


How Canadians supported the war from home

WAR IN THE AIR/AT SEA AND THE HOME "FRONT"

WAR IN THE AIR

- ✦ At the beginning of the war, pilots flew alone in biplanes (mostly for *aerial reconnaissance*) photographing and reporting on enemy troop movements



WAR IN THE AIR CONTINUED...

- ✦ Soon pilots on both sides were armed and fired pistols and rifles at the enemy below (then within a year, machine guns were mounted)
- ✦ In **aerial dogfights** pilots used elaborate spins and rolls to shake off planes
- ✦ When a pilot proved he had shot down **5 enemy** aircraft, he was identified as an **ace**
- ✦ In 1917, average life expectancy for a **Royal Flying Corps (RFC)** pilot, was only three weeks
- ✦ More than 50,000 pilots and air crew were killed between 1914 and 1918

WAR IN THE AIR CONTINUED...

- ✦ Because Canada didn't have their own Air Force, Canadians who wanted to be pilots had to join the British RFC
- ✦ 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**)

WAR IN THE AIR CONTINUED...



WAR AT SEA

- ✦ German U-Boats (Submarines) were highly successful at disrupting British shipping – could travel under water without being seen or detected
- ✦ When later equipped with torpedoes, they completely destroyed warships or merchant ships
- ✦ 1915 – a U-Boat sank the British passenger liner, the *Lusitania*, killing close to 1200 passengers, including many Canadians and Americans
- ✦ April 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 U.S. to enter the war

WAR AT SEA CONTINUED...

- ✦ The Allies developed the convoy system and an underwater listening device that helped them locate and destroy U-Boats



WAR AT SEA CONTINUED...

- ✦ Prior to the war, Canada's navy consisted of only 2 warships (*Rainbow and the Niobe*)
- ✦ 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.
- ✦ Canada's merchant marine ferried munitions and food to Britain

WAR AT HOME - PRODUCTION IN OVERDRIVE

- ✦ Production of goods reached all-time highs to support the war effort
- ✦ Citizens were urged to produce as much as possible to feed and equip the troops overseas
- ✦ The fact that most of the goods were exported to Europe inflated prices domestically
- ✦ Businesses made enormous profits, but workers struggled due to wage controls (big issue post-war)

WOMEN AND THE WAR (A TIME OF GREAT PROGRESS)

- ✘ Pre-WWI, women rarely worked outside the home. Those that did were typically classified into a few fields:
 - + Nurses
 - + Teachers
 - + Domestic servants/nannies
 - + Low-skill, low-paying jobs (wage inequality)
 - + 1.6 Million women joined the workforce during the war (approximately 40% of the female population)

THE WOMEN'S SUFFRAGE MOVEMENT

- ✘ Without women in the workforce, it is generally considered that Canada's economy would have collapsed
- ✘ Women were fully aware of this, and believed they needed more of a say in how the country was run
- ✘ Manitoba would be the first province to give women the right to vote in January 1916
 - + By 1918, Women were given the vote in federal elections (except aboriginals and immigrants)

DISASTER ON HOME SOIL: THE 1917 HALIFAX EXPLOSION

- ✘ Halifax was the primary Atlantic port during the war, and was the chief departure point for soldiers and supplies headed across.
- ✘ Traffic control was insufficient and caused frequent collisions
- ✘ December 6, 1917, a French munitions ship carrying 2500+ tonnes of explosives was hit
- ✘ The resulting explosion was so intense it destroyed most of the city entirely.
- ✘ Shattered City: The Halifax Explosion

AFTERMATH

- ✘ Visit <http://www.cbc.ca/halifaxexplosion/>
- ✘ 1000 were killed immediately, 1000 more would die before they could be brought to a hospital
- ✘ 9000+ were injured and countless people were left homeless
- ✘ The wealthy Richmond region of the city was completely wiped off the map
- ✘ Just the *Mont Blanc* and its cargo alone were worth over \$3,000,000 (at the time, roughly \$45 million in today's figures)

DEVASTATION



VICTORY BONDS

- ✘ The war cost Canada over \$2 million daily, so they needed to find a way to pay for it
 - + Victory Bonds
 - + Honour Rationing
 - + "Temporary" income tax
 - + Corporate tax
 - + Loans
 - ✘ (from US and others)