

Total War

While war was raging in Europe and the Pacific, important developments were taking place back home in Canada. By 1942, Canada was committed to a policy of "total war." **Total war** meant that all industries, materials, and people were put to work for the war effort. The war affected everyone in Canada.

People were encouraged not to hoard (store away) food, and to stretch their supplies as far as they would go. Some goods became scarce because they were needed for the war. **Ration cards** became necessary for buying gasoline, butter, sugar, meat, tea, and coffee. Rationing means that the government limited the amount a person could buy.

Rubber tires, tubes, and antifreeze were very scarce. A family was limited to 545 litres of gasoline a year for its car. Liquor and silk stockings became luxury items. Silk stockings were hard to find because the silk was needed to make parachutes. For most people in Canada, rationing caused little real hardship. They realized that they were lucky not to be in Europe where the real war was being fought and

where the hardship was much worse.

People tried to "do their bit." In many kitchens, bacon fat and bones were saved to provide glycerine for explosives and glue for aircraft. People also gave up buying new aluminum pots and pans and new stoves so that more airplanes could be built. Children became scrap gatherers. Scrap metal, rags, paper, rubber, foil, and wire coat hangers—anything that could be salvaged for the war effort was collected. Posters urged the whole family to help win the war.

One woman recalled how the newspapers were always urging readers to "do their bit" for the war effort.

The newspapers, they were just propaganda sheets. My goodness, on the front pages, war, war, war, and in the insides, how to cook cheaper, how to do Victory Gardens, why we should have car pools, buy Victory Bonds and tell our friends they were traitors if they didn't load up on them too...

You remember those Sunday sections. They were jammed with war stuff. How to cook cabbage, make cabbage rolls, and then drink the cabbage juice. Did they think we didn't know that stuff, like how to make a dollar do the price of ten? You'd think the idiots in their big offices in Toronto and Ottawa didn't know about the Depression we just went through—ten years of nothing.

Canada's Economic Miracle

Before the war, Canada was mainly a supplier of raw materials such as fish, wheat, and metal ores. During the war, Canada became an industrial power. Canadian munitions factories turned out bombs, shells, and bullets for small arms. Shipyards worked full blast building cargo ships, trawlers, mine sweepers, and landing craft. Shipbuilding became the sec-

Rationing of goods was common during the war years. All necessary resources were directed toward the war effort.



ond largest employer in the country. Aircraft manufacturers, such as De Havilland, produced everything from training planes to fighting craft.

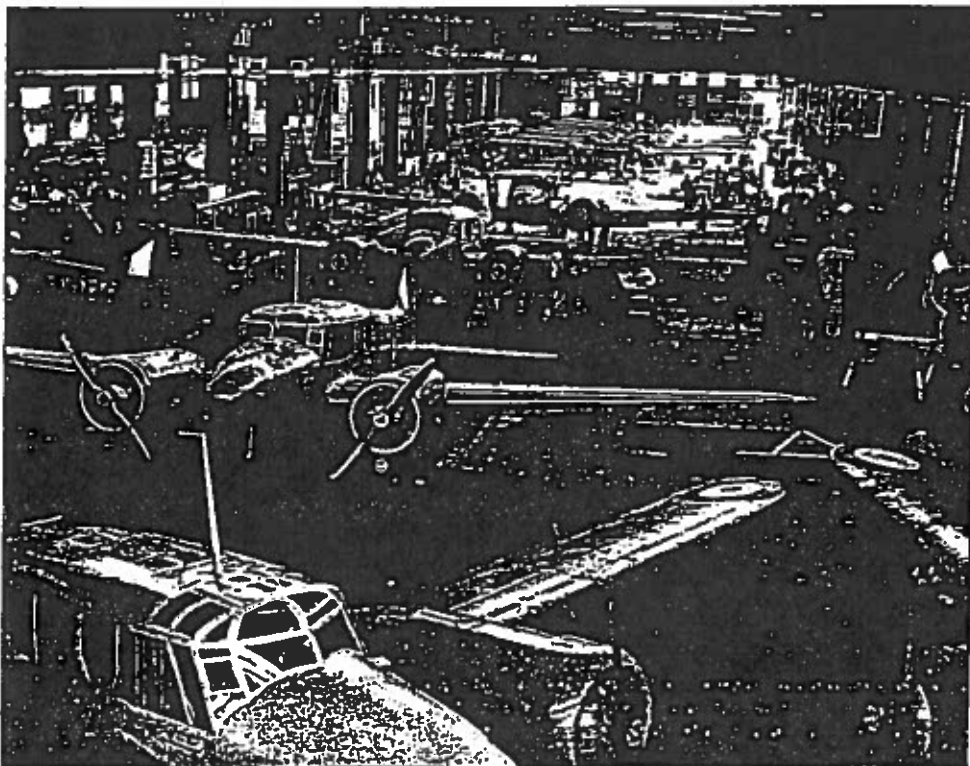
In 1942, the government turned all automobile plants over to the production of war vehicles. The plants produced trucks, jeeps, Bren gun carriers, and artillery tractors. It has been calculated that half of the vehicles used by the British in the North African campaign were stamped "Made in Canada." The Nazi general Rommel gave orders to his troops to capture Canadian-made jeeps because they did not get stuck in the sand as the German ones did. Other industries were also switched over to produce war materials.

All kinds of military vehicles, tanks, radar equipment, and penicillin were produced in large amounts. Steel output doubled, while aluminum production increased six times. Canadian farms and fisheries provided astonishingly large amounts of wheat, flour, cheese, canned

salmon, fish oil, bacon, ham, canned meat, and dried eggs for Britain and the Allies. Canadian industries also produced engines, synthetic rubber, electronic equipment, and other goods they had not manufactured before. Many of these industries remained an important part of the Canadian economy after the war.

With the commitment to "total war," the government also took control over many aspects of the economy. It geared the country's industries to war production and reduced the number of luxury goods that could be manufactured. It also froze prices, wages, and rents to keep the cost of living down. The government was afraid that with the high demand for scarce goods, prices might skyrocket.

To raise money for the war, income taxes were raised and Canadians were urged to buy Victory Bonds. The government's efforts were largely successful. A great deal of money was raised for the war effort, people had jobs, and the economy was booming.



The Canadian Car and Foundry plant in Amherst, Nova Scotia, was converted to producing aircraft in 1942. Many Canadian plants were turned over to producing munitions and other supplies for the war.

Conscription Again!

Conscription raised its ugly head again in World War II. Prime Minister Mackenzie King was determined that this time conscription would not tear the country apart as it had during World War I.

At the beginning of the war, Mackenzie King had promised that no one would be forced to fight overseas. The Liberals made this pledge primarily to French Canadians. They were determined to avoid the split between French and English Canadians that had occurred in 1917.

However, as the war went on and Hitler's forces scored major victories, the pressure to send more soldiers mounted. Prime Minister King found himself in a corner. Many English Canadians began to call for compulsory military service. Britain had introduced conscription from the start of the war. When the United States entered the war, it too brought in full conscription. Many Canadians whose relatives were vol-

untarily fighting overseas resented the fact that some Canadians were escaping wartime service.

In 1942, King decided to hold a plebiscite. In a plebiscite, all citizens have a direct vote on an issue of major national importance. Canadians were asked if they were in favour of releasing the government from its pledge that it would not introduce conscription for overseas service. Nine of the ten provinces answered with an overwhelming 80 percent "Yes." But 72 percent in the province of Quebec said "No."

English Canadians were reassured by the vote. To satisfy French Canadians, Mackenzie King emphasized that conscription was not yet necessary. He promised that it would be introduced only as a last resort. His famous statement about the policy was purposefully vague. It could be taken favourably by either side. King said, "Not necessarily conscription, but conscription if necessary."

For these Vancouver students, the threat of the war was very real as Japanese submarines were sailing off Canada's west coast. The students went through air raid drills and strapped on gas masks in preparation for a gas attack.



By 1944, the pressure to introduce conscription had increased even further. The army was desperately short of troops. Soldiers who had been wounded two or three times were being sent back to the front lines. King turned to Louis St. Laurent, the leading Cabinet minister from Quebec. With St. Laurent's co-operation, the prime minister announced that a total of 16 000 conscripted soldiers would be sent overseas, but no more for the time being.

The motion to send 16 000 conscripts overseas passed in the House of Commons by a majority vote of 143 to 70. Only one minister from Quebec resigned from the Cabinet. He protested that the government had broken its pledge to French Canadians. There was some rioting in Quebec City and Montreal. However, the response from French Canadians was not nearly as violent as it had been in 1917.

Mackenzie King had won a victory for unity. Most French Canadians acknowledged that King had tried to prevent conscription. He had paid attention to French Canadian opinion. Although many French Canadians were unhappy about conscrip-



How does this cartoon depict Prime Minister King's dilemma over conscription?

tion, they gave Mackenzie King credit for doing his best.

Mackenzie King's conscription policy was probably one of his greatest political achievements. He had remembered and learned from the tragic experience of 1917. This time conscription did not tear apart the Liberal party or the country.

Women Roll Up Their Sleeves for Victory

In World War I, women had served as nurses behind the front lines and made a major contribution to the war industry at home. In World War II, they again did the same, but they also became an active part of the armed forces for the first time. Women pushed to be accepted into official military service. In 1941, the Canadian army, air force, and navy each created a women's division—the Canadian Women's Army Corps (CWAC), the Canadian Women's Auxiliary Air Force (CWAAC), and the Women's Royal Canadian Naval Service (WRCNS). By the end of the war, Canadian women in uniform numbered 50 000. Another 4500 women were in the medical services.

Women were not sent into front-line combat, but they did essential work behind the lines. Some worked as radio operators, guiding back planes and ships from battle missions. Others were mechanics, welders, armourers, or workers in armed forces headquarters. In first-aid posts and in hospitals in Europe and Britain, nurses and Red Cross workers treated the wounded and dying.

A woman who served near the front recalled her wartime experiences:

I was a Red Cross worker. We had to do all we could to help. Some men were cheery, asking for a cigarette, joking. Some were in shock through loss of blood and just torn-up bodies, and some of these were the ones who were dying. You got to know. They had

this look about them, a whiteness, a look in their eyes. Some would die while you sat beside them. One did once, a young boy from Ontario, and he died as I was reading the last letter he got from his mother. He let out this kind of sigh and his head fell down a bit and I knew he was gone. He had a lot of steel in his chest. I suppose he never had much of a chance.

It was a time when you could work twelve hours a day and another four if you wanted to, and you'd crawl into the tent just dead. The bombing didn't bother us. The shelling. Sometimes it sounded like thunder rolling across the lake, just like at home at the cottage.

Women also played a vital role in war industries at home. The war once again proved that women could perform jobs in industries and services as well as men. In 1939, there were 638 000 women in the workforce in Canada. By 1944, there were

1 077 000. Traditionally, only unmarried women worked. But during World War II, it became patriotic for all women to help "fight Hitler at home."

Women in overalls and a bandanna on posters everywhere became a symbol of service to Canada. By the thousands, women operated riveting machines in shipyards, welded parts in airplane factories, and worked on assembly lines in munitions plants. In rural areas, they ran farms while men were away fighting. Jobs that had traditionally been done by men were now done effectively by women. These included work in lumber mills and as street-car and bus drivers.

In Ontario and Quebec, the government established child care centres for women working in war industries. Married women were temporarily allowed to earn more money without their husbands having to pay higher income tax. Salaries for women rose significantly during this time. Women in the aircraft industry received an average

Thousands of Canadian women served overseas as nurses and in the women's divisions of the army, navy, and air force.

