

Canada in the First World War, Pt. 2



Despite the uncertainty and local hesitations, the abolition of the colonial garrisons proved, in the end, an invaluable boon to the unity of the Empire. It put an end to the one concrete grievance which the British taxpayer and his representatives in Parliament could present against the overseas Empire. The removal of that grievance indefinitely strengthened the whole imperial. The colonies, which once had leaned so heavily upon the mother country and had been reviled as parasites upon her resources, were soon freely sending contingents of formidable fighters to augment her armies struggling in South Africa.

C.P. Stacey, *Canada and the British Army*



The Second Battle of Ypres, by Richard Jack (Canadian War Museum).

“Pals” Battalions

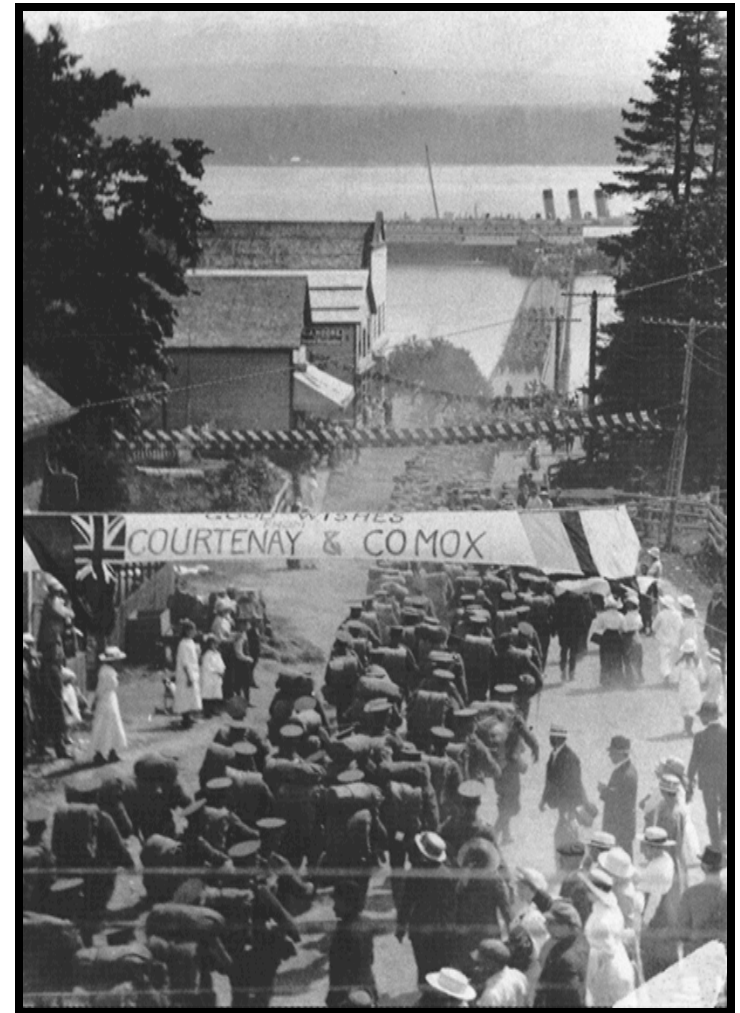
**2nd Ypres, Apr. 1915 - Hughes
authorizes 3rd and 4th
Contingents**

**British Ideas - “White Feather
Brigade” & “Pals” Battalions**

**Ethnicity and Community
- Irish Regt., 114th Bn.,
Sportsmen’s Bn, “Bantams”**

1) Inexperienced Officers

2) Community Disasters



**Departure of the 102nd Bn
from Comox, BC, on 10 June
1916. The whole Courtenay–
Comox community came to
the harbour to see them off.**

Borden's New Year's Resolution

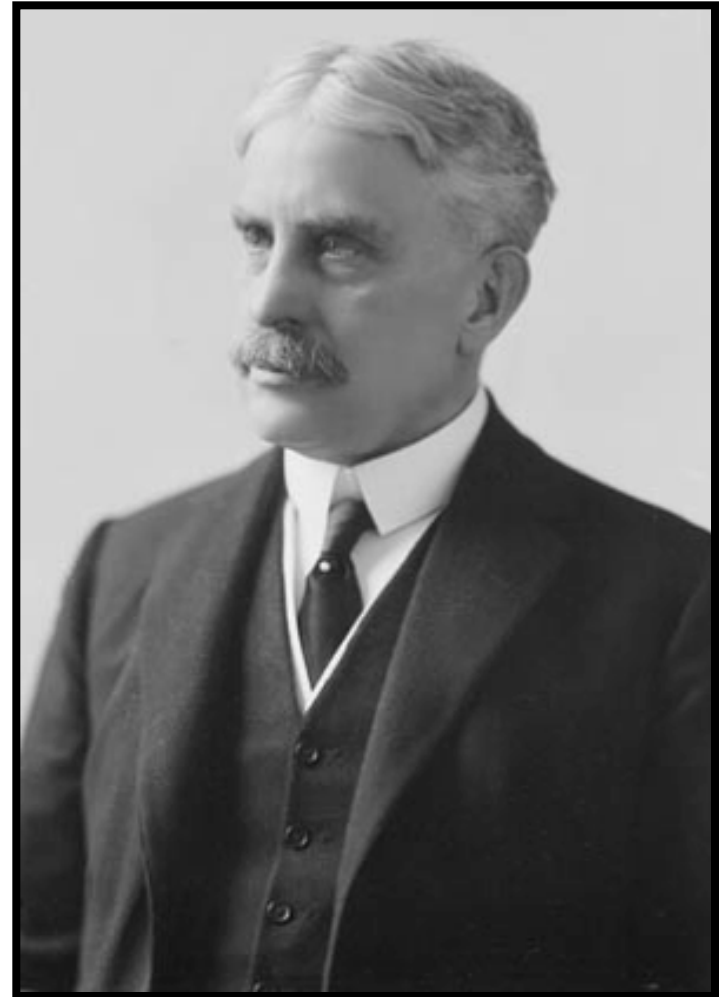
**Pledge of 500,000, 1 Jan. 1916
- British conscription law**

**250,000 Canadians
voluntarily enlisted by
1916**

**500,000 Enlistments or a
Half-Million Man Army?
- 500,000-man army
requires reinforcements**

Canada, 1916: 8 Million pop.

300,000 Enlistments by June



**Above: Canadian Prime
Minister Robert Borden**

The Somme Offensive

**German Verdun offensive,
Feb. 1916 - 5:2 Kill Ratio**

**British Summer Offensive
- Relief of French (Verdun)**

AKA “The Big Push”

**1 Ton Shells / Sq. Yd.
- Obliterate German lines,
cut the barbed wire, bury
them in their dugouts**

**1.5 Mill. Shells in 7 Days -
Shook London windows**



Trench warfare has become a symbol of mankind's inhumanity. Above, a scene from the French trenches at Verdun.

The Advance, 7:30 AM, 1 Jul. 1916

**66,000 British soldiers went
“over the top”**

**Walking pace - each carrying
60 lbs. of equip**

Unbroken barbed wire

**No Man’s Land heavily
cratered, often impassable.**

**Germans survived to man
their machine-guns - British
Empire disaster - 50,000
casualties on 1 Jul. 1916**



**Above: British infantry going
“over the top.”**

Beaumont-Hamel, 1 Jul. 1916

1st Newfoundland Regt.

710 volunteers

**Had to cross 300 yds. of
“no man’s land”**

**91% became casualties in
40 mins. – ¼ of Nfld’s
volunteers died in WWI**

**July 1st is Canada Day
and Memorial Day in
Newfoundland**



**Above: Newfoundland’s War Memorial
at Beaumont-Hamel, France, 2000.**

Attrition: The War in 1917

**U.S. Declares War on
Germany, Apr. 1917**

**Russian Revolution, Mar.
1917**

**French Army Mutinies, Spr.
1917**

**PM Borden Tours the
Western Front**

**Canadian Corps at Vimy
Ridge, 9 April 1917**

Enlistments/ Casualties, 1917

January	9,194	4,396
February	6,809	1,250
March	6,640	6,161
April	5,530	13,477
May	6,407	13,457
June	6,348	7,391
July	3,882	7,906

The Battle of Vimy Ridge, 9-12 April 1917

**Vimy Ridge National
Historic Site**

**Pierre Berton, *Vimy*
(1987)**

Canadian Corps

**5 Mile Advance, 4 Mile
Front**

10,000 Casualties



**“In those few minutes I witnessed
the birth of a nation.” Brigadier
General A.E. Ross.**

Vimy Ridge: Planning and Preparation

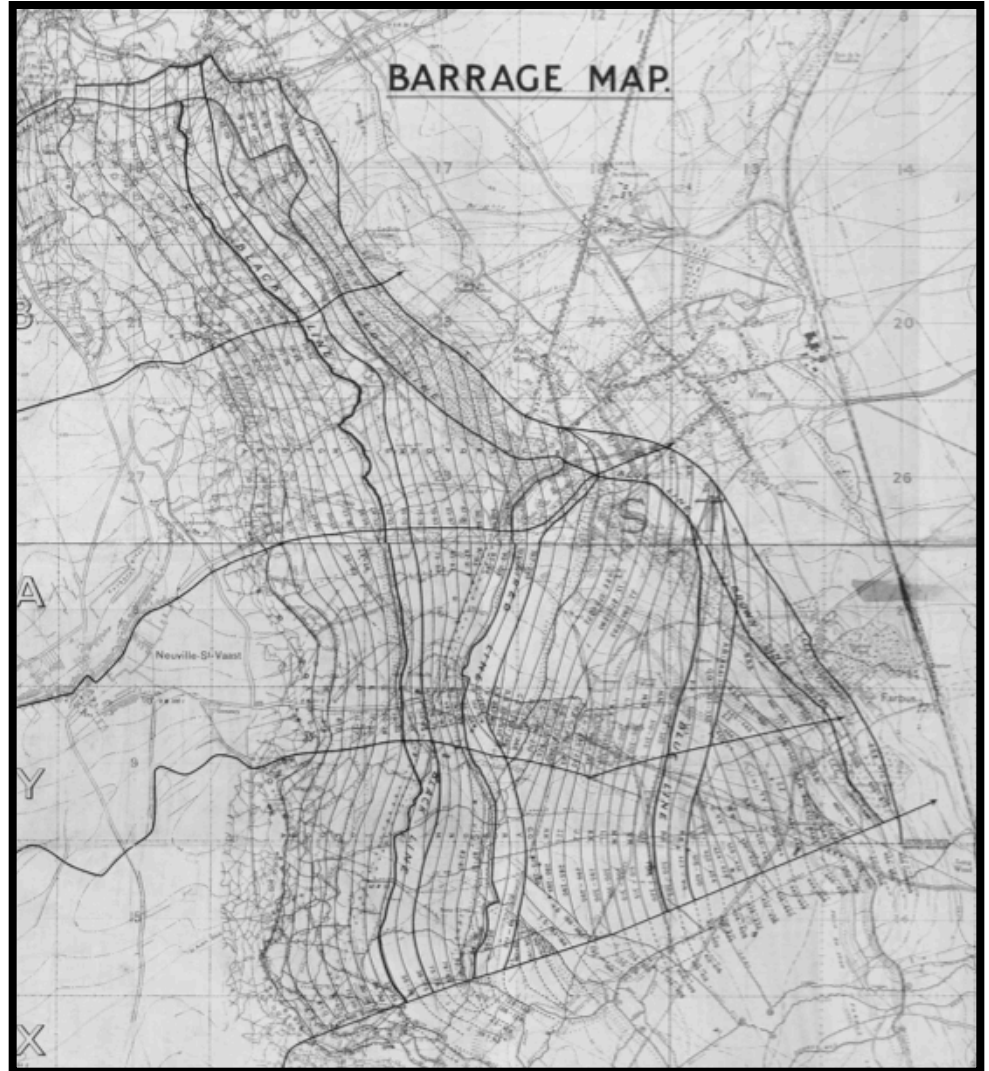
**Second Artois Offensive,
May 1915, 100,000
French casualties**

**Winter 1917: Rehearsals,
Maps, Scale Models**

Trench Raids - Training

**Tunnels: 12 Subways, 1.2
km long**

**Artillery: Sir Julian
Byng, Arthur Currie**



“The Week of Suffering”: Preliminary Bombardment

**1,000 Guns: 1 Heavy / 20
Yds; 1 Field / 10 Yds**

**Somme: 1 Heavy / 57 Yds; 1
Field / 20 Yds**

106 Fuse - Barbed Wire

**Flash Spotting and Sound
Ranging: Triangulation
83% Success Rate!**

Counterbattery - Gas Masks



“Birth of a Nation”: The Assault

**Easter Monday, 9 April
1917**

**Assault Wave: 15,000
Cdns vs 5,000
Germans**

**Consolidation: 12,000
Cdns vs. 3,000
German Reserves**



Canadian machine gunners dig themselves into shell holes on Vimy Ridge, France, April 1917 (LAC PA-1017).

Results and Legacy

**Forced German
withdrawal from the
Douai Plain - coal**

**Canadian Corps: 4
Divisions, 9 Provinces,
elite status**

**1922 French gov't cedes
250 hectares for Vimy
National Park**

**Walter Seymour Allward's
memorial, 1936**



**Above: Canadian troops returning
from Vimy Ridge.**

Holding the Ridge

The 2nd Canadian Mounted Rifles went into the assault on 9 April 1917, with 23 officers and 664 men. When it was relieved on 11 April, it had 14 officers and 353 soldiers left.





The sheep in this image are used to cut the grass in large areas of the park surrounding the Vimy Memorial. If you look carefully at the terrain in the woods you will see that it is pocked from shells and mines that were exploded during the Battle of Vimy Ridge. The public is forbidden to travel in this area because of the rare but continuing possibility of explosions from old shells or mines.

Canadian Conscription, 1917:

“No one takes a referendum when the house is on fire.”

**French-Canadians reluctant
to volunteer**

**P.M. Robert Borden's New
Year's Pledge, 1916: 500,000**

**Military Service Bill, May
1917**

**Conservative Majority → No
Referendum**

**Canada has not asked
her sons to go to the
front with the
intention of deserting
them.**

**This war is not a
private fight in which
every man should be
free to sponge on his
neighbour for his
freedom.**

MSA Exemptions:

“Promises are made to be broken.”

“Farmers’ sons who are honestly engaged in the production of food will be exempt from military service, and if I continue to be Minister of Militia I will give you my word that if...they are not exempted by the Tribunals and are called up for military service, I will have them honourably discharged from the CEF, provided they go back to the farm.”

**Gen. Sydney Mewburn,
Min. of Militia and Defence**

“Hell on Earth”: Passchendaele

German Submarine bases

July-November 1917

**271,000 British and
Commonwealth Casualties**

Gen. Sir Arthur Currie

Estimated 16,000 Cdn casualties

**Canadian capture of
Passchendaele, 10 Nov. 1917**

15,654 Canadian casualties



**Above: Canadian Corps
“walking wounded” assisted
to the medical clearing
station by German prisoners
of war.**

General Sir Arthur Currie, commander of the 4-Division Canadian Corps, predicted that the capture of Passchendaele would result in 16,000 Canadian casualties.



General Election, 1917

General Election, Dec. 1917

Wilfrid Laurier and Quebec

Union Party: Borden

**Conservatives and English-
Canadian Liberals**

**Military Voters Act: Soldiers,
Nurses**

Wartime Elections Act:

**Female Relatives, Enemy
Aliens**

Result? Union Majority



***Nationaliste* M.P. Henri
Bourassa led French-
Canadian opposition to
conscription during the
First World War.**

The Union Victory, 17 Dec. 1917

**153 Union Seats vs. 82
Liberal**

**62/65 Quebec Seats to
Laurier Liberals**

Only 3 QB Seats to Union

**Liberals win only 8/82 in
ON and 2/57 in the West**

**Ontario: Liberals win only
10% of Seats but 40% of
Popular Vote**



Slander!

That man is a slanderer who says that
The Farmers of Ontario

will vote with

Bourassa, Pro-Germans,
Suppressors of Free Speech and Slackers

Never!

They Will Support Union Government

Citizens' Union Committee

Tribunals and Exemptions

**Aug. 1917, Archbishop of
Quebec: “impending
racial and religious war”**

Single Men, Ages 20-35

**Montreal: 56,000 claimed
exemption; only 4,297
claims rejected**

**National Ave.: 93% Filed;
84% Approved**

BC - Lowest exemption rate

Laval University, Quebec

**“Out of 177 examined under
the MSA, 164 are shown
unfit, including 40 suffering
from tuberculosis, 26 from
diabetes, 27 from nephritis,
32 from heart trouble, 11
from bronchitis, 18 from flat
feet, and 10 from various
deformities. Only 13 out of
177 physically sound!”**

**“Are We Degenerating?”
18 February 1918**

The Last Year of the War

**“Red October” - Allies to fight
a defensive battle in 1918**

**American Expeditionary Force
arrival, summer 1918 -
“Doughboys”**

**German - *win the war before
the Americans arrive* - 44
Additional Divisions from
the East**

**German Spring Offensive,
March 1918**



**Above: Bolshevik “Red
Guards” storm the Winter
Palace, October 1917.**

Conscription Riots

**Quebec City arrest of defaulters,
28 March 1918**

**Military Service Registry, English
Businesses destroyed**

**Police? 700 Troops from Toronto;
3,000 from West**

**4 Killed, War Measures Act =
Martial Law**

**“Backs Against the Wall” - British
General Order of 11 April 1918**

**5,000 Farmers in Ottawa, 15 May
1918**

Order-in-Council 19 April 1918

“The need is urgent,” Borden warned, “so urgent that without this Order in Council I do not believe we could provide the CEF with reinforcements after the first day of July next, and if the attack comes, as it may come, within the next two weeks, we might be left without any reinforcements after the first day of June.”

“Black Day of the German Army”

**1 Million British casualties
since March – Aus/Cdn
Spearhead – “Shock
Troops”**

**Combined Arms: 530 Tanks,
800 Aircraft**

Pre-Registered Artillery

**8 August, 1918: 13 km. and
30,000 German PoWs**

**“Black Day”: Ludendorff
orders *fighting*
withdrawal**



**Above: Lines of German
prisoners after the Battle
of Amiens, Aug. 1918.**

Canada's Hundred Days

During a period of a little more than three months the Canadian forces, with the splendid assistance of sometimes one and sometimes two British divisions, fought and, more than that, defeated forty-seven German divisions, nearly a fourth of the entire German army. Of these, no less than fifteen divisions were so thoroughly defeated that they were never reconstituted. During these hundred days the path of the Canadians was the path of victory.

**PM Borden on the
Hundred Days Campaign of 1918.
House Commons, 7 July 1919.**

“All Quiet on the Western Front”

**Ludendorff, Sep. 1918:
“The war is lost.”**

**Germany in chaos:
Abdication of Kaiser
Wilhelm II, 9 Nov. 1918**

**Canadian capture of Mons,
Belgium, 10 Nov. 1918**

**Armistice, 11:00 am, 11
Nov. 1918 – Temporary?**

Pte. George Lawrence Price



Canadian troops take shelter in a ditch along the Arras-Cambrai road in September, 1918. Some 20% of Canadian Corps wartime casualties occurred during the “Hundred Days” campaign. NAC PA-003153