

Canada at the Paris Peace Conference

In 1919, representatives of the countries that won the war met in Paris, France, to negotiate the treaties that would officially end the war. Although Britain still controlled Canada's foreign policy, Prime Minister Robert Borden argued that Canadians' wartime record had earned Canada the right to sit independently at the peace table. And when the time came to sign the treaties, Canada did so separately from Britain.

Still, Prime Minister David Lloyd George of Britain, Prime Minister Georges Clemenceau of France, and President Woodrow Wilson of the United States were the driving forces behind many of the treaty decisions that would have far-reaching consequences in the decades to come.

The Treaty of Versailles between the Allies and the Central Powers imposed harsh financial, military, and territorial penalties on Germany. The treaty forced Germany

- to give up some European territory and its overseas colonies, such as present-day Namibia in Africa and Jiaozhou Territory in China.
- to limit the size of its military and stop manufacturing large armaments
- to pay for the cost of the war and to compensate those countries that had been severely damaged
- to accept responsibility “for causing all the loss and damage” of the war

Ethical Dimension: Why would the Allies insist on placing all blame for the war on Germany? Given the situation in Europe before the war, was this fair?

Consequences Around The World

Before World War I, many Arabs in the Ottoman Empire wanted an independent homeland. Although the Ottoman Empire, which was ruled by Turks, was an ally of Germany during the war, many Arabs in the empire helped the Allies — and were promised a homeland in return.

But during the war, Britain promised to help Jews establish a “national home” in Palestine, and France and Britain secretly agreed to divide control of the Middle East — and its oil wealth — between themselves.

At the end of the war, France took control of Syria and Lebanon, while Britain took control of Cyprus, Palestine, and Iraq. Iraq was a new country that the Allies carved out of the former Ottoman Empire.

Many Arabs felt betrayed by these actions, and their sense of betrayal sparked a lasting legacy of bitterness against the Western powers.

Figure 6–22 World War I by the Numbers

Which statistic stands out? What consequences might result?

Total estimated military deaths: 8 300 000
Total disabled for life: 7 000 000
Total civilian deaths: 8 000 000
Total Canadians enlisted: 600 000
Total Canadian military deaths: 60 400
Total Canadians wounded: 155 800

Check Back

You read about some of the long-term consequences of France and Britain's decision to create Iraq and control its oil in Chapter 5.

Recall... Reflect... Respond

1. Identify the three World War I events that you think are most historically significant for Canada and Canadians. Explain how these events affected
 - Canada's reputation in the world
 - Canadians' sense of identity
 - Canada's increasing independence
2. Canada's independent seat at the Paris Peace Conference came at a very high price. Did this seat make the sacrifices of Canadians during the war worthwhile? Write a paragraph that sets out your reasoned response to this question.

How did Canadians at home respond to the war?

During the war, about 7.5 per cent of Canada's 7.9 million people were in uniform. But millions of Canadians at home also supported the war effort. They contributed money, physical resources, and moral support.

Financing the War Effort

To fight the war, the Canadian government needed money to train, transport, feed, equip, and pay soldiers, and to build ships, armoured vehicles, airplanes, and weapons. At its height, the war effort was costing the government about \$1 million a day.

To raise money, the government sold Victory Bonds. People who bought these bonds were lending money to the government. In return, they would get their money back, along with interest. Buying bonds was voluntary, so the government launched advertising campaigns that appealed to Canadians' patriotism. The first bond drive, which was expected to raise \$50 million, raised more than \$100 million. What does this tell you about Canadians' initial view of the war?

The government also instituted business taxes in 1916 and introduced a tax on income in 1917. The income tax was supposed to be a temporary measure that would end when the war was over. But it is still in place.

Historical Perspective: With a partner, imagine that it is 1917 and you are preparing a speech to make at a community town hall meeting. Develop several points you could use to argue in favour of — or against — introducing an income tax to help raise money for the war effort.

Propaganda

Propaganda is the systematic effort to shape people's beliefs to achieve specific goals. During the war, Prime Minister Robert Borden's government used propaganda to keep Canadian patriotism at a high pitch. Posters played a key role in this effort. Posters were used to encourage Canadians to buy war bonds, enlist, work harder, and even change their eating habits so food could be sent overseas.

Artists were hired to develop the most effective images for the posters, which focused on duty to the country, protecting loved ones, and defeating the enemy. Billboards, parades, and rallies were used to make sure that the message reached Canadians in all parts of the country.

Propaganda also has a negative side. Some posters promoted hatred of the people of enemy countries and shamed Canadians who did not seem to be doing their share.

CONNECTIONS

Fighting World War I cost the Canadian government more than \$1.6 billion — at a time when the average Canadian family income was less than \$800 a year. Today, experts estimate that Canada spent as much as \$18.5 billion in the war in Afghanistan — at a time when the average family income was more than \$70 000.

Figure 6–23 Posters like this one, which quotes two lines from the poem “In Flanders Field” by John McCrae (see p. 186), appealed to Canadians' sense of duty and patriotism. How did the artist combine visual elements and words to appeal to the intended audience?



Check Forward →

You will read more about the War Measures Act in Chapter 15.

The War Measures Act

In 1914, the Canadian government passed the War Measures Act to help it respond to the war. The act gave the government the power to pass laws without the approval of Parliament while Canada was at war. It could also overrule provincial laws, censor the news media, tell manufacturers and farmers what they must produce, imprison people without trial, and label some people enemies of Canada.



Figure 6–24 The Castle Mountain Internment Camp in Alberta was one of many similar camps across Canada. Most of those interned in Castle Mountain were Ukrainians. What details in the photograph tell you about conditions at Castle Mountain?

Up for Discussion

Is suspending people's rights a reasonable response to war?

Enemy Aliens

In the years before World War I, the Canadian government had actively campaigned to attract immigrants from Europe. This meant that, by 1914, more than a million people from regions that were part of the German and Austro-Hungarian empires lived in Canada. Some were recent immigrants, but others were descended from immigrants who had arrived long before.

Some people feared that these immigrants could become spies who might sabotage the war effort. As a result, the government used the power of the War Measures Act to label more than 800 000 people **enemy aliens** — people who had come from an enemy country — and to restrict their rights.

Many so-called enemy aliens were forced to carry identification cards and report regularly to authorities. They were not allowed to publish or read anything in a language other than French or English, and they could not leave the country without permission.

More than 8500 people, mostly of Ukrainian and German heritage, were placed in internment camps and forced to build roads and railways, work in mines, and clear land. The internees at Castle Mountain Internment Camp in Alberta, for example, helped develop Banff National Park.

At the time, the 400 000 Canadians of German heritage were the third-largest ethnic group in Canada, after the English and French. But schools and universities were not allowed to teach the German language, German-language newspapers were banned, and some German Canadians were fired from their jobs. In Montréal and Winnipeg, rioters destroyed German-owned shops, and the town of Berlin, Ontario, renamed itself Kitchener, after Britain's war minister, who had died when his ship hit a German mine.

Historical Perspective: Despite their treatment, thousands of Canadians of Ukrainian and German heritage enlisted in the Canadian Forces. Think about Canadian identity and nationhood, and explain what might have motivated them to respond to their situation by signing up.

The War Zone Comes Home

Halifax was a busy port during World War I. On the morning of December 6, 1917, two ships, the *Mont-Blanc* and the *Imo*, collided in the harbour. The *Mont-Blanc* was loaded with about 2400 tonnes of explosives and began to burn.

Just before 9:05 a.m., the *Mont-Blanc* blew up. The massive explosion flattened much of the city and was heard more than 300 kilometres away. Two thousand people died and 9000 were injured. Thousands more were left homeless. The explosion brought the horrors of war to the home front.

Women's Changing Roles

In 1914, many women worked outside the home, but their job choices were often limited. Ideas about appropriate work for women restricted many to low-paying jobs, such as teaching, domestic work, and low-skilled factory work.

But when men signed up, many more women stepped in and ran their family farms and businesses. And when the war effort needed workers to make the supplies, ships, tanks, bombs, guns, and ammunition the Canadian forces needed, women accepted these jobs.

Conditions were not easy for these women. At first, labour unions resisted because they wanted to protect jobs for men. Many women found themselves doing the same jobs as men for a fraction of the pay.

Most employers did little to help women employees. Sometimes, not even separate washrooms were provided. In addition, working conditions were sometimes dangerous. In munitions factories, for example, fumes from the materials could damage workers' lungs and turn their skin bright yellow. Accidental explosions were also a risk.

Women's new jobs were often considered temporary. When the men returned from Europe, they would take back their jobs. But many women would no longer be satisfied to play only their traditional roles as wives, mothers, and domestic workers.

Ethical Dimension: Was it fair that women — productive workers during the war — were removed from their jobs because men had returned from the battlefield? Explain your viewpoint.

Women and the Right to Vote

In 1914, voting was not considered a right for everyone. Some Canadian women, for example, could vote in municipal elections, but they were not allowed to vote in provincial or federal elections.

Women had been fighting to change this since the early 1870s. In the early 20th century, this cause was taken up by women such as Nellie McClung and Emily Murphy.

In 1916, the Manitoba government gave some women the right to vote in provincial elections, and, by 1917, women in Ontario, Saskatchewan, Alberta, and British Columbia could also vote in provincial elections. But it would take a wartime conscription crisis in 1917 to get them the federal vote.

Figure 6–25 Nellie McClung fought for women's rights, including the right to vote. In 1921, she was elected to the Alberta legislature, where she continued to champion the cause of women. Without feminists like McClung, what would Canada be like today?

