

SOCIALS 11

CH. 2: CANADA AND WORLD WAR I – NOTES

THE BEGINNING OF WORLD WAR I

1. June 28, 1914 – Archduke Franz Ferdinand, Crown Prince of Austria-Hungary, was visiting Sarajevo, Bosnia.
2. Bosnia was part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, but neighbouring Serbia had claimed it as part of a “Greater Serbia” because the majority of Bosnia’s population was Serbian.
3. The Archduke’s visit was controversial – a Serbian nationalist group called the Black Hand targeted him for assassination.
4. Gavrilo Princip shot and killed the Archduke and his wife, Sophie.
5. The assassination was the event that brought on World War I.

BACKGROUND TO THE WAR

1. Beginning of 20th C. much of eastern Europe was dominated by 3 weak & crumbling empires: Austro-Hungarian, Russian, and Ottoman.
2. Many nationalities within these empires resented being dominated by a foreign power. They wanted to be independent nations.
3. When Austria-Hungary took control of Bosnia-Herzegovina, a province in the Balkans, many Serbs were outraged at suddenly being part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire.
4. **Nationalism** – intense loyalty toward one’s own country and culture.
5. Some countries formed alliances, agreeing to support one another in the event of an invasion by another country.

Triple Alliance – Germany, Austria-Hungary, and Italy

Vs.

Triple Entente – France, Russia, and Britain

6. **Militarism** – the massive build-up in armaments and armies
7. Germany, in particular, had been rapidly expanding its army, and other European countries expanded their armies to maintain a **balance of power**.
8. By the beginning of the 20th C., Germany had the strongest army and the most powerful arsenal of weapons in Europe. Its greatest rival on the sea was Britain, who built the largest battleship ever, the *HMS Dreadnought*.
9. By 1914, both countries had amassed huge fleets of warships. A fierce arms race was on.

10. **imperialism** – acquisition of overseas territories – Belgium, Italy, Germany, Britain, and France challenged each other for rights to overseas territories and resources in Africa, Asia, and the Pacific
11. Austria-Hungary blamed Serbia for Ferdinand's death and eventually declared war on Serbia.
12. Russia, Serbia's ally, mobilized her troops. Then Germany, as Austria-Hungary's ally, did the same.
13. Britain declared war on Germany when it invaded Belgium.
14. On one side the Triple Entente (Russia, France, Britain) became known as the **Allies**. On the other were two members of the Triple Alliance (Germany and Austria-Hungary) that became known as the **Central Powers**. Italy (an original member of the Triple Alliance) did not join the conflict at first, but eventually many other nations became involved in the war.

CANADA'S RESPONSE TO THE WAR

1. Although Canada had become independent in 1867, Britain still controlled the foreign policy of all its dominions, which meant that when Britain declared war on Germany, Canada, along with the rest of the British Empire, was automatically at war.
2. Most English-speaking Canadians were of British origin, and they supported the war out of a strong patriotic feeling for Great Britain and the Empire.
3. Wilfred Laurier, leader of the Liberals, joined English-Canadians in pledging support for Britain and the Empire.
4. Prime Minister Robert Borden offered Britain 25,000 troops, but more than 30,000 volunteers from across Canada signed up within the first month.
5. Reasons for joining: most believed that the war would be short and that they would be home for Christmas. Some were looking for an exciting adventure, and maybe even a chance to be heroes upon their return. Others had no job and thought it would be a chance to escape financial hardships at home. Still others felt the patriotic urge to defend their mother country.
6. Not all Canadians were allowed to participate in the war. Women were encouraged to support the war effort at home. Those who did join the services were limited to jobs as nurses and ambulance drivers.
7. Initially the Canadian forces did not accept Aboriginal people, and they were reluctant to take African- and Japanese-Canadians.

8. Volunteers from these groups managed to overcome racist attitudes and join, but few were promoted within the ranks.
9. One Aboriginal recruit, Tom Longboat (Cogwagee) was a Boston Marathon runner. He became a courier, carrying messages between the trenches in France, a position reserved for the fastest runners in the army.

Training the Troops

1. Sam Hughes – minister of militia – set up a training centre in Valcartier, Quebec.
2. Wartime training brought diverse Canadians together as a group, first at Valcartier, then at bases in England. The trials of boot camp built bridges between them and they began to develop a **national identity**, a sense of being Canadian.
3. These volunteers formed the Canadian Expeditionary Force (CEF).
4. When the CEF arrived in Britain, British commanders assumed it would be integrated into the larger, more experienced British units, but for most of the war, the CEF fought as a separate Canadian unit, further contributing to a growing sense of national identity.

Canada's Minister of Militia

1. Sam Hughes was also in charge of Canada's armament industry. He created the Shell Committee to oversee the manufacturing of shells, and by 1917, Canada was supplying about 1/3 of the shells used by the British forces.
2. Hughes was a poor administrator and was dismissed for patronage, inefficiency, and confusion. However, he was knighted by King George V.

The War Measures Act

1. Introduced by Prime Minister Borden almost immediately after war was declared.
2. Granted the Canadian government the authority to do everything necessary "for the security, defence, peace, order, and welfare of Canada."
3. For the first time it could intervene directly in the economy of the country and control transportation, manufacturing, trade, and agricultural production in whatever way it deemed necessary.

4. Gave the government the power to strip ordinary Canadians of their civil liberties.
 - Mail could be censored
 - **Habeas corpus**, the right of a person under arrest to be brought before a judge to determine the lawfulness of the arrest, was suspended. Police had the power to detain people without laying charges.
 - Anyone suspected of being an enemy alien or a threat to the government could be imprisoned, or deported, or both. Recent immigrants from Germany and the Austro-Hungarian Empire were treated harshly - 8579 were held in **internment camps**.

THE WAR ON LAND

1. Before the war began, Germany had developed the **Schlieffen Plan**, a bold strategy for a two-front war.
2. France to the west – the Western Front
Russia to the east – the Eastern Front
3. The plan was for the German army to quickly invade Belgium, then France, and capture the capital city of Paris. Once this was accomplished, Germany could turn its attention to Russia.
4. It almost worked because by August, 1914, German troops were only 35 km from Paris.
5. But they were exhausted by the pace of the Schlieffen Plan, so France and Britain rallied to push them back into northern France, where the Germans dug a defensive line of trenches.
6. The Allies dug their own system of trenches.
7. Eventually a vast network of trenches stretched from the English Channel to the Swiss border.
8. Between the trenches of the two enemies lay **no man's land**, a terrible wasteland of corpses, barbed wire, and mud.
9. By Christmas of 1914, the Western Front was locked in a **stalemate** with neither side able to make advances, yet both sides were unprepared to retreat.

New Technology and the War

1. By 1914, new weapons were so powerful and deadly that it was suicidal to charge across open ground.
2. Newly developed machine guns fired at unprecedented speed.

3. Airplanes, invented only a decade before the war began, flew over battlefields, allowing pilots to spy on enemy activity; later they were equipped with machine guns.
4. By 1916, armoured tanks had been built to protect crews as they advanced across the battlefield. Using tanks, troops could finally break through the protective wall of barbed wire in front of trenches.
5. Commanders often could not understand this new technology and hundreds of thousands of soldiers were slaughtered in the battlefields of France and Belgium as generals engaged in a **war of attrition**, each side repeatedly attacking the other until one was completely exhausted and unable to continue.

War Technology

- **Dirigibles** – inflatable airships for scouting and bombing missions
- **Field guns & cannons** – Germany’s “Big Bertha” artillery could arch shells almost 25 km upward to hit targets up to 120 km away.
- **Shrapnel** – metal balls or fragments
- **Fighter planes** – at first used to find the enemy, later used to attack
- **Submarines** or **U-boats** (from *Unterseeboot* or “under-sea boat”) used diesel engines and traveled faster on the surface than most ships.
- **Torpedoes** – cigar-shaped bombs driven by a propeller
- **Tanks** – developed by the British to crush barbed wire and shelter the crew from gunfire while crossing no man’s land.
- **Poison gas** – Germany was the first to use chlorine gas at Ypres in 1915. The gas burned the skin and lungs of the Allied forces. Later, both sides used phosgene gas (invisible but suffocating) and mustard gas (which creates huge skin blisters).

Life in the Trenches

1. Trenches were cold and damp in the winter and often flooded in a heavy rain.
2. Muddy trenches became stinking cesspools, overrun by rats.
3. Soldiers’ clothes were infested with lice, and many men developed **trench foot**, a painful condition that caused their feet to swell and turn black.
4. Men were in constant fear for their lives, either from deadly sniper fire or from exploding shells.
5. Lieutenant-Col. John McCrae, a Canadian surgeon, wrote his famous poem “*In Flanders Fields*” to commemorate the dead and injured

Canadians he treated in Belgium. He wrote the poem in 20 minutes and signed it. Dissatisfied with the work, he tossed it aside. A soldier later found it and sent it to a British magazine for publication.

THE CEF IN BATTLE

The Second Battle of Ypres

1. Ypres – Belgian city in the Flanders district, where some of the bloodiest battles of the early war years were fought.
2. Apr. 22, 1915 and 2 days later, French and Canadian troops were blinded, burned, or killed when the Germans used chlorine gas even though the use of gas for military purposes had been outlawed by international agreement since 1907.
3. Deadly fumes destroyed lungs; many men suffocated or choked to death.
4. Neither side gained much advantage; 6000 Canadians were killed, wounded, or captured.

The Battle of the Somme

1. July 1916, British and French forces under the command of General Douglas Haig launched a massive attack along a line of low ridges near the Somme River, France.
2. As wave upon wave of troops were ordered to march across open fields, they were mowed down by German machine guns.
3. Almost 85% of the Royal Newfoundland Regiment, over 700 men including all officers, were killed or wounded within half an hour.
4. At the end of the battle there were over a million casualties – almost equal numbers on both sides.
5. Almost 24000 Canadians were among the casualties, and most soldiers were badly shaken by having witnessed the slaughter.

The Battle of Vimy Ridge

1. Vimy Ridge – a strategically important area of land in northern France.
2. The French had tried 3 times, unsuccessfully, to regain Vimy.
3. Late in 1916, Canadian troops were chosen to lead a new assault under the command of General Julian Byng (later appointed governor general of Canada).
4. Byng developed strategies for attack and trained the troops well, rehearsing their movements thoroughly.

5. Canadian troops bombarded German positions for over a month.
6. Meanwhile, sappers (army engineers) constructed tunnels to move troops secretly to forward positions.
7. Zero hour Apr. 9, 1917, Easter Monday, the first day of the attack, Canadian troops moved into position.
8. The Canadian corps followed their plan of attack with precision and bravery, and in less than 2 hours they had taken their first objectives.
9. Apr. 10 – they captured Hill 145, the highest point on the ridge
Apr. 12 – they took “the pimple,” the last German position.
10. The Canadians had gained more ground, taken more prisoners, and captured more artillery than any previous British offensive in the entire war.
11. Cost was high – over 3500 men killed and 7000 wounded – but losses were significantly fewer than in any previous Allied offensive because of the meticulous planning and training.
12. Victory at Vimy Ridge marked a Canadian milestone – Canadians took great pride in the success.

Passchendaele

1. Byng was promoted for his role at Vimy and was replaced by General Arthur Currie – first Canadian appointed to command Canada’s troops.
2. Currie brought an increasingly independent Canadian point of view to the British war effort.
3. 1917 – Currie and the CEF were called upon to retake Passchendaele Ridge in Belgium.
4. Although it had little strategic value, General Haig was determined to retake it.
5. The Allies won the battle, but the “victory” cost over 15000 Canadian lives and nearly half a million soldiers from both sides.

Women on the Western Front

1. Almost 2500 Canadian women joined the medical and field ambulance corps.
2. Nurses in the Canadian Army Medical Corps were called “Bluebirds” after the colour of their uniforms
3. Nurses worked in military hospitals in the battle zones as well as in hospitals in Britain.
4. Many were killed or injured by artillery fire, bombs, or poison gas.

THE WAR IN THE AIR

1. At the beginning of the war, pilots flew alone in biplanes used mostly for *aerial reconnaissance*, photographing and reporting on enemy troop movements.
2. Soon pilots on both sides were armed and fired pistols and rifles at the enemy below.
3. Within a year, manufacturers for both the Allies and the Central Powers had built smaller fighter aircraft with machine guns mounted on the planes.
4. In **aerial dogfights**, pilots used elaborate spins and rolls to shake off attacking planes.
5. When a pilot could prove that he had shot down 5 enemy aircraft, he was identified as an **ace**.
6. In 1917, the peak year for aerial dogfights, the average life expectancy for a **Royal Flying Corps (RFC)** pilot was only three weeks.
7. In all, more than 50,000 pilots and air crew were killed between 1914 and 1918.
8. Because Canada did not have its own air force, Canadians who wanted to be pilots had to join the British RFC.
9. Canada produced a number of aces: **Billy Bishop**, Ray Collishaw, Billy Barker, William May, and **Roy Brown**, the pilot credited with shooting down the German flying ace, Manfred von Richthofen, the **Red Baron**.

THE WAR AT SEA

1. German U-boats or submarines were highly successful at disrupting British shipping – could travel under water without being seen or detected.
2. When later equipped with torpedoes, they completely destroyed warships or merchant ships.
3. 1915 – a U-boat sank the British passenger liner, the *Lusitania*, killing close to 1200 passengers, including many Canadians and Americans.
4. Apr. 1917 – Germany announced that U-boats would sink any ship within the war zone around Britain, a threat that added one more reason for the United States to enter the war.
5. The Allies developed the convoy system and an underwater listening device that helped them locate and destroy U-boats.

6. Prior to the war, Canada's navy consisted of only 2 warships: the *Rainbow* which patrolled the West Coast, and the *Niobe* stationed in Halifax.
7. The strategic location of Halifax and its protected harbour made it a base for the refueling and repair of Allied warships and the chief departure point for Europe.
8. Canada's **merchant marine** ferried munitions and food to Britain.

THE WAR AT HOME

1. By 1916 the economy was booming.
2. After PM Borden replaced the Shell Committee with the more efficient Imperial Munitions Board, munitions factories started building ships and airplanes as well as shells.
3. Lumber, nickel, copper, lead, wheat, and beef were in high demand.
4. Some Canadian businesses made huge profits from inflated prices, but workers became frustrated by government controls that kept wages low but allowed prices to rise.

Paying for the War

1. New technology and the large number of troops made the war very expensive.
2. The government decided to try to pay its debts through bonds, taxes, and loans.
3. Canadians were urged to buy Victory Bonds that they could cash in, with interest, when the war was over.
4. The government also introduced income tax.
5. The Canadian government was also forced to borrow money from other countries, particularly the U.S.

The Changing Role of Women

1. With so many men overseas, women had to take on new roles in wartime Canada.
2. Some organized committees to send food and letters overseas; others became involved in volunteer organizations such as the Red Cross.
3. Before 1914 women had been employed at low-skill, low-paying jobs in food and clothing industries, and as domestic servants.
4. Canada's increased industrial production created a great demand for labour – women were hired for all types of work.

5. The changing roles of women during the war strengthened the campaign for women's suffrage.
6. 1916 – women won the right to vote in Manitoba, then in Alberta and Saskatchewan.
1917 – women won the right to vote in Ontario and British Columbia.
7. 1918 – All Canadian women won the right to vote in federal elections in recognition of their patriotic effort during the war.

Propaganda as a Tool of War

1. Variety of media – films, magazine articles, radio programs, political speeches, posters.
2. Encouraged people to join the army, buy savings bonds, use less fuel, eat less meat, and support the government in whatever way necessary.
3. Colourful posters that encouraged able-bodied men to enlist contributed to the fact that more than 80% of the Canadians who served in WWI were volunteers.
4. Reports about conditions on the Western Front were inaccurate; the number of Allied soldiers killed or wounded was minimized while enemy casualties were exaggerated.
5. Portrayal of Germans aroused prejudice against all Germans, including those who had settled in Canada.
6. Residents of Berlin, Ontario, many descended from German immigrants, faced criticism. The city eventually changed its name to Kitchener.

The Halifax Disaster

1. Dec. 6, 1917 – the *Mont Blanc*, a French ship carrying more than 2500 t of dynamite, was accidentally hit by another ship.
2. The collision caused an explosion so powerful that it devastated Halifax's harbour and much of the city.
3. 2000-3000 people were killed and more than 10 000 were injured.

THE CONSCRIPTION CRISIS

1. Prime Minister Borden had promised there would be no **conscription**, compulsory enlistment for military service.
2. David Lloyd George, British PM, convinced Borden that the war had to be won at all costs and that victory would require many more troops.

3. Borden introduced the **Military Service Act**, a bill that made enlistment compulsory.
4. At first, the act allowed exemptions (for the disabled, the clergy, those with essential jobs or special skills, and **conscientious objectors**, those who did not believe in the war on religious grounds).
5. Canada had a high overall rate of volunteers, but the lowest was from Quebec.
6. Few French recruits spoke English; few officers spoke English.
7. Quebec nationalist **Henri Bourassa** – one of the most outspoken critics of conscription. He argued that Canada had lost enough men and spent enough money on a war that had little to do with this country. He believed that conscription would bitterly divide the nation.
8. Farmers in the Prairies opposed conscription because they needed their sons and hired workers to do the farm work.
9. Industrial workers felt they were already contributing to the war effort and didn't want to give up their jobs to fight overseas.
10. In B.C. opposition to conscription was led by the labour movement.

Canada's Most Divisive Election

1. Military Voters Act – allowed the men and women serving overseas to vote.
2. Wartime Elections Act – gave the vote to all Canadian women directly related to servicemen. Also cancelled the vote for all conscientious objectors and immigrants who had come from enemy countries in the last 15 years.
3. Borden invited opposition Liberals who favoured conscription to join him in forming a wartime Union Government.
4. Wilfred Laurier, Liberal leader, lost support because of his negative position on conscription.
5. The Union Government won the election, but in Quebec people continued to demonstrate against conscription even after the election.
6. Conscription went ahead – of 404 000 men across Canada who were called up, 380,500 applied for exemptions for medical or other reasons.
7. 130 000 were enlisted, but only about 25 000 conscripted soldiers reached France before the end of the war.

THE CENTRAL POWERS COLLAPSE

1. Two important events in 1917 changed the direction of the war:

- Czar Nicholas of Russia was forced to abdicate and a provisional Russian government was formed.
 - The U.S., angered by the sinking of neutral ships and passenger liners such as the *Lusitania*, declared war on Germany on Apr. 2.
2. Oct. 1917 – revolutionaries called Bolsheviks overthrew the provisional government in Russia and signed a peace treaty with Germany.
 3. This truce on the Eastern Front in early 1918 freed German troops for fighting on the Western Front.
 4. The German army struck at weak points in the enemy lines and succeeded in driving deep into France.
 5. Positions that had been won at great cost in lives were lost in weeks: Ypres, the Somme, Passchendaele, everything but Vimy Ridge.
 6. By the summer of 1918, the new front line was only 75 km from Paris..
 7. But the Germans had exhausted themselves – had no reserves, no fresh troops, food, or supplies.
 8. **The “Hundred Days”** – final months of the war; Canada’s offensives were among the most successful of all the Allied Forces.
 9. The Central Powers collapsed one by one; the German Kaiser abdicated and fled to Holland.
 10. **Armistice** (or truce) – war ended at 11:00 a.m., November 11, 1918

Canada on the World Stage

1. Prime Minister Borden fought successfully for Canada to have its own seat at the **Paris Peace Conference**, and not simply be represented by Britain.
2. He also insisted that he be included among those leaders who signed the **Treaty of Versailles**, the document that set out the terms of the peace agreement in 1919.
3. American President Woodrow Wilson proposed a **fourteen-point plan** for peace that emphasized forgiveness.
4. French and Belgian leaders wanted compensation from Germany for the damage their countries suffered. They insisted that:
 - Germany had to agree to a war “guilt clause;” they had to accept responsibility for causing the war.
 - Germany had to pay war reparations totaling about \$30 billion.
 - The map of Europe was to be redrawn, reducing Germany’s territory and dividing it into 2 parts so that the newly independent Poland would have a corridor to the sea.
 - The German army was to be restricted to 100,000 men; the nation was not to be allowed U-boats or an air force.

Participating in Peace

1. Prime Minister Borden also fought hard to have Canada become a member of the newly formed **League of Nations**.
2. League of Nations – brainchild of U.S. President Woodrow Wilson; made up of many nations throughout the world and based on the principle of **collective security**.
3. If one member state came under attack, all members were to cooperate in suppressing the aggressor.
4. Britain and France had doubts; they wanted the freedom to pursue their imperialist ambitions. But the proposal had good propaganda value – it would gain them publicity and support.
5. Smaller nations were concerned about becoming victims of the great powers.

The League's Limitations

1. The League was more an idealistic vision than a practical solution to world problems because it required nations to cooperate with one another.
2. The League could punish an aggressive nation by imposing economic **sanctions** against it, thus restricting trade with the offending nation, but the League had no military force of its own to impose its decisions upon aggressor nations.
3. Ironically, the Americans refused to join the League of Nations, even though their own president was responsible for its creation.
4. Half paralyzed by a stroke, Woodrow Wilson could no longer campaign for a vote in favour of the U.S. joining the League, and the motion was defeated.
5. The refusal of the U.S. to join the League greatly undermined its effectiveness to resolve disputes in the years after WWI.

The Aftermath of War

1. During the winter of 1918-1919, people went hungry across large areas of Europe, their crops and transportation systems ruined.
2. A deadly influenza virus (known as the Spanish flu) swept across Europe, killing millions, and many returning soldiers carried the virus to North America.
3. Young people were especially susceptible to the virus, which caused the deaths of about 22 million people worldwide, more than the war itself.

4. 1918-1920 – approximately 50,000 Canadians died during the epidemic.

Did the War Have a Positive or Negative Effect on Canada?

Positive

1. It changed the way we saw ourselves as a country and a nation.
2. Canadian troops fought well, particularly at Vimy and Passchendaele - distinguished themselves as disciplined and courageous fighters.
3. The need for war munitions had stimulated the economy, resulting in major growth in Canadian industry.
3. Women for the first time achieved the right to vote.
4. Canada gained international status with its participation at the Paris Peace Conference, and Canadians began to see themselves less as colonials in the British Empire and more as citizens of an independent country.

Negative

1. The issue of conscription and the bitterness of the debate between English-speaking and French-speaking Canadians have never been completely forgotten. Those who spoke out against conscription were accused of being unpatriotic and labeled cowards and “Hun sympathizers.” Such accusations isolated many French-Canadians from the federal government that had broken its promise not to impose conscription.
2. The War Measures Act caused problems for immigrants from Eastern European countries who suffered racial discrimination even after the war.
3. Approximately 13 million people were killed during the war, and millions more were psychologically or physically wounded (60,000 Canadian deaths and 170,000 wounded).
4. Canada sent about a billion dollars worth of war materials overseas between 1914 and 1918, a debt that took decades to pay off.

