

Canada and WW I

Canada's great
patriot crusade



1914-1918

“The Lamps go out....”

Sir Edward Grey

- June 28th , 1914: Sarajevo:
- Archduke Franz Ferdinand and his wife are assassinated by Serbian nationalists - “the Black Hand”.
- Diplomacy stumbles and unravels; ultimatums are given and deadlines ignored; France, Germany and Russia call-up millions of young conscripts and reservists:
- August 1st 1914, German invades Belgium with 2 million men.
- August 3rd, France declares war
- Britain commits her Empire: Canada is at war.
- The curtain rises on Act I of a colossal Canadian tragedy.



Franz Ferdinand's Funeral hearse

The Alliances

Triple Alliance

Russia

France

British Empire

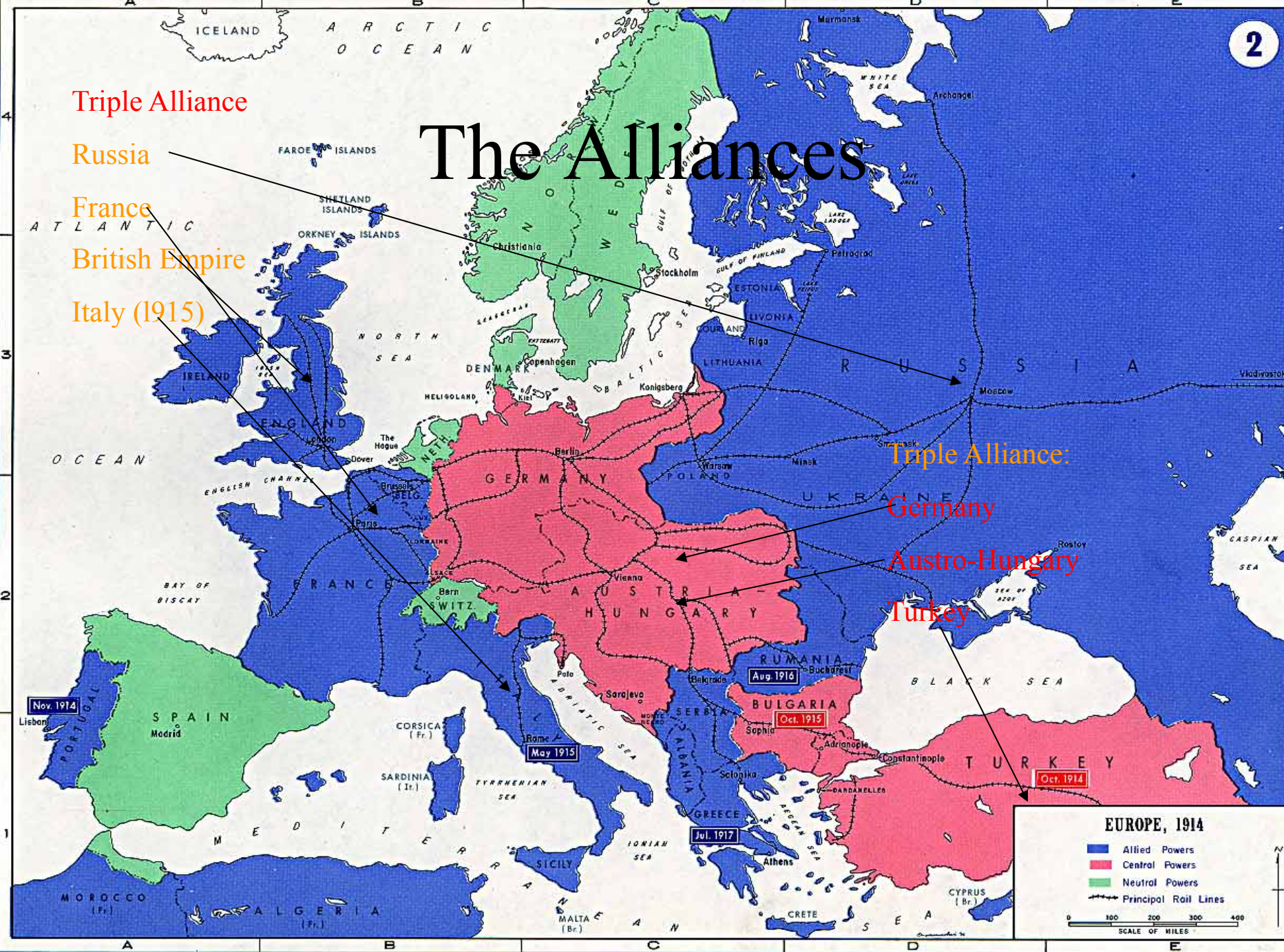
Italy (1915)

Triple Alliance:

Germany

Austro-Hungary

Turkey



EUROPE, 1914

- Blue: Allied Powers
- Red: Central Powers
- Green: Neutral Powers
- Dashed line: Principal Rail Lines

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SCALE OF MILES

Canada enters the War



- From coast to coast Canadians celebrated the war. Why? A reflexive reaction? Patriotic duty? The answer is complex
- We were entirely unprepared.
- Army – 4,000 men
- Navy – 2 obsolete ships
- Militia – 70,000 poorly trained
- In the first month, 30,000 enlisted.
- The army rallied at a hastily built camp at Valcartier Quebec under the ubiquitous and capricious leadership of the Minister of Militia and Defence...

Sir Sam Hughes

One of Canada's most colorful characters, some historians think Hughes was crazy. One high ranking officer called him "the Mad Mullah of the Militia." Others claim he was crazy like a fox. What we agree on is that Hughes was a nationalist and from the outset, was determined that the Canadian army would be Canadian lead, Canadian equipped and carry Canadian made weapons. A noble and popular position in 1914.

Unfortunately, fumbled the ball and gave us bad Canadian officers, defective Canadian boots and the much maligned Canadian designed Ross rifle.



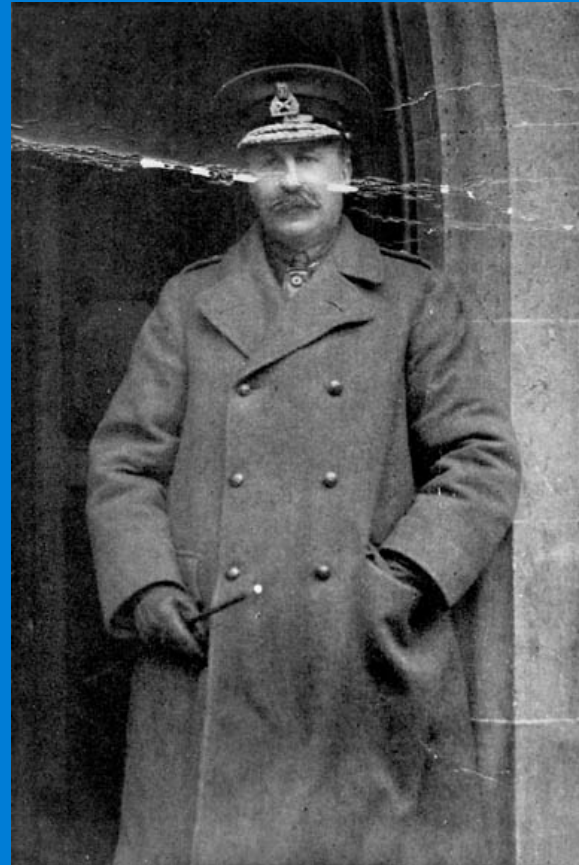
Mobilisation



- By the end of September 1914, Hughes had assembled 30,000 men for overseas.
- The men were organized into units and out of the chaos, the 1st Canadian Infantry Division emerged.
- October 3rd, 1914, the 1st contingent boarded 30 ships and sailed for England.

Nascent Nationalism

- When the Canadians arrived in England, standing quayside was their commanding General, British Lt. General Sir Edwin Alderson. Alderson was popular choice with the Canadians. He had commanded many of them during the Boer War (1899-1902).
- However, Sam Hughes wanted a Canadian commander, preferably himself or one of his Canadian protégés.
- He was determined to remove Alderson.



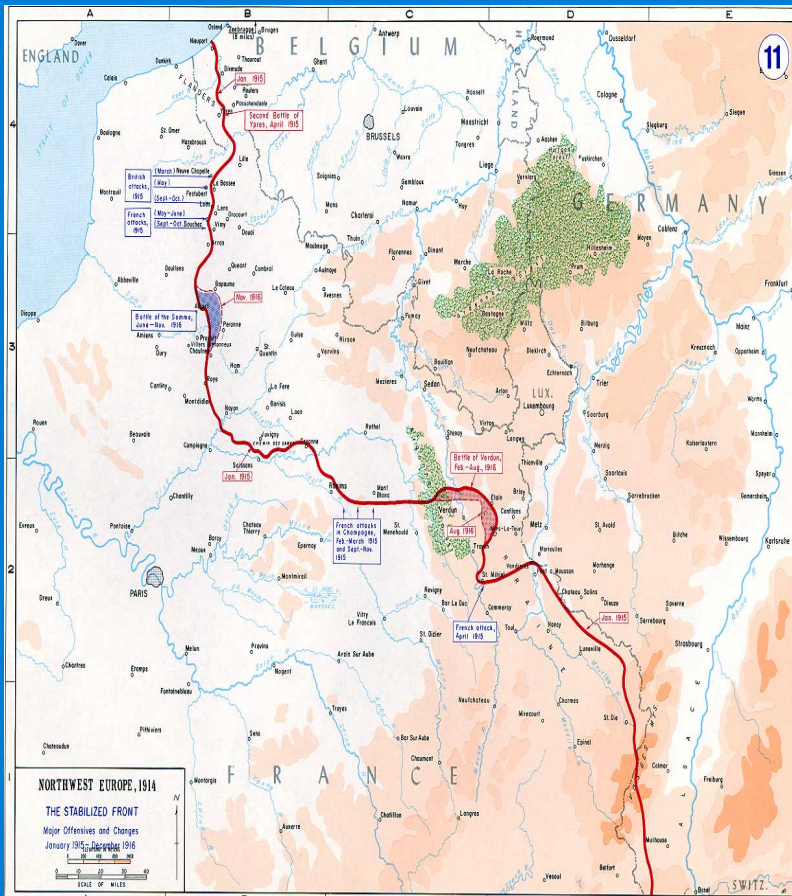
The Western Front:

Act 1: War of Movement

- The Schlieffen Plan (1905).
- To avoid a two front war, Germany planned to move first against the French and then turn east and fight Russia.
- The plan was bold, required precision timing and that the French would respond as predicted.
- But, in war, predictions are invariably wrong or foolhardy.
- The plan was flawed. The left flank was to thin. The French stopped the Germans at the Marne.
- The result, a race to the channel and “Trench warfare”. The stalemate had begun.



Stalemate: Counter-siege warfare



- Christmas 1914.
- A continuous trench line, 1000 km long, stretched from the English Channel to the Swiss boarder.
- In February of 1915, the Canadians landed in France and went to Ypres.

End of the line - the Belgian coastline



Rabble to Army: the learning curve



- The Canadian Army arrived in France as amateurs. Four years of intense fighting transformed them into the best little army on the Western Front.
- The cost was heavy.
- How had this happened?

Ypres 1915



- First battle:
- April 22nd to 25th, 1914:
- Canadians withstood first use of poison gas.
- Saved the British line but the cost was heavy
- 6,000 casualties of 18,000 men.

Grateful survivors



After Neuve Chapelle where the Canadians first saw action.

Source: A. A. Chesterfield Fonds, Queen's University Archives

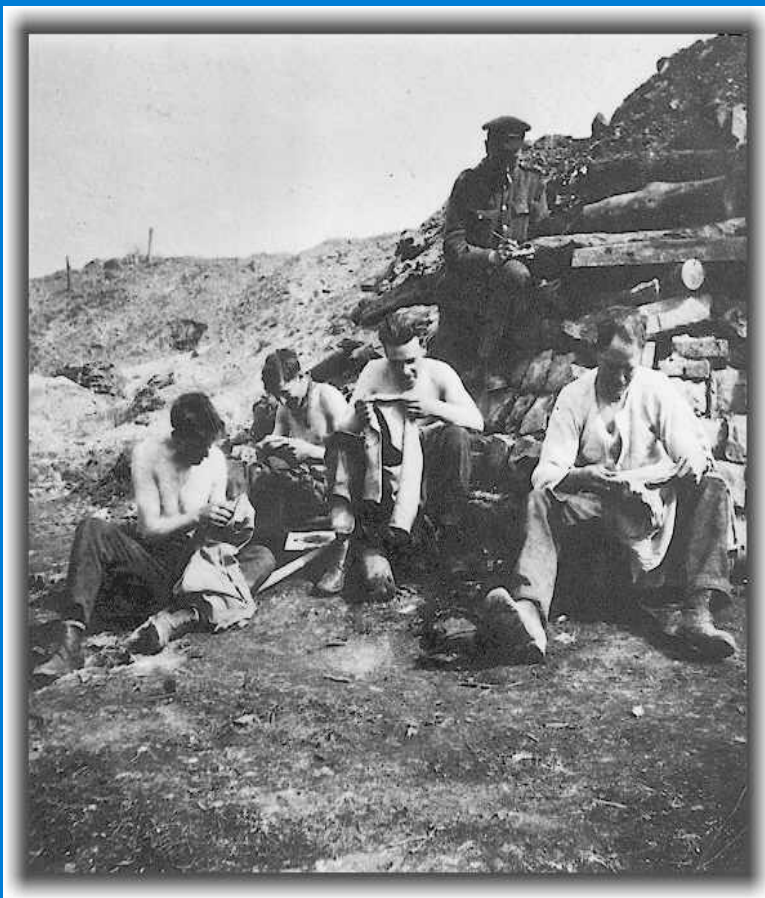
Trench Warfare



Trench Warfare



Living conditions



No-Man's Land



Machine guns and rifles



Field Artillery



Heavy Artillery

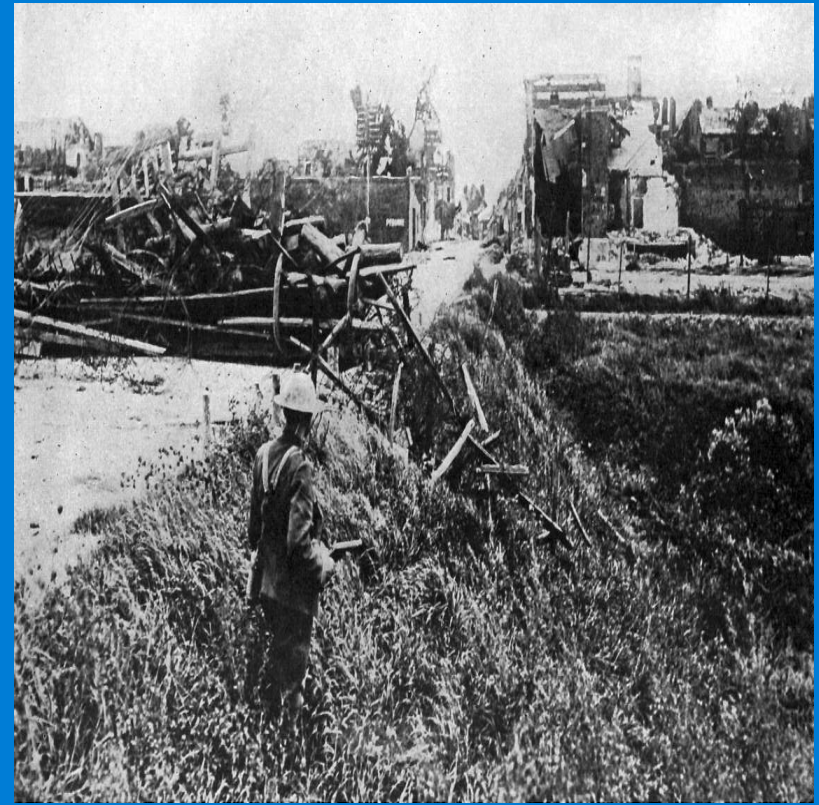
British 21 inch gun



Destruction



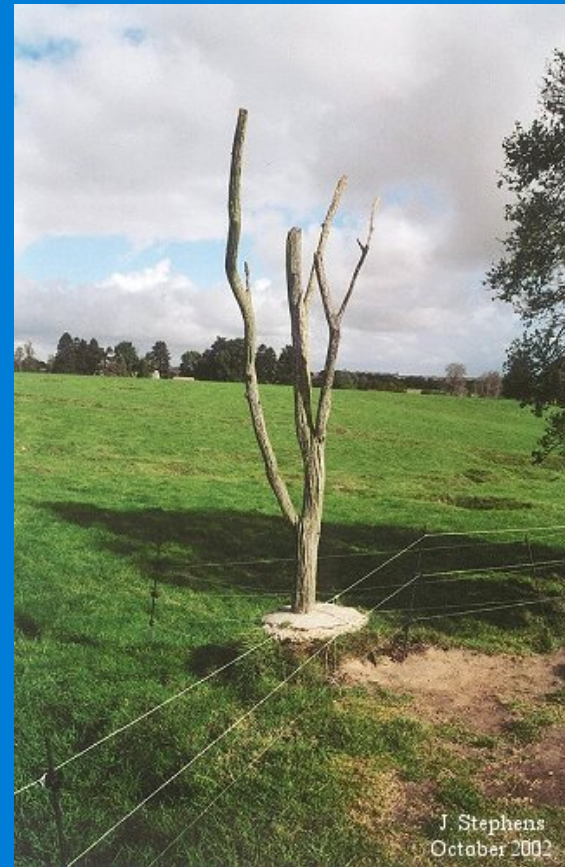
Source: Dr. F.X. O'Connor Fonds, Queen's University Archives



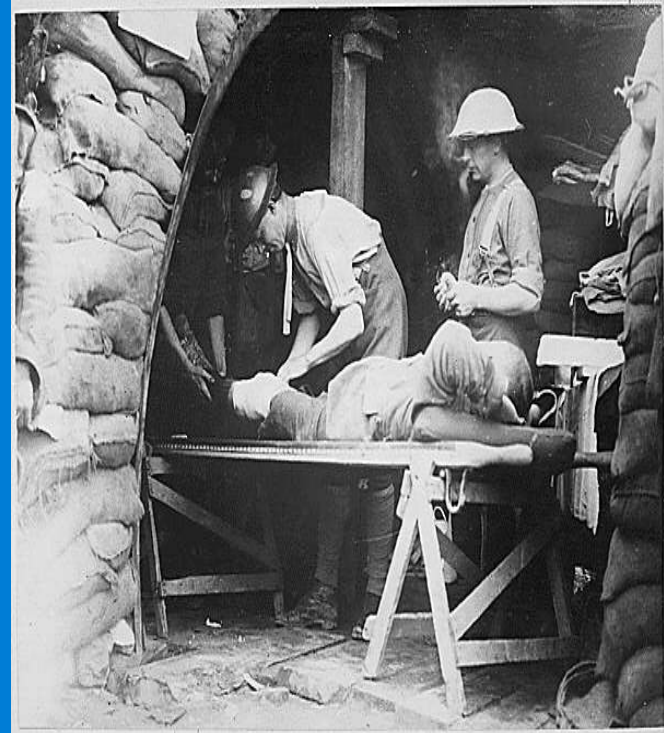
The Somme – July 1st



The Newfoundlanders attack



The Dead and wounded



Gas



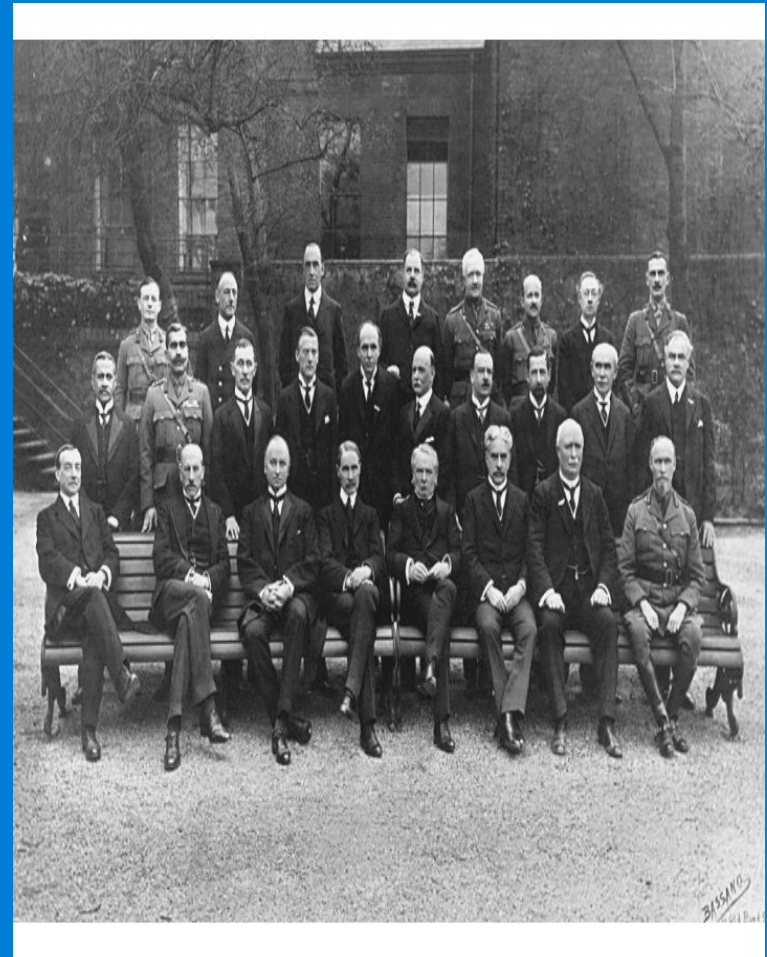
Vimy Ridge

- Easter morning April 9th 1917, Canadian army had grown to over 100,000 commanded by the legendary Julian Byng.
- Following months of intensive training and reorganization, the Canadians attacked.
- It was our greatest victory and in the view of many historians, made this colony a nation.
- The cost: 10,000 casualties



Colony to Nation

- Prime Minister Borden was determined that our sacrifice on the battlefield would not be in vain. He demanded and won concessions from the British that Canada be treated as an ally, not a colony. The British were not impressed but Borden stuck to his guns; he knew the British needed our troops.
- Borden's tenacity earned Canada a seat in the Imperial War Cabinet.



Conscription and the Khaki Election, 1917

- Heavy losses at the Somme and Vimy created a shortage of men (infantry)
- Borden implemented conscription and called an election.
- It was possibly the bitterest election in our history. French Canadiens opposed it and rioted. English Canadians voted en masse to implement it. Women voted for the first time.
- Quebec, never forgave the Conservative party !!!



Source: Dr. F.X. O'Connor Fonds, Queen's University Archives

Homefront

- Volunteerism to compulsion.
Government intervention.
- Industrialization
- Role of Women:
nursing sisters (40 Killed) , assumed
“masculine” trades
and jobs.



War in the Air

- A new technology in 1914, by 1918 air warfare had become very important.
- Over 10,000 Canadians flew in the Royal Flying Corps
- Billy Bishop was our best !!!!



Breaking the Stalemate – 1918



- On August 8th, 1918, The Canadian and Australian corps broke a huge gap in the German line and advanced 8 and 7 miles respectively by day's end.
- “The black day of the German Army”.

The Battle of Amiens

- August 8th , 1918, The Canadians advanced almost 13 km.; the largest single day Allied advance of the war.
- The German's called this "The Black Day". The day they knew the war was lost.



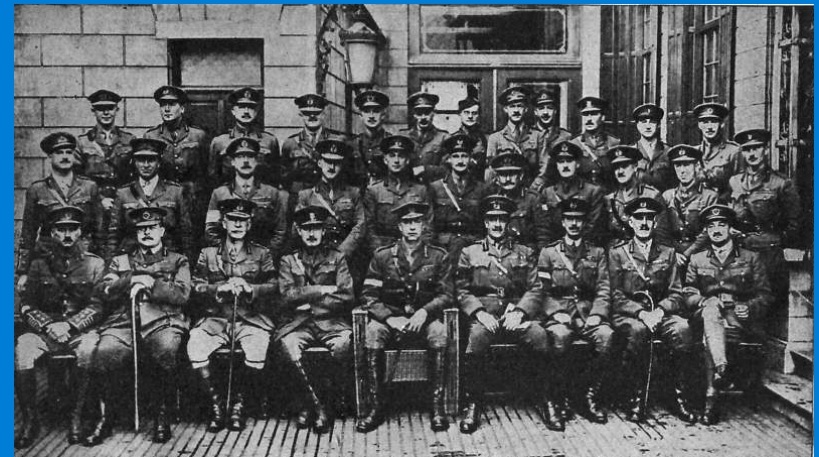
The 100 Hundred Days August to November 1918

- During this period the Canadian corps fought and won nine major battles. Affirming its reputation as the British Army's best.
- The cost was heavy; over 30,000 casualties.



Currie's Commanders

- The Canadians had learned the hard lessons by “doing and dying”.
- They were led by a gifted leader who surrounded himself with very capable officers; a winning combination.



The Last to Fall



- On November 11th 1918, at 10:58 a.m. – two minutes before the armistice, George Price 28th bn, was shot and killed by a German sniper. Likely the last allied soldier to be killed in that war.
- We lost 66,000 dead and 172,000 wounded out of 450,000.

The New Canada

- No nation can endure such turmoil and return to its former ways.
- What would the new nation look like. How would we grieve our dead, bind our wounds and bind over the French vs English schism created by the conscription crisis. Time would tell.

