

Canada and W.W.I

Introduction

- A very young nation at the outbreak of war (only 47 years old)
- Our total population was approx 8 million
- ‘A Nation of Immigrants’ ...as we discovered in Unit 1
- Mainly agricultural country with increased urbanization & industry
- We were in the midst of a two-year economic downturn with many young men unemployed in 1914 following the end of the western real estate boom
- Limited military experience (1885 NW Rebellion, 1899-1903 South African War)
- Limited military forces (Approx 3000 soldiers & little military equipment)
- Lack of trained officers
- 2 ships with 350 men...(Britain assumed responsibility for defended the sea approaches to Canada)
- Canada was a self-governing dominion within the British Empire (Britain controlled our foreign affairs / defense including our decision to go to war)
- Britain’s entry into the First World War against Germany legally brought Canada into the conflict as well
- In addition to Canada, other dominions of the British Empire immediately entered the war to support Britain

Canada’s Response to War

- The announcement of war brought great excitement & celebration across our country
- It was to be a great adventure & for many an escape from the daily routines & unemployment
- Thousands of young men rushed to the recruiting offices
- Unlike the professional armies of Europe, our army would be a volunteer citizen-soldier army initially comprised of over 70% British born recruits
- They eagerly volunteered hoping for a free trip to visit relatives or areas they lived in prior to their arrival in Canada

Question #1: Describe the reaction across Canada when war was declared in August 1914.

Sam Hughes

- Canadian minister of militia in 1914 responsible for raising Canada's new army in 1914
- Nationalistic / patriotic, very controversial
- He scrapped the training grounds at Petawawa, Ontario & moved it to Valcartier, Quebec
- Gave military contracts to political supporters
- He infuriated French Canada
 - Placed a Baptist minister in charge of recruiting in Quebec
 - All instructions were provided in English
 - Placed all French recruits into English speaking regiments
- He promoted inferior Canadian made equipment produced by political cronies who were more interested in profit than quality
 - Boots turned to mush in heavy rains
 - MacAdam Spade (Army bought 25, 000 @ \$1.25 each. All were sold for scrap)
 - Ross Rifle (Canadian replacement for the British Lee Enfield, it was a great target weapon used by snipers but it jammed easily when fired rapidly)



Question #2: Who was Sam Hughes?

Question #3: In what ways did Hughes infuriate French Canada at the outbreak of the war?

Question #4: Upon entry into the First World War, Hughes had equipped the Canadian soldiers with the Ross Rifle. What was the main controversy surrounding this weapon?

Recruitment

- In the days before the information age & mass media, recruitment posters were prominent in stimulating military enlistment
- These posters would be found in newspapers & posted at various locations within cities
- They highlighted symbols of patriotism & nationalism

Question #5: Describe some of the nationalistic and patriotic symbols contained with the recruitment posters from the First World War.

Patriotic Response

- Within weeks approx. 30,000 men had joined & were assembled at Valcartier Camp near Quebec City for organization & military training
- Within two months the First Contingent, Canadian Expeditionary Force was going to Europe
- Before front line duty, they were sent to train for a few months on the Salisbury Plain in England



Question #6: What was the significance of Valcartier, Quebec and Salisbury Plain, England to the first contingent of Canadians in 1914?

Newfoundland's Response to War

- Much like in Canada, the response here was immediate
- Newfoundland Patriotic Association (NPA) was formed to deal with organizing the war effort & raising troops for overseas fighting
- The government at the time promised the British a initial force of 500 men...these would become known to history as the 'First Five Hundred'
- The volunteers were immediately assembly at Pleasantville (St. John's / Quidi Vidi Lake) for training

Question #7: What was the purpose of the Newfoundland Patriotic Association (NPA)?

Question #8: Who were the First Five Hundred?

Primary Document Analysis

1. What elements contained within do you think would have encouraged/enticed our young men to sign up for the fight?
