

3 • The emergence of the Americas in global affairs, 1880–1929

toward higher tariffs in the US through the 1920s, the United States was still an impressive importer as well. US capital, propping up the German economy and playing a substantial role in many others meant that as went the US economy, so went the world economy. There were elements of continuity with the prewar period. US companies continued to buy and lease huge amounts of foreign land in their voracious search for raw materials for the overheated US economy. The relative weakness of other economies meant that there was limited competition from overseas firms. But again, these “incursions” into foreign countries and markets were piloted by private enterprise, albeit with a helping hand from the US government. **The Washington Treaty** helped short-term relations with Japan—an important trading partner and the **Dawes Plan** helped rehabilitate the German economy such that it could resume payment of reparations to Britain and France, which would then find their way back to the Allies’ American creditors.

The Washington Treaty signed in 1922 by Great Britain, the United States, France, Italy, and Japan limited naval armaments including ship tonnage.

The Dawes Plan was an economic recovery plan engineered by Senator Charles Dawes designed to address hyperinflation in Germany. Through this plan, US loans would be used to back the revaluation of the German currency. The plan also facilitated the flow of US capital into the German economy. The recovery was intended to allow Germany to resume its reparation payments to the Allies.

Canada and the First World War

Having gained independence in domestic issues in 1867, Canada still labored under a confusing foreign policy structure in 1914. As a Dominion of the British Empire the British government essentially controlled Canada’s foreign policy, which meant she was bound by the course that the British would take in the July Crisis of 1914. Over the course of the preceding 12 years, the Canadian military had been gradually drawn into a more centralized command structure in terms of imperial operations and by 1912 Canadian forces were integrated into imperial defence plans. Despite this integration, there were hints that the issue of British command of Canadian soldiers would prove contentious and in fact would come to a head during the war. In 1904, Wilfred Laurier officially placed the countries militia under the command of a Dominion-born officer. From 1907, however, integration continued with advances in common training and standards among the imperial forces. On paper, Canada had a permanent force of about 4,000 soldiers and about 50,000 militia with some training. The navy consisted of two warships.

Mobilization

In the midst of a heated debate regarding the construction of the Canadian navy, Wilfred Laurier had declared that when Britain was at war, Canada was at war. Although Canada had been debating her place in the British Empire almost since the signing

Discussion point

What were the advantages of Canada integrating her military with British forces? What were the disadvantages? What effect might the position of the United States have played in this decision?

Activity

Canada’s economic context

Research the economic situation in Canada in the period 1912–14. Use the following topic headings to guide your research:

- Manufacturing
- Unemployment
- Agricultural production
- Trade

Questions

- 1 How was the economic context related to Canada’s ability to fight a war in 1914?
- 2 What effect might the unemployment situation have on recruiting efforts in the autumn of 1914?
- 3 What effect did this economic situation have on government revenues? How might this impact Canada’s ability to equip an army and navy? What might be some possible solutions for the government?

of the British North America Act with some advocating greater independence and others arguing caution and the benefits of "Dominion Status", in 1914 the fact remained much as Laurier had characterized it. While it is true that Canada tumbled into the conflict with Britain's declaration of war in August 1914, as the South African War of 1899 had illustrated, the manner of Canada's participation was a matter for the Canadian parliament to decide. That said, there was little debate. Canada and her population of eight million would commit to the total war effort. It would send men and material and mobilize the home front to the war effort. The initial commitment was a contingent of 25,000 men equipped and delivered to the European theatre at Canada's expense—initially estimated at some \$50 million. To facilitate this mobilization the government passed the War Measures Act at the outbreak of the war. The Act reserved for the federal government the right to govern by executive decree in times of perceived "war, invasion, or insurrection."

The mobilization effort would be dominated by the character of the minister of militia, Sam Hughes. Hughes operated free from governmental interference, method and scruples. Within a month of the outbreak of the war, over 30,000 men had assembled at Valcartier, Quebec, for training. Assembling men was one thing, but a modern army had to be equipped and clothed and this proved a challenge. Khaki uniforms and the **Ross rifle** were ordered in huge quantities. Ships were contracted and preparations made, albeit at times unorthodox and somewhat haphazard preparations. The embarkation of the first contingent of the Canadian Expeditionary Force bore a marked resemblance to the US army's chaotic departure for Cuba during the Spanish–American War. Nevertheless, the first contingent of 30,000 troops landed in England in mid October 1914, and Robert Borden's Conservative government ordered a second of the same strength be raised.

The volunteer spirit was not limited to those seeking active service in Europe. Organizations such as the YMCA and other existing associations turned their efforts to raising money and material for the war effort. The Canadian Patriotic Fund was chartered to raise money that would bridge the gap between what soldiers would earn in uniform and what they had earned as civilians thus taking some of the financial burden off those who remained behind. Schools, clubs, and mutual benefit societies raised money to buy food, uniforms and even weapons.

Despite the enthusiasm with which most Canadians approached the war effort, there was, from the start some quiet voices of dissent, voices that would grow in volume as the slaughter in France became more apparent and dragged on from year to year. Pacifist religious sects, such as the Mennonites and Doukhobors, remained opposed to the war though quietly so. Even some among the religious groups that opposed the notion of war, such as the Methodists, were won over to support the war effort on the ground that it was becoming a moral crusade against those who would use war to further their national goals, namely Germany.

The **Ross rifle** was the weapon that Sam Hughes decided would be issued to Canadian infantrymen at the outset of the First World War. The rifle proved to be a good target and sniping rifle, but was heavy and jammed regularly, especially in the trying conditions of trench warfare. Persistent criticism by frontline soldiers eventually led to its replacement by the British Lee-Enfield rifle.

Robert Borden (1854–1937)

Born in Nova Scotia, Borden started his professional life as a teacher and later became a lawyer. After practicing law in Nova Scotia, Borden was drawn into political life and was first elected to parliament in 1896. By 1901, he had ascended to leadership of the Conservative Party and spent ten years as leader of the opposition, responding to the more charismatic prime minister, Wilfred Laurier. While in opposition, Borden championed closer ties within the British Empire and defeated Laurier and the Liberals in the 1911 general election.



Once in power, Borden worked to strengthen military and economic ties with Britain. When the First World War erupted, Borden continued this imperial vision to its logical extension and pledged, with vast popular support, unqualified support for the British war effort. As Canada's wartime prime minister he oversaw the dramatic expansion in Canada's military and industrial capacity. He pushed conscription through parliament, developing a Union government and expanding the franchise to women in order to do so. As he managed her expanding war effort, Borden came to realize that the sacrifice in men and material that Canada was making required a greater say in the direction of the war and from 1915 to the end of the war he energetically argued this position. When it came to crafting the peace settlements, Borden continued this position to the end that Canada signed the treaties on her own authority, not that of Great Britain. After his retirement in 1920, he traveled and wrote, serving as the Chancellor of Queen's University from 1924–1929.

Recruiting remained relatively easy throughout 1914 and 1915, with close to 60,000 enlisting by the end of 1914. By June 1915, Canada had a force of over 100,000 soldiers overseas, with a goal of one man in reserve in England for every two at the front. This was in the face of enormous casualty figures, the like of which none of the belligerents had foreseen. By the fall of 1915, Canada had two divisions with a strength of over 40,000 fighting in France. Sam Hughes boasted an ever-expanding Canadian army, with all new recruits forming into new battalions, which in turn would coalesce

Activity

Volunteer motives

The initial volunteers for the Canadian Expeditionary Force came from all over Canada, although in markedly different numbers. For each of the following people, write a letter explaining your motives for volunteering or not.

- A farm boy from Southern Saskatchewan
- A lawyer from Toronto
- A French-Canadian mill worker from Montreal
- A recent German immigrant living in Edmonton
- A Mennonite farmer from Steinbeck, Manitoba
- A logger from New Brunswick whose parents had emigrated from Scotland

into new divisions. The brutal arithmetic of the trenches, however, dictated that each division that was fighting would need replacements at a rate of some 15,000 men a year. The decentralized recruiting system continually lowered medical and height standards in order to meet the need for men. Volunteer recruiting peaked in early 1916 and fell off from that point. Nevertheless, when the Battle of Arras erupted in the spring of 1917 and the Canadians began their assault on Vimy Ridge, the Canadian Corps consisted of four divisions in France with a fifth waiting in Britain. But by this time, recruit numbers could not keep up with battle losses.



Canadian Machine gunners in shell hole during the advance at Vimy Ridge, near Arras, France, 1917. The Battle of Vimy Ridge is considered an important event in the development of Canada as an independent nation. How can the experience of war foster nationalist feelings?



What are some reasons for the decline in volunteers from early 1916? How might the Canadian government have addressed this problem?

Quebec

Recruiting in Quebec had lagged behind English Canada from the beginning of the war. The reasons were numerous. There was one French-speaking regiment—the Royal 22 Battalion “The Van Doos”—but it was primarily led by English officers. Demographically, men married earlier in Quebec and this shrank the available pool of single men as compared to Western Canada and Ontario. Recruiting in the province was organized by a Protestant clergyman, excluding the most influential social institution in the province—the Catholic Church—from the recruitment process. Anti-French education laws in Ontario and Manitoba epitomized an attitude that convinced many French Canadians that this was not their war. The growing employment opportunities afforded by increased war production and the high wages that accompanied them seemed to young Quebecers a more sensible decision than enlisting. Politically, Henri Bourassa was expressing his opposition to the war openly by 1916 as were many of his *nationaliste* allies and this curtailed Quebec recruitment even further.

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Activity

Canada's willingness

Source A

The following is an excerpt by historians J. Finlay and D. Sprague.

At the beginning, mobilization had the effect of unifying the country around a sense of common danger that was far less artificial than anything Canada had experienced in the past. Earlier, in the case of John A. McDonald's attempt to create an atmosphere of national emergency around the building of the CPR, for example, the artificiality of the effort was only too apparent. Or later with the South African war, the episode was the only English Canada's adventure.

Source: Finlay, J.L. and D. N. Sprague, D.N. 1984. *The Structure of Canadian History*. Scarborough: Prentice Hall. pp. 298–99.

Source B

Wilfred Laurier, the leader of the official opposition, uttered the following to describe Canada's stance at the beginning of the war.

... when the call goes out our answer goes at once, and it goes in the classical language of British answer to the call of Duty: Ready, Aye Ready.

Source C

Stuart Ramsay Tompkins was a young Albertan working for the Department of Education when the war broke out in 1914. The following is an excerpt of a letter he wrote to his wife-to-be in September 1914.

The whole city [Edmonton] is now astir with a mild form of mobilization. Last night coming down town we passed a squad of citizens marching to the tune of "A Hundred Pipers ...". A whole regiment is being formed to train bellicose citizens. The civil service are forming a squad but in view of the announcement ... there is much less enthusiasm being displayed. Strong exception is being taken to the stand of the government in refusing to allow men any part of their salary while on active service.

Source: Stuart Ramsay Tompkins to Edna Christie, September 10, 1914. Cited in Ramsay Tompkins, Stuart. 1989. *A Canadian's Road to Russia: Letters from the Great War Decade*. Doris H. Pieroth (ed.) Edmonton: University of Alberta Press. p. 36.

Questions

- 1 How does source A contrast the First World War with earlier crises in Canada? Why was it different?
- 2 Why, according to source C, are members of the civil service hesitant to enlist?
- 3 Compare and contrast the sentiments of Canadian citizens regarding enlisting as expressed in sources B and C.
- 4 Using the documents and further research analyze military enlistment in Canada in 1914.

The home front

While the First World War was developing into a human tragedy of catastrophic proportions, it was fundamentally changing the short-term condition and long-term structure of the Canadian economy. Like other countries, Canada entered the war while in the depths of a sharp depression. The increased production required by a European war and the prospect of a vastly expanded army meant that after a period of realignment—and in fact a brief deepening of the depression—unemployment would be a memory. When the massive increase in demand that accompanied a war of this magnitude was combined with the physical devastation and dislocation of established European national economies it meant that Canada, her fields and factories safe on the other side of the Atlantic, could expand into this niche.

Initially, in Canada, this expansion would be in the traditional role of supplier of primary resources. Acreage under cultivation increased dramatically early in the war and this pushed wheat production to new levels. Thereafter, production would stabilize at lower levels. The massive demand created by the disruption to European wheat supplies sent commodity prices higher. The net result was that the value of wheat exports doubled during the war, although it would never match the amount of grain produced per acre in 1915. Wartime necessity also buoyed the Canadian lumber industry, which had been hit hard by the building slump that accompanied the depression of 1913. Dairy products and meat also found new markets. Meat exports increased by some 1400% during the course of the war. Mineral extraction also increased during the war.

Munitions production was certainly not a traditional sector of strength in the Canadian economy. The expanded Canadian army, her British allies, the grinding nature of trench warfare, and the domineering personality of Sam Hughes all demanded that she create one. It was initiated in typical Sam Hughes fashion—ad hoc with a heavy dose of **patronage**. But such a “system” was bound to collapse under the massive demands of a war the scale of which was developing in Europe. Initial war production suffered in both quantity and quality. Hughes’ Shell Committee set up in 1914 to manage munitions production proved incapable of keeping up with purchase orders from both the Canadian and British army, plagued by Hughes’ meddling, profiteering and old party patronage. The Imperial Munitions Board over which Hughes had no control was created to replace the Shell Committee in 1915. The quantity and quality of munitions improved almost immediately.

The issues with the Shell Committee and munitions production illustrated the fact that the Canadian government did not have an overall plan for wartime economic coordination. Rather, it responded to issues and situations as they arose. The War Measures Act gave the government a powerful tool with which to address these emergent situations. Nevertheless, as the war progressed, a patchwork of government intervention appeared in Canadian society:

Patronage is the practice of giving political positions and economic opportunities to political allies and supporters.

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- 1915, Imperial Munitions Board coordinated production of artillery shells and later other materials from ships to airplanes
- 1915, War Purchasing Commission coordinated military procurement
- 1915, Munitions Resources Commission supervised the conservation of natural resources for war production
- 1917, Fuel Controller coordinated fuel import, export, production and distribution
- 1917, Board of Grain Supervisors managed wheat marketing
- 1918, War Trade Board managed import and export licenses
- 1918, Canadian Food Board supervised food distribution.

Financing the war

With a massive war effort comes a massive financial burden. Canada, like all countries had two means at its disposal to meet this burden—taxation and credit. Taxation was anathema to the finance minister, Thomas White, but there really seemed no alternative. A multitude of indirect taxes descended on the Canadian public. Steamship and railroad tickets were taxed, as were items such as coffee, sugar, tobacco, cheques, and telegrams. Tariffs increased. It was clear from the beginning that indirect taxation would not suffice and in 1916 the federal government passed its first direct taxation measure, a power that the **British North America Act** had reserved for the provincial level of government. It was a tax on profits made from war materials. It was not the last such tax and in 1917, with bills mounting, the federal government introduced Canada's first income tax, assuring the public that it was a temporary measure. The new taxation, however, came nowhere near meeting the government's wartime obligations. The rest would have to be raised by borrowing.

Canada was already in debt when the war broke out. Years of railroad construction and subsidies had pushed government expenditures well beyond its income. The problem with wartime debt was where was there money available to borrow? Britain, a traditional source of credit for Canadian enterprise, was strapped beyond her capacity to pay and indeed would become a debtor nation to Canada by the end of the war. The United States was an economy that, free from wartime expenditure and flush with war profits, became one source of credit. The other, more important Canadian source, starting in 1915 and continuing throughout the war, were a series of federal government bonds that would raise Can \$2.3 billion. Provincial and municipal governments were also looking for credit during the war and when the resultant burden was added to the federal numbers Canada emerged from the war with a debt of close to \$5 billion.

While spending helps create employment it also causes prices to increase. When this spending is undertaken by the government on a scale like that required by the First World War, inflation is bound to be significant. The Borden government had taken Canada off the gold standard early in the war and began to print money. When this was added to the dramatically increased demand in the war years, prices almost doubled. The war also put strains on world supply that exerted an upward pressure on prices.

British North America Act This was an 1867 Act of the British parliament that established and governed self-government in Canada—it, in essence, formed part of the Canadian constitution until 1981 when the constitution became a solely Canadian document.

A question of leadership

The war brought into sharper focus an issue that Canada and her leaders had been grappling with increasingly over the preceding 20 years—namely the dominion's relationship with Great Britain. The simple fact that a declaration of war by the British Parliament committed Canada to war highlighted the limited nature of Canada's independence as did the fact that her constitution was in fact an Act of the British Parliament and would remain so into the 1980s. It is true that when the British Parliament declared war in August 1914, there was no hesitation on the part of both Borden and Laurier, himself somewhat cool to imperial integration. Canada would commit completely to Britain's cause. But as Canada's commitment grew and the war dragged on in its vicious stalemate, questions of dominion sovereignty began to emerge. Nowhere was this more clear than in the matter of the leadership of Canadian troops.

At the outset of the war, the British High Command gave brief consideration as to how the Canadian troops would be distributed among existing British formations, but very early determined to use the Canadians as a division led by a British general. Borden favored the idea that Canadian officers would lead these units. While he was largely successful in these efforts, the Canadian Expeditionary Force (CEF) would become, for operational purposes, part of the British army. Operationally, the Canadian troops would gradually come ever more under the Canadian commanders as the war progressed with Sir Arthur Currie becoming the first Canadian-born commander of the Canadian corps in 1917. But the overall direction of military operations was another matter.

Throughout 1914 and the first half of 1915, Prime Minister Borden began to realize that the Canadian troops had essentially been turned over to the British government to do with as they pleased, short of splitting them up. While this might have been inconsequential had the war been over by Christmas and Canada's contribution remained proportionally small, by the summer of 1915 it was becoming evident that the war was going to be a long, brutal and grinding affair and that the Canadian contribution was growing in significance. Borden found it increasingly difficult to accept that he and the Canadian parliament had no say in the policy and strategy that its troops would execute. Facing staggering casualty figures with no end in sight, Borden traveled to Britain in the summer of 1915 to assess the situation for himself and argue for a more significant decision-making role for his Dominion.

Finding no answers and plenty of condescension from the British government and military officials, Borden returned to Canada determined to raise enough soldiers for the cause that Canada's concerns could not be ignored. It was not until the horrific battles of 1916 decimated Allied ranks and David Lloyd George became the Coalition leader of a new British government that this situation began to change. In January 1917, Lloyd George convened an Imperial War Conference and the Dominion leaders formed into an Imperial War Cabinet. Two things became evident at the Cabinet table: Britain expected even more from her imperial partners and, in turn, the dominions wanted a change in their status.

Discussion point

Canada emerged from the First World War with a greater degree of sovereignty than it had in 1914. Was this the same in the cases of the other dominions -Australia, New Zealand and South Africa?

Quebec

The initial wartime consensus welded together by war fervor and patriotic outpouring soon began to show cracks and as might be expected these were most evident in French–English relations. Wilfred Laurier, ever an eloquent advocate of Canadian unity, never wavered in his exhortations to cooperation. But as the war dragged on, recruiting numbers began to reveal a perceived gap between English volunteers and French volunteers. Lack of distinct French military units and a perceived prejudice against French officers combined with anti-French language legislation in both Ontario and Manitoba to further enflame a tense situation. The Quebec nationalists had furthered their alliance with the Conservatives early in the war by joining Borden's government. The *nationaliste* leader, Henri Bourassa, however, had turned publicly against the war by 1916.

Much of this was brought to a head by the conscription crisis and subsequent 1917 federal election campaign. The Liberal Party under Laurier, whose power stretched across the Quebec/Ontario border, was severely split by the question of conscription. Many Ontario and western Liberals who either supported conscription or recognized the prevailing political winds crossed to join Borden's new Unionist government, leaving the aging Laurier feeling betrayed and with only a few Quebec MPs.

In the streets, conscription proved deeply unpopular in Quebec. Riots and protests spread across the province and with them denunciations of treason by pro-conscription advocates. Order was restored with the help of the War Measures Act. When the dust of the 1917 election settled, Quebec found itself with its MPs in parliamentary opposition and with conscription a reality. While to the community of nation states the First World War helped propel Canada toward nationhood, within its borders Canada was more divided in 1918 than it had been in 1914.

Political unity and division

When the British government tumbled into war in August 1914 dragging her Empire over the edge with her, the news was greeted with pledges of cooperation and support from politicians on both sides of the House of Commons. Wilfred Laurier put aside his pre-war Imperial misgivings and ranged his Liberal Party behind the Borden government. Henri Bourassa, although personally opposed to the war, would not speak against the war as a politician until 1916. His parliamentary followers backed the government, as many had in the years preceding the war. This united front, however, was built more on circumstances than it was on deeper political principles. There was agreement on the ends, but not the means. All could agree if not on the necessity of supporting Great Britain, then at least on opposing the dangers of "Prussianism" and the evils of an unprovoked expansionary war. How that was to be accomplished was another matter.

The government's approach to meeting these ends was to place a great deal of power, money and trust in the controversial minister of the militia. Sam Hughes was a bombastic, stubborn, energetic

politician who had little use for the formalities of parliamentary government or his own prime minister. He did, however, have a great deal of use for people who supported him and the quirky ideas that took his fancy. His championing of the Ross rifle, a fine target weapon, but unsuitable for the dirty rigors of trench warfare, left the riding (electoral district) in which it was produced flush with employment and the Ross Rifle Company flush with profits, but Canadian soldiers bereft of a workable rifle in France. His lack of a centralized recruiting system created chaos at the same time as tens of thousands of Canadians signed up. Mounting scandals and criticism finally pushed Borden to fire Hughes in 1916.

The corruption that accompanied Hughes' "system" as well as non-Hughes related scandals, brought political opposition to the Borden government's handling of the war. A number of Liberals had been calling for a coalition government from early in the war and these calls increased in intensity as 1916, with its seemingly endless casualty lists, dragged on. Borden himself began to see that this was going to be necessary before the end of the war. It was the combination of dwindling enlistment numbers and growing casualty lists that would bring about the formation of a Union Government.

The conscription crisis

Unable to maintain voluntary enlistment numbers that could sustain the Canadian Corps in the face of battlefield losses, Prime Minister Borden decided that the only alternative was conscription and in May 1917 announced it to the House of Commons. After announcing it, he approached Laurier with the prospect of forming some kind of coalition government, not necessarily with Borden as prime minister. Laurier, struck by the fact that the prospect of conscription was raised before he was approached, essentially asking his endorsement rather than his input, declined and set himself against conscription.

The Military Service Act was debated throughout the summer of 1917 and passed by August. It would call up single men first and provide for conscientious objectors. Borden hoped it would raise an additional 100,000 men for the Canadian Corps. Borden was unable to persuade opposition leader Laurier into a coalition government and his inability to get the opposition Liberals to consent to a further year's postponement of a general election meant that conscription would be decided largely at the polls. To bolster the chances of victory, the government drafted and passed the Military Voters Act. This Act provided for soldiers serving overseas to cast a vote. As if to underscore the fact that it was essentially a one-issue election, they could either cast a "yes" or "no" vote for the current government. Alternatively, they could write in the name of a candidate if they knew it. A helpful list of government candidates accompanied the ballots. The Wartime Elections Act significantly extended to the franchise to female relatives of serving and deceased soldiers. The same Act removed the franchise from those immigrants who had come to Canada from enemy countries after 1902.

As it became increasingly obvious that the pro-conscription forces would win the looming election, many English-speaking Liberals

Discussion point

To what extent do you think the Wartime Elections Act was based on ideas of gender equality? How did it contribute to the fight for granting the vote to women?

Activity

The Canadians in battle

From their initial bleeding in 1915, the Canadians took part in numerous battles on the western front. Research the following battles to complete the following chart.

Battle	Dates	Canadian Commanders	Description	Significance
2nd Ypres				
St. Eloi				
The Somme				
Courcelette				
Vimy Ridge				
Hill 70				
Passchendaele				
The 100 Days				

began to take Borden up on an offer to accept them into what he called a Union Government. Regardless of how these politicians read the prevailing winds, the general election of 1917 was a hard-fought affair that revealed the issue of conscription to be divisive across the country. In an effort to secure the western farm vote, Borden announced that farmer's sons would be exempt from military service. The outcome of the election returned a Unionist government with a 71-seat majority. Closer examination of the returns reflected the divided nature of the country that had emerged in the campaign. Quebec and the Maritimes had gone heavily against the Unionists, but Borden was able to carry the day on the strength of Ontario and Western Canada. In terms of the popular vote, Quebec had voted four to one against the Unionist government while the rest of Canada had voted in favor of it by a margin of almost three to one. Not surprisingly serving soldiers voted overwhelmingly for the Unionists and by association for conscription.

In an effort to win the election of 1917, the Union government had promised a number of conscription exemptions—farmers' sons and Mennonites for example—but the sheer number of those seeking exemption ran the appeals mechanism to a standstill. The conscription machinery in Quebec proved incapable of compelling a largely unwilling population to register for the draft. Faced with the alarming casualties at the beginning of 1918, Borden and his cabinet ended most exemptions causing violence to erupt in Ontario and Quebec. In the west, the violence was often turned on those seeking exemptions. The divisions created by conscription would continue to the end of the war.

Activity

Wartime elections

Compare and contrast the issues, electoral tactics, and results of the following wartime elections:

- Argentina, 1916
- Canada, 1917
- Canada, 1940
- United States, 1944
- United States, 1952
- United States, 1968
- United States, 2004

Activity**The conscription debate**

Divide into two groups. One group will take the pro-conscription position and the other will take the anti-conscription position. Conduct a debate on whether or not the Canadian government should pass conscription into law in 1917. In researching your positions be sure to include a representative sample of perspectives including:

- The Maritimes
- The Western Prairies
- British Columbia
- English-speaking Quebecers
- French-speaking Quebecers
- Immigrants
- Families of soldiers
- Members of the Conservative Party
- Members of the Liberal Party
- Labor leaders

By the end of the war, some 24,000 conscripts had made it to the front and were assigned as reinforcements to existing formations within the Canadian corps and many played an important role in the battles that took place in the last three months of the war. While it can be argued that conscription was necessary to maintain Canada's overseas fighting strength, which it did, it was bought at the cost of the national unity that appeared to be forming at the beginning of the war and the division thus engendered would continue throughout the century.

At the front

The first contingent of the Canadian Expeditionary Force arrived in England in October 1914 and soon began a haphazard training at their quarters on the infamous windswept, cold and wet Salisbury plain. While the bulk of Canadian troops would serve as a distinct division and later corps in the British army, some units served in other British formations. The Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry, a unit raised in Canada at the outset of the war consisting of Canadians with British military experience, initially served within a British division. Some Canadian specialist units served in other theatres of war, but the vast majority were stationed at various points on the western front throughout the war.

The Canadians arrived in France in February of 1915. After some minor engagements in March, in April the Canadian brigades were stationed in the Ypres Salient, a bulge in the British line near the ancient cloth-making town of Ypres. On April 22, the Germans opposite the Canadians, who were flanked by French and Algerians, released chlorine gas for the first time on the western front. The ensuing 2nd Battle of Ypres was a chaotic and bloody affair that revealed the Canadians as inexperienced but courageous soldiers.

The shortcomings of the Ross rifle were becoming dangerously evident and Canadian soldiers would abandon them for the more robust Lee Enfield of the British army whenever they could.

With the arrival of the second contingent in mid 1915, the Canadians were formed into a corps commanded by a British general with the component divisions being commanded by Canadian generals. The Canadian Corps began to gain reputation as skillful trench raiders and eventually as shock troops leading larger assaults on German lines. By 1917, the Canadian Corps, by then consisting of four divisions, was given the task of capturing Vimy Ridge, a commanding position that the French army had been unable to wrestle from the German army. This operation, to commence on April 9, was to be Canadian in conception, planning, and execution. General Arthur Currie took note of previous failures and determined not to repeat them had his corps meticulously rehearse the plan behind the lines. Innovations such as platoon tactics, new methods for counterbattery targeting as well as ensuring that all men, especially non-commissioned officers, understood their objectives and how to find them both on a map and in reality helped make the operation a huge success.

The peace

From Borden's first wartime visit to England it was evident that he believed the scale of Canada's commitment entitled her to a share in determining the direction of the conflict. While this was not immediately evident to the British authorities, by the time David Lloyd George formed the Imperial War Cabinet, it was fairly clear that the role of the Dominions would have to be redefined.

The British assumed that the Dominions would be consulted, but submit as subordinate to the British delegation at the Peace Conference. Borden would have none of this; Canada must have a seat at the conference on her own merits and the merits of her contribution to the Allied victory. Canadian delegates sat on committees that decided some aspects of the final treaty. Their position on the whole can be seen as a mixture of US and British sentiments. Borden refused the notion that Canada might benefit from German territorial concessions. While Borden may have seen Canada's new position in the world as ideal to act the middle ground between Britain and the United States, Wilson saw it quite differently. Wilson and other US diplomats preferred to deal with Britain on matters involving Canada. Britain could be counted on to arrive at compromise more quickly than Canada, having little direct interests in much of Canada-US relations. Article X of the League of Nations Covenant providing for international response to aggressive acts, was as much a concern for Borden as it was for US opponents of the treaty. He was worried that this clause might drag Canada into another European war—her hands tied this time by the League as it had been by the British Empire in 1914. Canada also opposed any part of the League of Nations Covenant that might curtail her ability to limit immigration based on race or any other criterion. In the end, Canada became a signatory to the Treaty of Versailles separate from the British delegation. Likewise, she was admitted to the League of Nations as a country.