices and Trade Board (WPTB), created on September 3, 1939, to control inflation, set prices and wages, license businesses selling consumer goods, prosecute hoarders, and manage the distribution of scarce items. The WPTB's powers derived directly from the War Measures Act, which gave it a mandate to interfere in virtually every aspect of the war economy, setting aside for the duration the distribution of powers between the federal and provincial governments that had been laid out in the British North America Act, Canada's constitution at the time. The WPTB's mandate was simple: take any measure necessary to avoid the runaway inflation that had plagued the economy in the First World War and set aside free enterprise for the duration, where necessary, to control the national labour and commodity market. Chair Donald Gordon quickly oversaw the issuance of order-in-council PC 7440, which limited wage increases to 1926-29 levels. The move was very unpopular with Canadian workers, whose grievances began to show up with increases in the number of strikes and other industrial actions—even in war industries—within twenty-four months. About 16,000 woman volunteers working for the board's Consumers' Branch kept a close watch on price increases and possible profiteering by local businesses across Canada. The board also tried to control rents across Canada; the influx of rural Canadians into the cities in pursuit of war-industry jobs and the significant burgeoning of military personnel and their families in garrison towns also pushed rents up very quickly. In fact, wartime housing was one of the greatest challenges the federal government faced.³

The board also set maximum prices for coal, butter, sugar, and wool

by mid-1940, and eventually a sweeping ration system was instituted that allocated virtually all consumer products, from fabric for clothing to meat, gasoline, and fats and oils. The aim was to stifle consumer demand so as to keep prices reasonable—thus also stifling upward pressure on wages—but most importantly to make sure strategic materials were available for the equipping, feeding, clothing, and housing of the burgeoning military forces and the production of the weapons and munitions they would fight with. Under the Combined Boards regimen first established by the Americans and the British in Washington at the end of December 1941 and the beginning of January 1942 (referred to in Chapter 8), Canada also had Allied production quotas to fill—from the assembly of army trucks to the shipment of bacon and almost everything in between. Thus the board was even responsible for controlling prices on many second-hand goods, such as civilian vehicles, which were not produced during the war. For the most part, the board did a more-than-adequate job, keeping inflation over the course of the war to just under 20 percent for the whole six years, with much of that coming in the first year of the war before the board had greatly broadened its own mandate.

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The Second World War can be considered the most expensive public works project in Canadian history, and, like all government projects, it had to be paid for. In order to do so, the government raised income and corporate taxes severalfold, put a limit on earnings by taxing back virtually all income over fixed amounts, and borrowed heavily from the Canadian people.⁴ The borrowing was done through the issuance of Victory Bonds and War Savings Certificates, which promised to pay

Canadians a good interest on the money they were investing in the war effort after the war was over. Investment in Victory Bonds and War Savings Certificates was, strictly speaking, voluntary, but the ongoing public bond and certificate drives, usually featuring well-known personalities and the occasional Canadian war hero, created much moral pressure on Canadians to save. Campaigns were carried on in schools and factories, churches and community associations. Schoolchildren were encouraged to contribute pennies that would eventually add up to quarters and, eventually, entire certificates. Rallies were held in war industry factories. The War Savings Certificates alone eventually covered half the cost of the country's war. There were ten Victory Bond campaigns, with bonds mostly purchased by businesses. Canadians bought bonds and certificates for two primary reasons: it was a way of supporting the war effort, and they had little else to spend their money on. And despite very high taxes, the unemployment of the Great Depression disappeared quickly once war and farm production was in full swing, and people had more money in their pockets than at any time since 1929.

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C.D. Howe and the Department of Munitions and Supply was the orchestra leader; Canadian factories, shipyards, universities, the National Research Council, and the many new government corporations established to produce goods that Canadian factories couldn't were the orchestra. The department was established in the spring of 1940 to retool industry for war and, without scandal or major problems, set in motion a second "industrial revolution" in Canada. Investment in industry doubled during the 1939–43 period. Howe took Canada from

bust to boom and from a nation that made light bulbs to one that built advanced radars and communications equipment, not to mention heavy bombers, sophisticated anti-submarine vessels, trucks, tanks, ammunition and small arms of all sorts, and other advanced military gear. One of the best examples is the way the nation's shipbuilding developed from the start of the war to the end.

By the fall of France, when it became increasingly important to secure shipping and replace lost ships, Canada had just started to build corvettes for the protection of its own coastal shipping. Britain soon placed orders for twenty-six 10,000-tonne cargo ships and orders for more corvettes and minesweepers. This was just the beginning, as Britain made clear it needed Canada to build as many naval and merchant ships as it possibly could. The practically non-existent Canadian interwar shipbuilding industry (three shipyards employing fewer than 4,000 men) expanded to ninety shipyards on the East and West Coasts and the Great Lakes. More than 126,000 men and women were employed. Overall, Canadian shipyards built 4,047 naval vessels, 300 anti-submarine warships, 4 Tribal class destroyers, 410 cargo ships, and 348 Park merchant ships (10,000-tonnes, slow but reliable, and able to handle all kinds of cargo). Shipyard workers got faster and production times dropped significantly by mid-1942.⁵

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In July 1940 a new Department of National War Services (DNWS) was established to mobilize the civilian population, find every last male eligible for military service, and coordinate and supervise volunteer efforts. Its portfolio of concerns was unmanageably large, so it underwent some changes beginning in 1942, but it always retained responsibility for the

supervision of voluntary work. One of the key things the DNWS did was set up local citizen committees to optimize the effectiveness of volunteer groups. Some private organizations such as the YMCA, the Knights of Columbus, the Salvation Army, and the Canadian Legion were given funds and a mandate to provide comforts to training soldiers and those overseas. These groups eventually came under the purview of the Directorate of Auxiliary Services within the Department of National Defence.

The most important step taken by Ottawa to place the national economy and national man- and woman-power under its direction for the duration of the war was the National Resources Mobilization Act (NRMA), passed in June 1940 to secure public safety, defend Canada, maintain order, and exert control over employment.⁶ The act's ultimate mandate was within its title. Any resource—human, agricultural, or industrial—was henceforth to be at the call of the nation, to be deployed and or regulated as necessary to assure that the nation's total war effort was fully utilized for the common good. The National Resources Mobilization Act was the umbrella legislation first used to begin military training for home defence for Canadian men who had not volunteered for overseas service.⁷

The national war effort had a profound impact on Canadian women, though the extent to which it was a lasting impact is still the subject of considerable debate among historians. The initial impact was greatest in the voluntary sector, where women employed in traditional occupations—housewives and others—could make a contribution to the war without significantly changing their daily lives. In the fall of 1940, the government created the Women's Voluntary Services Division, which directed woman volunteers into dozens of jobs that they could do while maintaining their traditional ways of life. But it soon became obvious that women could and should play a significant role in replacing men in

tasks such as the Air Raid Protection Program (ARP), which called on them to maintain blackouts in Canadian communities, but also trained them in blackout, air raid, and emergency drills and first aid. Two hundred thousand women volunteered for air raid service.⁸

Women also began to volunteer for the military in large numbers and in military occupations far more diverse than the nursing services in which they had played such an important role overseas in the First World War. Nursing was a long-established traditional war role for women, but in late June 1941 the government established the Canadian Women's Army Corps (which eventually attracted about 22,000 women); this was followed in early July 1941 by the establishment of the Royal Canadian Air Force Women's Division (which eventually took in some 17,000 women) and, at the end of July 1942, the Women's Royal Canadian Naval Services (with an eventual complement of about 6,800 women). These women received rudimentary military training, were issued uniforms, conformed to military rank structure, and largely performed administrative jobs that had once been filled by men. About half of the women who signed up were married, supplementing family incomes as their men went into the military services or earning a steady wage for the first time themselves; mothers, however, were not allowed. Recruitment depended on the idea that these measures were only temporary and would not in any way compromise the femininity on which women's traditional gender role was based. The recruitment message was conflicted, however, because society itself was: on the one hand women were absolutely necessary for the war effort, but on the other hand they were supposed to conform to traditional male notions of chastity, deportment, dress, and conduct.

It's a sad truth that the work women did in the military was often traditionally "female" or women's work—they were bat women, waitresses,

cleaners, clerks, etc. Only about 10 percent went overseas to serve, though an increasing number of women were recruited to fly bombers and transport aircraft over the northeast staging route, mostly to replace men who were being sent into the bomber war over Europe. Female personnel were often harassed, discriminated against, and always paid less than men. Instead of tackling these systemic problems, government, industry, and the military bided their time, certain that all would return to normal when the men came home and the women went back to their housekeeping and knitting. Women were being utilized to win the war, not to change their role in society.⁹

In fact, many women's lives remained basically the same throughout the war. The question was, were changes going to be permanent for those women who signed up or went out to work? Historian Ruth Roach Pierson says that gender stereotypes and biased government policies allowed only minor breakthroughs for women, and those breakthroughs were clawed back in the postwar years (because they caused such desperate social anxiety).¹⁰ Postwar, women in uniform (excluding nurses) were seen as a menace to the traditional family and a moral threat. But the good part was, those wartime experiences created a climate of broadened expectations and a sense of confidence, self-respect, and pride that really boosted women's general outlook. Still, there were many changes within wartime households. With the men away, women had greater responsibilities for family finances and household maintenance. They had to fend for themselves in dealing with the coal salesman, the man who changed windows twice a year, or the plumbers and electricians who came to make repairs. And those in the upper classes had less domestic help in doing so. They all had to deal with rationing and shortages, and essentially hunting for the best available grocery bargains on foot or on public transit. Meal planning

around shortages and allotments was difficult. They had to learn basic repair and maintenance work around the house (e.g., in plumbing and heating), while money problems in some cases forced women to work outside the home whether they wanted to or not. Overall, the term "housewife" was invested with a higher status during the war.

The women's division of the National Selective Service was created in May 1942.¹¹ It was very careful to initially recruit only single women, approaching wives and mothers only after the invasion of Sicily. Child-care services and tax breaks were offered as an incentive to work. Generally, women's participation in the paid workforce was greater during the war years (they could work even after marriage and could get higher-status jobs). There were a larger number of the people in better jobs of a wider variety. Men still held workplace authority, but increasingly women claimed that they deserved equal pay for equal work. A lot of effort was put into reassuring people that not much was changing and that by working for wages during the war women were only being patriotic. Childcare was a huge problem only partly addressed, and child neglect was often blamed on or attributed to working mothers—sending a contradictory message that women must work to advance the war effort but that women with children shouldn't work, lest the kids be neglected or even go bad.

By June 1941 the number of women workers was 100,000 more than in 1931, and the demand for women to take up paid labour only got stronger after that, as the pool of male civilian workers dried up. Mackenzie King stated that the most important aspect of the 1942 National Selective Service program was to recruit women. The peak of female employment occurred in the fall of 1944, when more than a million women were working full-time (many others worked part-time only and about another 800,000 were working on farms). Almost half of the

full-timers were in the service sector, with just slightly less than that in manufacturing positions; 180,000 were in trade and finance, 31,000 in transportation and communication, and 4,000 in construction. Women's numbers in the civil service went up significantly from the prewar years. As the military situation improved for the Allies, consumer groups began the campaign to encourage women to go home after the war and put the needs of the male breadwinner veterans first. Some were glad to get back to their old lives. But few had any real choice.

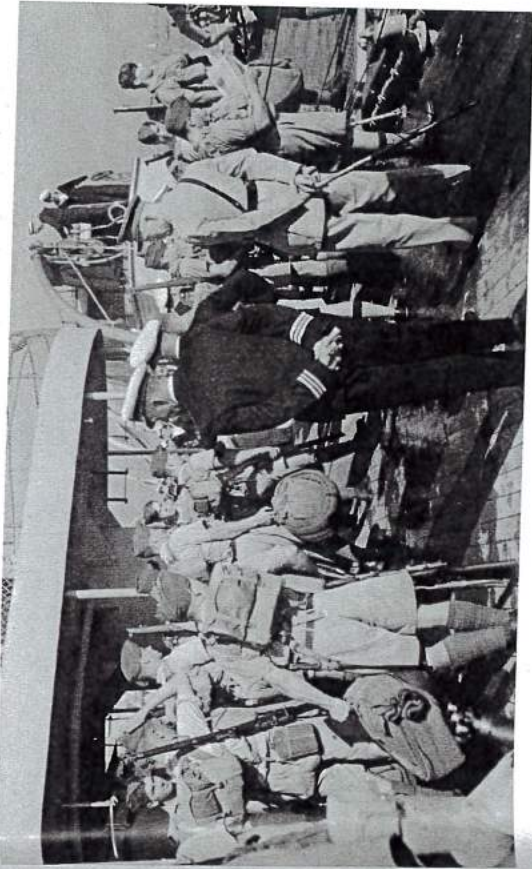
It is difficult to connect the advances women made in the Second World War to the rise of feminism in the early 1960s; the drive for equal opportunity for women in colleges and universities, the professions, the civil service (in fact all manner of public and private employment); and the campaign for equal pay for equal work. Women in wartime were asked, coaxed even, to leave stereotypical roles and to take on new responsibilities, but only for the duration of the war, after which everything was supposed to go back to where it was before. Postwar women, at least those in the middle class, were supposed to play an auxiliary role in society, supporting males by raising children, keeping the floors and the laundry clean, and welcoming their husbands home after a day at work. They were materially much better off than they had been in 1939, but their role in society had changed little.

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It is impossible to generalize about what life was like for the eleven million or so Canadians who did not go off to war between 1939 and 1945. For many, record taxation, war savings, long work hours, few wage increases, high rents, rationing, shortages of certain foods and consumer products, and overcrowding in cities added to the emotional

strain of bad war news and—for those with husbands, boyfriends, or fathers overseas—constant worry. In today's world of ubiquitous instant communication—where even soldiers at war get frequent opportunities to phone, Skype, or email their loved ones (sometimes even on a daily basis)—it is very difficult to imagine that couples in the Second World War were often separated for years. Their only means of communication was mail—letters and parcels, and sometimes individually recorded phonographs—that took weeks to cross the ocean by military mail services. In some instances, as historian Jeff Keshen has pointed out, the distance and the emotional strains it precipitated allowed for greater infidelity. Men at war were men at war, after all, and far away for long periods—and the link between war and sex is as old as war itself—while some women who were awakening to their own importance and self-worth, not as extensions of male society, but in their own right, seem to have taken greater licence when it came to fidelity.¹²

The popular music people listened to and danced to—blues, big band, swing—was dominated by themes of loneliness, distance, separation, pleas for fidelity by both men and women, hope for better times after the war. The runaway hit of the war was “White Christmas,” from the movie *Holiday Inn* with Bing Crosby, Fred Astaire, Marjorie Reynolds, Virginia Dale, and Walter Abel, which was released in August 1942. Written, ironically, by American Jewish songwriter Irving Berlin, it quickly topped the charts for months in both Canada and the United States at a time when the Allies were still struggling to turn back the Axis tide in almost every theatre of war. Canadian musicians, such as the big band Guy Lombardo and His Royal Canadians, wrote, sang, and played the same sort of music at home. Every major hotel in every Canadian city had its Saturday night dances in the hotel ballroom, with most of the men in uniform and the women doing their best to be attractive

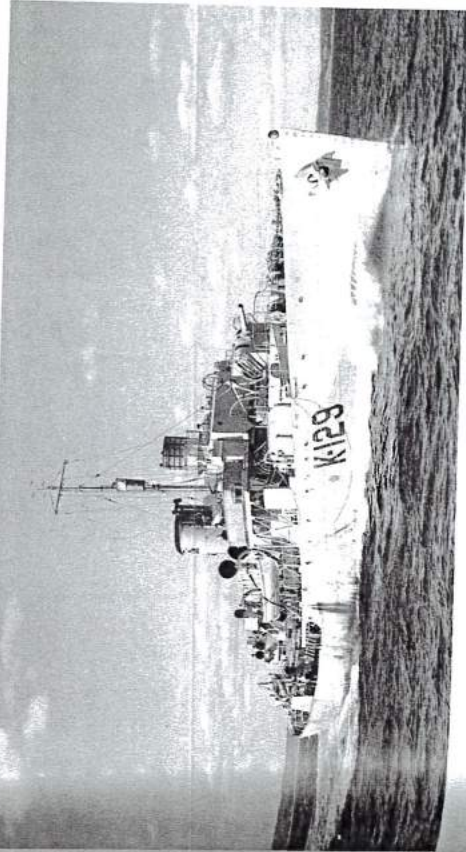


1. Troops arrive in Hong Kong aboard HMCS *Prince Robert*, November 1941.



2. Disaster on the Dieppe beach, August 19, 1942.

3. Corvette HMCS *Agassiz*.



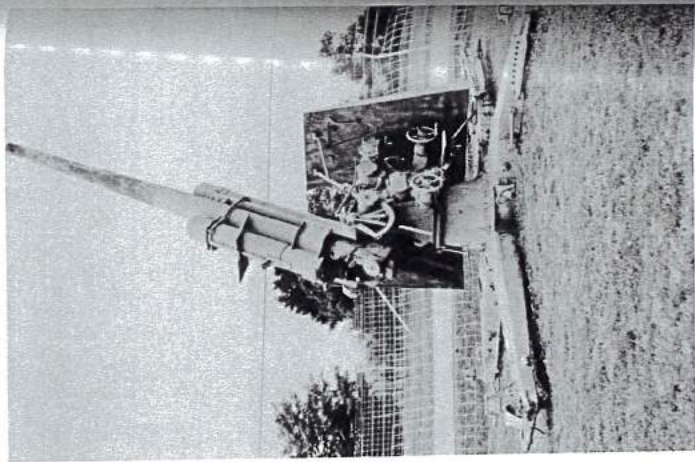
despite the many wartime restrictions on nylon for stockings, cosmetics, fabric for clothes, leather for shoes.

Wartime marriages were risky and their numbers boomed when war broke out.¹³ There were many reasons to marry: incomes were better, the government offered dependents' allowances for servicemen's families, a commitment could help get people through tough times, intense feelings were generated in wartime, and some married men could get out of military service entirely.

Although divorce was still a relatively difficult process, the number of divorces went up during the war, as did the number of desertions and abandonments. Some groups, religious and military, existed to help mediate problems between spouses.

Separation from loved ones was presumed to create loneliness and depression, and a whole industry grew up around keeping people in touch with loved ones, neighbours, and even acquaintances. Letters were the most important component in this, but there were also photographs, phonographs (of a loved one's voice, made in-store), and radio shows. When it came to infidelity, suspicion was often worse than reality, but while women at home had to appear behaviourally in line or risk getting their allowances cut off, servicemen abroad sowed their wild oats.

Some servicemen overseas or in Canadian towns and cities burgeoning with BCATP airfields, naval bases, or new army barracks, became like debauched tourists, and many took advantage of the unique circumstances of war to conduct themselves in ways they would not normally have. Key to this was the assumption that these actions could be left behind when they were transferred, or the war ended, and there would be no consequences. And it seemed logical to believe that life was short and no opportunity for adventure should be passed up. The prevalence of gambling, booze, sex, female "camp followers," prostitution, and VD



27. A captured German 88-millimetre anti-aircraft gun, without the carriage, at the Royal Canadian School of Artillery, Petawawa, Ontario.

28. A Canadian Regimental Aid Party carrying a wounded soldier, Italy, October 1943.

PHOTOGRAPHER: TERRY ROWE



outbreaks (especially in Quebec, where they finally generated franker discussion and better treatments) contributed to widespread concern that the war had created terrible permanent changes. Despite many raids on brothels in the bigger cities, the sex trade persisted. Demand was too high!

About 48,000 war brides came to Canada during and after the war, most of them in 1945 and 1946. The majority of them were from Britain, but they also came from Belgium, Germany, Italy, France, and the Netherlands. The Canadian Army officially discouraged these unions but accepted the inevitable marriages—the Canadian government paid for the women to travel to Canada. The outcomes of these marriages varied widely: Some war brides were immediately abandoned, and between 5 and 10 percent of the brides returned to their home countries (with no help from the Canadian government). Of those who stayed, many had a difficult transition to married life in Canada, due to isolation, language issues, climate, unfriendly in-laws, different food and customs, infidelity, inflated expectations, and discrimination. Many were successful in their marriages, and others stayed because with children and no money, they had few options. But the majority soon adjusted and became staunch pillars of the communities they settled into.¹⁴

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The Canadian Broadcasting Corporation may have experienced its finest hour in the Second World War. War correspondents such as Peter Stursberg and Matthew Halton filed their reports—short-wave broadcasts—on the Canadian fighting forces from as close to the front as safety would allow, in sound trucks that were miniature recording studios. One CBC announcer, Lorne Greene, became known as the “Voice of Doom” both because of the deep cadence of his voice and because he

began his announcing career early in the war, when much of the CBC’s news from the front was bad. Canada also produced a corps of new war correspondents such as Ross Munro, Gregory Clark, and Charles Lynch, whose postwar careers would stretch over many decades. In the manner of the day, many of these men felt a patriotic duty to tell Canadians that the glass was almost always half full—instead of half empty, as they knew from the evidence before their own eyes. Munro’s early reports from Dieppe stressed accomplishment, rather than the terrible tragedy he had seen unfold.¹⁵ This was not the result of official censorship, but of self-censorship. In this global war against the unspeakable horror of the Axis enemy, they, too, were soldiers. Very few British or American correspondents did otherwise.

Despite the emotional strains of war, the standard of living of most Canadians definitely improved over the course of the war, and they were much better off at the end of it than at the beginning. Salaries rose from prewar levels and, with tight government controls over prices, increased more than the price of consumer goods. People had more available cash, and even though retail and grocery costs were up, there were few “big ticket” items to buy and many more incentives to save through Victory Bonds and War Certificates. When the war ended and hobbies and boyfriends returned to start families, savings poured into new homes, household goods such as stoves, electric refrigerators, radios, and—eventually, by 1946 and 1947—new cars. The buying spree caused huge problems for the federal government because most of the products wanted by consumers were manufactured in the United States; but it also marked the beginning of a rapid enlargement of the middle class, which was also helped along by veterans’ benefits that sent hundreds of thousands of veterans to schools, colleges, and universities and helped them obtain loans for new homes.

The number of unionized workers doubled during the war, as men and women flooded into war plants, mines, shipyards, and other industrial facilities such as steel, aluminum, and nickel factories, and the mines that produced the ores out of which the guns and bullets and bombers were made. Organizing drives always produce labour militancy, and no less so during wartime, especially when many workers were convinced that government war policies—particularly limits on wages—unfairly discriminated against them. At the start of the war, federal labour laws were completely outdated. Far more liberal reforms had been introduced in the United States with the 1935 National Labor Relations Act (The Wagner Act) that gave workers the right to organize collectively, outlawed unfair labour practices, and compelled employers to bargain with unions that had been freely chosen by workers in government-managed certification votes. Canadian workers, most of whom were affiliated with international unions that spanned the Canada-US border, demanded the same thing. Labour unrest gave way to strikes even in industries directly related to the war effort. Some government officials and politicians saw these strikes as the products of unpatriotic agitators, but cooler heads eventually prevailed, and in February 1944 the government issued order-in-council PC 1003, which adopted the Wartime Labour Relations Regulations and essentially grafted the major provisions of the US Wagner Act onto Canadian labour law.¹⁶ After the war, the provisions of PC 1003 were extended in peacetime legislation but covered only workers in federal jurisdictions and federally owned Crown corporations (since labour legislation in peacetime is largely within the provincial domain).

Most Canadians tolerated rationing and controls and did what they could to support the war effort in what they reused, recycled, or purchased second-hand. Had they not, there was no way that the govern-

ment's various boards and agencies would have been able to enforce the strict rationing and consumption regimes that they did. The enforcers were too few, and the jails were not large enough. Thus the war showed an example of civil society banding together to face a common threat. But in a country of almost 13,000,000 people, there was bound to be cheating around the edges. Hoarding was unpatriotic at the least, and black marketeering was simply illegal, as were price fixing, skimming, failure to report excess profits (which were heavily taxed), or stealing salvage to sell to the government at exorbitant prices. It was easy for a grocer to hoard cans of fruit cocktail to sell, under the counter, to the highest bidder and fail to collect the appropriate ration coupon, for example. Or for counterfeiters to distribute fake ration booklets. Black-market activities included trading ration coupons or commodities, outlawed in September 1943; using the coupons of others via theft, impersonation, etc. (shopkeepers were in charge of making sure the person and name on the coupons matched); and offering or accepting cash bonuses or coupons for guaranteed availability or better quality than the standard. Illegal sales of meat were apparently the biggest area of cheating the ration rules, as many Canadians felt plentiful meat was their due, given all the hard physical work they were doing.

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Not everyone in Canada was a "happy warrior" in this effort to create a united home front in support of the war. There was some political opposition to the war by religious pacifists and conscientious objectors, such as members of the Mennonite community. The National War Service Regulations of 1940 recognized two categories of conscientious objectors (COs): 1) Mennonites and Doukhobors, who had entered

Canada decades earlier with specific promises of exemption from any compulsory military service and 2) other conscientious objectors (such as Seventh Day Adventists) prohibited by their religion from bearing arms. Mennonites and Doukobors both received postponements of military training, though not exemptions, but even those postponements were subject to cancellation. All COs were eventually required to perform non-combatant military service. Application for postponement for those persons was dealt with through an autonomous local board; thus there was disparity in recognition of COs, depending on where they lived, and differences in the way applications were accepted or rejected.

There was certainly more support for this war in French Canada than there had been for the First World War, and many more volunteers for the military services, but not nearly enough to fulfill government hopes for more than a relatively small number of all-French-speaking regiments in the army or squadrons in the air force. The Wartime Information Board (WIB) tried to deal directly with the conscription "crisis" of 1942 and the bad publicity surrounding it, creating propaganda that spelled out the anti-Christian nature of fascism and confronting rumours about French-Canadian soldiers getting the worst of it in actions such as at the Dieppe Raid. But the significant lack of francophone participation in the prewar militia, and decades of mistrust from the 1885 Riel Rebellion to the First World War conscription crisis in 1917, gave the WIB little purchase in Quebec. Many prominent Quebecers, such as future prime minister Pierre Elliott Trudeau, opposed the war, as did many who had developed strong sympathies for the Vichy regime, which Canada continued to recognize until late 1942. Until then, Vichy continued to reach out to Quebec for support, and did indeed have the attention of some of the Quebec intelligentsia as well as members of the clergy. It did so because it stressed values such as work, religion, rejection of state liberalism, and

authoritarian (read Roman Catholic Church) control, which closely paralleled major objectives in rural Quebec society.

Perhaps the most egregious example of Ottawa suppressing suspected "enemy aliens" was the exile of Japanese-Canadians, most of whom were citizens, born in Canada, from the West Coast to the interior of British Columbia, the eastern slopes of the Rockies, and as far east as Ontario. The Japanese had already been discriminated against for decades before the war, but the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, the Japanese navy's romp across the Pacific, and the Japanese army's stunning victories in Southeast Asia and China ramped that discrimination up to incredible levels. From the time of the bombing of Pearl Harbor, government policy (opposed by the CCF members) supported and institutionalized what had been a more informal hatred for the Japanese. With no trials or charges, the Japanese were uprooted from their homes and neighbourhoods in early 1942, and sent to refugee camps far from the coast, often to do forced labour. By September 1942, 22,000 Japanese-Canadians had been forced inland. Their homes, businesses, fishing boats, and personal property were confiscated and sold, without their receiving any compensation. As the war came to a close, King set up "loyalty commissions" to interview Japanese-Canadians and determine who was "faithful" to Canada; those who didn't pass or who refused to be interviewed were deported (about 4,000 people in all). The restrictions on Japanese-Canadians lasted until four years after the war (1949) and a formal apology and cash compensation offer was made only in 1988.¹⁷ Internment was not limited to the Japanese-Canadians: 660 Germans and 480 Italians were also interned for the duration of the war.

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Canada was simply not the same country in 1945 as it had been in 1939, partly because of the rapid changes within society itself, partly because of the years-long anxiety of the war, partly because of the changing relationship between men and women both inside and outside families, and partly because Canadians had become used to the idea that an activist government could smooth out inequalities and aspire to social justice. It is clear from the by-election and provincial election results of August 1943 and the year that followed that these deep-seated changes were beginning to manifest themselves through the political process. The civil-service mandarins began to see it early in the war; the CCF, Conservative Party, and Liberal intellectuals and backbenchers took a bit longer but were on board for significant changes in the role of the federal government by the late summer of 1943. Eventually the prime minister, too, saw it, and his old, almost buried social activism, combined with his innate sense of political survival, awakened him to action. The revolution in how the people related to the government and vice versa was truly launched by the beginning of 1944; even the wily old Mackenzie King preferred to "gift" these sweeping new programs to the people of Canada after the Nazis had been defeated, rather than while the war was still grinding on. But the tactic worked. On June 11, 1945, King's Liberals won a majority government, taking 125 seats to the Progressive Conservatives' 67, while 28 went to the CCF, 13 to Social Credit (almost all in Alberta), and 12 to independents, many of whom were actually Quebec Liberals. In the first peacetime budget, many of the promised changes were put in train. The government had not entered the war with a strategy for social change, but it was intent on avoiding the near chaos that had marked Robert Borden's domestic leadership of the First World War and then, when it saw that Canadians would no longer tolerate the status quo ante bellum, it placed itself at the head of the drive for

change in Canada. In these ways, it was far more successful in providing national leadership than it was unsuccessful in achieving significant leadership in Canadian war strategy.