

From Spenders to Savers:
Thrift, Saving and Luxury in Canada during the First World War

By
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Abstract:
**“From Spenders to Savers: Thrift, Saving, and Luxury in Canada during the
First World War”**

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This thesis focuses on wartime thrift and patriotic consumer campaigns as central features of the Canadian home front experience during the First World War. Using records from government officials, federal departments, and volunteer service organizations, as well as examples from newspapers, magazines, and other wartime publications, this study explores the ways in which wartime standards of acceptable consumption and patriotic spending and saving were developed, challenged and negotiated. It traces a shift in sensibilities from a spending to saving ethos through the lens of the Business as Usual and Made in Canada campaigns which, by mid-war, gave way to the thrift and food conservation campaigns. Notions of wartime patriotism demanded that every Canadian “do their bit”; thus, public participation in wartime thrift and saving was encouraged through widespread organized campaigns and enforced through informal surveillance networks. This study argues that wartime calls for thrift and sacrifice, meant to support a national project aimed at ensuring victory, were undermined by an apparent and persistent inequality; many Canadians perceived wartime policies as protective of the wealthy and business-owning minority at the expense of the working and agricultural majority. Moreover, as the war continued, it became clear that some Canadians refused to “do their bit” and continued to make unpatriotic consumer choices; this gave rise to an outspoken anti-luxury and anti-wealth movement. This study further argues that wartime scrutiny of individual choices, as viewed through the lens of wartime spending and saving, revealed a

great concern over the moral integrity of Canada and its citizens. Many Canadians viewed the war as an opportunity to revisit and instill those moral habits of thrift and self-sacrifice that appeared to be startlingly absent from the current generation – an absence they blamed on both the perils of modern consumerism and the general ineptitude and selfishness of the masses. Thus, the government, in collaboration with large service organizations, launched a national project of social engineering aimed at instilling Canadians with a proper sense of thrift and saving that would not only aid in the war effort but could be carried forth into the postwar world. As such, this thesis illuminates the tensions between the individualism inherent in modern capitalism and the communalism demanded by wartime patriotism. While the market became subordinate to the government and the widespread spirit of self-sacrifice, federal officials and patriotic proponents struggled to rein in the overwhelming desire of Canadians to participate in the market economy unfettered by the moral restraints of wartime.

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Abbreviations

CMA	Canadian Manufacturers' Association
IODE	Imperial Order Daughters of the Empire
NCWC	National Council of Women of Canada

Introduction

On August 4, 1914, Canadians embarked on their largest national project to date as they readied themselves to accompany Great Britain to war. Led by Robert Borden's Conservatives, the Canadian government entered the European war with little experience in administering war finance or national organization on a large-scale. On the heels of a divisive federal election and struggling amidst the throes of a prolonged economic recession, political leaders faced the formidable challenge of both seizing the opportunity to demonstrate Canada's ability to contribute to the wider Allied war effort, and unifying a divided country towards the singular goal of winning the war. Thus, Canadians were encouraged to "do their bit" and the importance of individual sacrifice to ensure the wellbeing of the nation became paramount.

For those on the home front, support for the struggling economy and patriotic support for the war found expression in several pro-spending consumer campaigns. This patriotic consumerism, however, quickly became divisive and fraught with contradictions. How could consumer purchasing be rationalized within the new morality of wartime that was grounded in individual sacrifice? As the war continued into 1915 and it became clear the conflict was no six-month affair, notions of acceptable wartime consumption shifted from a spending towards a saving ethos, represented by widespread calls for thrift and economy. Wartime thrift and saving were formally endorsed by the Minister of Finance under the government's thrift campaign of 1916-1918, which sought to raise domestic funds to support additional wartime expenditures. This financial campaign was accompanied by material economy measures in the form of government food and fuel

control. While government efforts were aided by the widespread enthusiasm Canadians expressed for the war effort, there was, nevertheless, widespread criticism of the government's outreach campaigns. The public perceived government policies as seemingly protective of the wealthy and business-owning minority at the expense of the working and agricultural majority. This perceived unequal sharing of the burdens of war gave rise to a widespread outcry against wartime luxury and wealth as it became clear that such personal accumulation had no place alongside the selfless sacrifice demanded by wartime patriotism.

This study is an examination of wartime notions of spending and saving, and the way in which they shifted throughout the war and interacted with simultaneous demands for patriotic service and sacrifice. As a central feature of the home-front experience, these issues touched every Canadian either directly or indirectly, albeit in different ways. The aim of this study is to explore the various public spaces (both physical and discursive) and the ways in which wartime standards of acceptable consumption and patriotic spending and saving were developed, challenged, and negotiated. In this study, I offer what historian Daniel Wickberg describes as a "history of sensibilities...focusing on the primacy of the various modes of perception and feeling, the terms and forms in which objects were conceived, experienced, and represented in the past."¹ By examining wartime sensibilities, this study examines the perception that individuals had a crucial role to play in the outcome

¹ Daniel Wickberg, "What is the History of Sensibilities? On Cultural Histories, Old and New," *American Historical Review*, 112, 3 (2007): 662. Wickberg further suggests, "we need a concept that lets us dig beneath the social actions and apparent content of sources to the ground upon which those sources stand: the emotional, intellectual, aesthetic, and moral dispositions of the persons who created them. That concept is sensibility." See p669.

of the war, and that individual morality was directly attached to national wellbeing. I argue that government and popular patriotic spending and saving campaigns contributed to the politicization of consumer choice and endorsed public scrutiny of both individual and institutional behaviour. In this way, previously private choices were thrust into the public realm and subjected to a collective scrutiny. Informal surveillance networks dissected wartime choices and encouraged performative behaviour aimed at portraying active patriotism and avoiding public censure. At the root of this public scrutiny, however, was a widespread dissatisfaction with regional and class inequalities that were made evident within the war effort. War thrift and sacrifice, meant to be a national project with the aim of victory, were undermined by a persistent inequality.

I further argue that wartime concern over individual choices, as viewed through the lens of wartime spending and saving, revealed greater concern over the moral integrity of Canada and its citizens. The war was viewed by many as an opportunity to revisit and instill those moral habits of thrift and self-sacrifice that appeared to be startlingly absent from the current generation – an absence that many blamed on both the perils of modern consumerism and the general ineptitude and selfishness of the masses. Thus, the government, in collaboration with large service organizations, launched a national project of social engineering aimed at instilling Canadians with a proper sense of thrift and saving that would not only aid in the war effort but could be carried forth into the postwar world. In 1911, Edwin Lee Earp described social engineering as a “modern social movement...[that] seeks not to get all men to think alike, or to hold the same opinions about any given plan or project of social reform, but [seeks] to get men to act together in an organized way for the destruction of evils in society and the creation of good in the

community.”² Similarly, in the context of the First World War, I use social engineering to refer to organized efforts aimed at initiating and regulating social behaviour on a massive scale. This national project, however, was not without challenge. The moral superiority of wartime sacrifice was further weakened by what appeared to patriotic proponents as an uninterrupted public lust for consumer goods and commercial profits. Moreover, resulting tensions revealed a certain discomfort with the new “world of goods” and what it represented, particularly when it intersected with the scarcity and sacrifice demanded by wartime. Overall, the war was a jarring experience for many Canadians as its resulting scarcity demanded a sense of communal sacrifice that clashed directly with the individualism inherent to modern consumerism. This contradiction highlighted the persistent sensibility of hedonism that the market enforces. While the market became subordinate to the government and the widespread spirit of self-sacrifice, federal officials and patriotic proponents struggled to rein in the overwhelming desire of Canadian consumers to participate in the market economy unfettered by the moral restraints of wartime.

The historiography of Canadian thrift and saving efforts during the First World War is sparse, as the subject has largely been absent in histories of Canada’s home front

² Earp further described social engineering as “a movement that involves organization of individuals, cooperation and federation of groups in mass-effort for the accomplishment of social tasks. It recognizes that the powers of evil today are social organized, and therefore the salvation of society involves social methods and machinery in order to overthrow the organized powers of evil...it means that the social consciousness of society has been aroused to the necessity of doing something heroic to regenerate the changing social order by bettering the conditions of living where the life struggle and class conflict are most threatening to the whole structure of Christian civilization.” See Edwin Lee Earp, *The Social Engineer*, (New York: Eaton & Mains, 1911): xi-xvii.

experience. Traditional histories of the war have pointed to the conflict as a watershed for the Western world in general and for Canada's national development in particular.³ Notably, the war has been credited by Desmond Morton, J.L. Granatstein, and C.P. Stacey as the period in which Canada achieved its independence, became a nation or came of age.⁴ In his seminal work on memory and commemoration of the First World War, Jonathan Vance has argued that it was everyday Canadians who were responsible for building this perception of the First World War as a defining moment in the nation's history.⁵ However, these characterizations, regardless of their source, fail to appreciate the complexities of Canada's wartime experience, and the realities faced by many Canadians during the war – particularly on the home front.

Spurred by the increasing emphasis on social history at the end of the twentieth century, historians of wartime Canada have since expanded their focus to issues such as propaganda, voluntarism, and enlistment. Beginning in the 1990s, the home front became a focal point for historians of Canada's First World War. Several works have examined the overall social climate of the period, and interrogated national sentiment towards the war effort. Jeffrey Keshen's *Propaganda and Censorship during Canada's Great War*

³ Paul Fussel famously interprets the war as a transformative experience for Western culture; see *The Great War and Modern Memory*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).

⁴ Desmond Morton and J.L. Granatstein, *Marching to Armageddon: Canadians and the Great War 1914-1919* (Toronto: Lester & Orpen Dennys, 1989): 1; C.P. Stacey, *Canada and the Age of Conflict. Volume 1: 1867-1921*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1979): 238-239; Pierre Berton, *Vimy*, (Anchor Canada, 2001): 45. See also Robert Craig Brown and Ramsay Cook, *Canada 1896-1921: A Nation Transformed*, (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart Limited, 1974); and, Tim Cook, *Clio's Warriors: Canadian Historians and the Writing of the World Wars*, (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2006): 253-254.

⁵ Jonathan Vance, *Death So Noble: Memory, Meaning, and the First World War*, (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1997): 7.

(1998) discusses the role of propaganda in inciting popular support for the war.⁶ Keshen devotes only a few brief paragraphs to wartime thrift and conservation, but offers valuable insight into the overwhelming effectiveness of Canadian propaganda, suggesting that Canadians were shielded from the realities of war and duped into providing their patriotic support. In many ways a response to Keshen's work, Ian H.M. Miller's *Our Glory and Our Grief: Torontonians and the Great War* (2000) points to the aura of civic engagement and voluntarism that permeated the wartime atmosphere, arguing that in fact, Canadian censorship was largely ineffectual; instead, Miller stresses that Canadians knew the extent of the costs of war and accepted those costs, no matter how onerous they became.⁷ Similarly, works by James Pitsula, Robert Rutherford, and James Blanchard have shown the unique regional experiences and demonstrated the national disparity of wartime experiences.⁸ This current study builds on the work of Miller, also recognizing that voluntarism and patriotic support for the war effort were offered despite apparent incongruities between government narratives and the realities of wartime inequality.

Historians such as Desmond Morton, Jeffrey Keshen, and Sandra Gwyn have acknowledged the role of women as leaders of home front voluntarism; other major contributions include an edited volume dedicated to the subject.⁹ In particular, Sarah

⁶ See Keshen, *Propaganda and Censorship during Canada's Great War*.

⁷ See Miller, *Our Glory and Our Grief: Torontonians and the Great War* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002).

⁸ See James Pitsula, *For All We Have and Are: Regina and the Experience of the Great War*, (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2008); Robert Rutherford, *Hometown Horizons: Local Responses to Canada's Great War*, (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2004); and Jim Blanchard, *Winnipeg's Great War: A City Comes of Age*, (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2010).

⁹ See Desmond Morton, *Fight or Pay: Soldiers' Families in the Great War*, (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2004); Jeffrey Keshen, *Propaganda and Censorship during*

Glassford has noted that despite social parameters surrounding the participation of women in wartime, “women were not bystanders in the Great War...they were actively engaged in wartime society and deeply affected by the vagaries of war.”¹⁰ While it’s true that Canada’s women actively engaged in the war effort through a variety of means, their prominent role within the realm of wartime thrift and saving has been largely overlooked, particularly in reference to wartime consumption and organized consumer campaigns. To reveal the private aspects of war, Sandra Gwyn’s *Tapestry of War: A Private View of Canadians in the Great War* has delved into the journals and diaries of a select number of lesser- and well-known Canadian figures.¹¹ However, the author’s desire to focus on individuals makes the work less useful when trying to discern the nature of more wide-ranging discourse. Desmond Morton has perhaps come the closest to revealing the private experience of war with his 2004 work, *Fight or Pay: Soldiers’ Families in the Great War*.¹² Here, he covers in detail the establishment and operation of the Canadian Patriotic Fund, while revealing the financial struggles that were a reality for most service families. Morton highlights the ways in which the private became public, as the intimate details of service families were scrutinized by public individuals to ascertain eligibility for the Patriotic Fund. While Morton’s work reveals more about intimate female experiences, his focus on the Patriotic Fund overlooks the broader emotional implications of financial scarcity and

Canada’s Great War (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 1996); Sandra Gwyn, *Tapestry of War: A Private View of Canadians in the Great War*, (Toronto: HarperCollins, 1992); and Sarah Glassford and Amy Shaw (Editors), *A Sisterhood of Suffering and Service: Women and Girls of Canada and Newfoundland during the First World War*, (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2012).

¹⁰ Glassford in Glassford and Shaw, p2.

¹¹ See Gwyn, *Tapestry of War*.

¹² See Morton, *Fight or Pay*.

the close-knit connections that existed between women, consumerism and war. Another important work on Canadian women in wartime is Linda Kealey's *Enlisting Women for the Cause: Women, Labour, and the Left in Canada, 1890-1920* (1998). Here, Kealey's discussion of female activities on the left are underpinned by the acknowledgement that women were forced to contend "with the expectations and the real material constraints surrounding the meaning of working-class womanhood in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries."¹³ Additionally, Joan Sangster's work on the mobilization of women has pointed to the accentuation of existing class and ideological divisions amongst women during this period. She too has rejected the traditional argument that the First World War was a watershed, particularly with respect to gender ideologies, class differences and social tensions, instead pointing to their resilience.¹⁴ My study builds on these works, drawing attention to divergences between the everyday realities of working-class or agricultural-women and the advice and admonishments of bourgeois women at the heart of wartime service organizations.

In the last decade, historians of Canadian consumerism have begun to turn their attention towards the First World War. Andre Siegel and James Hull have examined the Made in Canada purchasing campaign that extended from the pre-war to post-war period from the perspective of the Canadian Manufacturer's Association. The authors recognize that the war was viewed as an opportunity by Canadian businesses to instill an appreciation

¹³ Linda Kealey, *Enlisting Women for the Cause: Women, Labour, and the Left in Canada, 1890-1920*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1998): 14.

¹⁴ Joan Sangster, "Mobilizing Women for War," in *Canada and the First World War: Essays in Honour of Robert Craig Brown*, 157-193. Edited by David Mackenzie. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2005): 184.

for patriotic purchasing; however, this analysis is removed from the wider context of wartime consumerism and the experiences of Canadian consumers. Donica Belisle has produced a brief examination of consumer activism during the First World War, viewed through the lens of *Woman's Century*, the organ of the National Council of Women of Canada (NCWC). She has pointed to the publication's conservative feminism, and its use of consumer initiatives to promote maternal feminism, bourgeois values, and Christian morality.¹⁵ My study acknowledges this argument, and extends it further to examine the role of Canadian women, including the NCWC, in developing, negotiating, and enforcing wartime standards of consumption. In her assessment of the historiography of Canadian consumerism, Belisle also argues for a much-needed appreciation of consumer subjectivity.¹⁶ I answer this call by addressing the evolution of Canadian sensibilities regarding consumption during the First World War, and the shifting lens through which the moral landscape of consumption was both assessed and constructed. Moreover, I examine broader issues of social surveillance and social engineering which served to inform this subjectivity in wartime.

This study also contributes to the broader historiography of capitalism. In her seminal work, Joyce Appleby argues that “capitalism is as much a cultural as an economic system.”¹⁷ This is reflected in Karl Polanyi's *The Great Transformation* which approaches

¹⁵ Donica Belisle, “Conservative Consumerism: Consumer Advocacy in *Woman's Century* Magazine During and After World War I,” *Histoire Sociale/Social History*, 47, 93, (May 2014): 138.

¹⁶ Donica Belisle, “Toward a Canadian Consumer History,” *Labour/Le Travail*, 52, (Fall 2003): 187.

¹⁷ Joyce Appleby, *The Relentless Revolution: A History of Capitalism*, (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2010): 4.

the history of capitalism not only as transformation from pre- to post-industrialization, but also as a transformation of the “ideas, ideologies, and social and economic policies accompanying it.”¹⁸ Moreover, Appleby notes how periods and instances of scarcity challenge the capitalist model.¹⁹ My study acknowledges this and finds evidence of such challenges during the First World War as I examine the socio-cultural conflict between wartime scarcity, patriotism, and modern consumerism.²⁰ Similarly, I draw inspiration from T.J. Jackson Lears who observed “the shift from a Protestant ethos of salvation through self-denial to a therapeutic ideal of self-fulfillment” which found expression in the capitalist structures of modern consumerism.²¹ Lears argues that, ironically, antimodernists contributed to this shift through their endless quest for authentic experiences; similarly, I note that the First World War acted as a catalyst to exacerbate tensions between nineteenth-century sensibilities favouring moralism and twentieth-century sensibilities more inclined to favour consumerism.²² Moreover, the antimodernist

¹⁸ Joseph E. Stiglitz in Karl Polanyi, *The Great Transformation: The Political and Economic Origins of Our Time* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2001): vii.

¹⁹ Appleby, pp.5-6.

²⁰ Here, I defer to the definition favoured by social historians, whereby “modern consumerism” refers to the period which began in roughly the nineteenth century when consumption was democratized and all classes gained access to the new world of goods. See Lawrence B. Glickman (Editor), *Consumer Society in American History: A Reader*, (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1999); and for a more in-depth discussion on periodization see Peter N. Stearns, “Stages of Consumerism; Recent Work on the Issues of Periodization,” *The Journal of Modern History*, 69, 1 (1997): 102-117.

²¹ T.J. Jackson Lears, *No Place of Grace: Antimodernism and the Transformation of American Culture, 1880-1920*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981): xv-xx.

²² Similarly, a transition between the nineteenth century culture of “character” to the twentieth century culture of “personality” has been noted by cultural historian Warren I. Susman. See *Culture as History: The Transformation of American Society in the Twentieth Century*, (New York: Pantheon Books, 1984): 271-285.

quest for authenticity found expression in wartime calls for genuine, moral-driven acts of patriotism.

The chapters that follow provide a greater understanding of wartime thrift and saving, and their place within broader discussions of wartime sacrifice, patriotism, and citizenship. Chapter 1 provides an overview of the economy leading into the first months of war. It focuses on public calls for a credit moratorium and the tensions resulting from the Borden government's restrained reaction to the financial crisis and its perceived protection of business interests at the expense of workers and farmers. This chapter provides context and background for arguments made in subsequent chapters.

Chapter 2 examines the Business as Usual and Made in Canada consumer campaigns that gained traction in 1914 and 1915. Organized patriotic purchasing campaigns reinforced notions that collective interests should take precedence in wartime and established wartime consumption as a performative display equated with declaring one's commitment to the war effort. Pro-spending campaigns highlighted the unequal sharing of the burden of war, as wartime policies again appeared to favour manufacturers over consumers.

Chapter 3 examines the shift from a spending to saving ethos and the subsequent government and popular thrift and saving campaigns from 1916 until the end of the war. The government's Victory Loans sparked a national discussion on the necessity and value of thrift as both an individual and national characteristic. Sacrifice and self-denial became paramount as thrift was imbued with the new morality of wartime. Concern arose over a perceived lack of thrift amongst the Canadian people. To ensure widespread adherence,

government and social leaders embarked on a widespread project of social engineering and informal surveillance aimed at instilling sensibilities of thrift and saving within the Canadian public.

Chapter 4 focuses on material conservation under the guise of government and popular food control campaigns launched in 1917. Charged with regulating supply, the Food Controller launched a national campaign aimed at promoting economy and reducing waste. He too established an informal surveillance network aimed at enforcing a set of entirely voluntary measures. In unprecedented numbers, Canadian women took up the call with vigour and, in many cases, freely criticized the food controller and subsequent food board for its poor handling of the nation's food problem. The case of food conservation and control in the First World War serves as an example of how the patriotic and voluntary spirit fought to prevail over the prevalent and visible social inequalities which threatened to undermine the home front war effort.

Finally, chapter 5 examines the outcry against luxury and wealth that arose alongside the thrift and conservation campaigns of chapters 3 and 4. Within the new morality of wartime, luxury and wealth became contentious as they threatened to undermine the notions of sacrifice and self-denial that had become synonymous with the war effort. Personal indulgence and excessive consumption were markers of individualism that had no place in wartime.²³

²³ For a discussion of sources, see Annex A.

Chapter 1: “Hold these sharks back”: Financial Crisis and Moratorium, 1913-1914

When the European war began, Canada was still nursing the wounds left by a divisive federal election in 1911 and the widespread economic depression that followed.²⁴ In 1913, a recession gripped the transatlantic market and threatened to unbalance a fragile system of overseas lending and investment, the linchpin of which could be found in the settlement boom of Western Canada. The British declaration of war on August 4, 1914, propelled the London financial markets into crisis, creating a grim situation for Canada – a young country that still relied heavily on British lending and investment. Market prices soared as rapid inflation widened the gap between wages and the cost-of-living. This quickly became a national issue, albeit felt in some regions more sharply than others. Urban Canada experienced increased unemployment as manufacturing and construction slowed; meanwhile, rural Canada watched as the crucial overseas credit and investment that had funded settlement and expansion was withdrawn. Prime Minister Borden and the Dominion government sought to minimize the damage caused by suddenly-squeamish investors, while also relying on a *laissez-faire* approach to the market that, they believed, would steady the economic course. His restrained response to the financial crisis cemented Borden the support of leading financiers and businessmen, but served to alienate everyday Canadians. The widespread financial struggles which continued into 1915 exacerbated existing tensions as the working and agricultural classes struggled to gain an economic

²⁴ John Herd Thompson details the divisiveness of the 1911 election, and the sense of abandonment felt by Western Canadians who found that the defeat of reciprocity “demonstrated...that their interests were...irreconcilable with those of central Canada...” See *Harvests of War: The Prairie West, 1914-1918*, (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart Limited, 1978): 14-15.

foothold amidst the increased cost-of-living, rising unemployment, and unprecedented interest rates.²⁵ It is evident that the early months of war both worsened Canada's economic depression and aggravated distinct regional and social divisions.

Historian Mary Dudziak has noted that some burdens and hardships become more tolerable to citizens within the exceptional circumstances of war.²⁶ She draws on the work of Giorgio Agamben who has pointed to this same “state of exception” as a time in which the suspension of juridical order is justified during a crisis.²⁷ A suspension of normal life and government, accompanied by economic hardship and loss, was widely expected. Canadians facing economic struggles were less willing, however, to accept the perceived social inequities and their wartime reinforcement by the government and business classes – particularly in the financial crisis of the war's early months. That financial policy during a national crisis should support businesses and bankers at the perceived expense of the farmer countered the very notion of collective wartime sacrifice and community. Moreover, it threatened to erode the sense of moral indebtedness to the war effort that formed a crucial foundation of wartime nationalism.

This chapter examines the economic depression and financial crisis leading into and during the early months of the war as part of the fundamental context that informed several organized consumer campaigns outlined in subsequent chapters. It examines the

²⁵ The economic crisis came on the heels of a decade of increased labour activism, unionism, and amplified tensions between the managerial and labour classes; thus, the reactive economy heading into the war added fuel to a number of fires already burning.

²⁶ Mary L. Dudziak, *Wartime: an idea, its history, its consequences*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012): 15.

²⁷ Giorgio Agamben, *State of Exception*, translated by Kevin Attell, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005): 4-5.

economic situation as one that existed prior to the war, but was fundamentally changed by the war. Further, this chapter explores the underlying debates and sentiments informing widespread calls for a national credit moratorium. I argue that public behaviour during the financial crisis – both by the prime minister and everyday Canadians – demonstrates the politicization of choice in wartime – particularly financial and consumer choices. I further argue that choices reflective of personal or group-based individualism were deeply problematic in the new moral subjectivity of wartime. While the Borden government's response to the struggling economy during this period was consistent with the traditional *laissez-faire* approach to the Canadian economy, the resulting socio-economic and regional tensions were evidence of the waning expediency of this approach. Borden's restrained reaction to the wartime financial crisis alienated working class Canadians, particularly in rural Canada, and set the tone for a difficult wartime relationship between the federal government and its much-needed farmers. These Canadians perceived Borden's preference towards the financial struggles of financiers and businessmen as a class-protectionism that had no place in the collective sacrifice demanded by wartime. From the perspective of Canadians struggling under the weight of what often seemed like insurmountable debt, the government's handling of the financial crisis eroded the sense of shared sacrifice at the center of the war effort. The resulting tensions echoed throughout the war and were articulated in a variety of popular wartime campaigns, to be discussed in later chapters.

Economic Recession of 1913

The federal election of 1911 occurred at the peak of Canadian economic expansion and European investment. Robert Borden, as new Prime Minister, inherited from his

outgoing counterpart, Wilfrid Laurier, what by all accounts promised to be a strong and healthy economy. Under the Liberal government, the west was flooded with European and American settlers who established thousands of new farms across the region. The Liberal campaign was so successful that annual immigration rose from a mere 21,716 in 1897 to an astonishing 138,660 in 1903.²⁸ This mass settlement of European immigrants was largely facilitated by overseas investment. Between 1908 and 1913, British investors made available large sums of capital to assist new farmers as they settled on the land, established farms, and expanded operations.²⁹ This period also saw the construction of over 16,000km of new railroads to service those burgeoning communities, again largely facilitated by British capital. By 1913, investment in Canada by way of British securities, insurance companies, and other miscellaneous ventures totaled over \$375,771,000.³⁰ This amounted to a 74.9% increase from 1912, and a 341.8% increase from 1900.³¹ While historians tend towards the popular “wheat boom” moniker for this period, economist Robert E. Ankli has instead aptly suggested that this was a period of “investment boom”, a “tooling up” which put Canada in the position to expand exports such as wheat, newsprint, and minerals, during the Borden era.³² The First World War would provide this opportunity, but not before the investment boom came to a sudden end.

²⁸ Valerie Knowles, *Strangers at Our Gates*, (Toronto: Dundurn Press, 2007): 102.

²⁹ John Feldberg and Warren M. Elofsen, “Financing the Palliser Triangle, 1908-1913,” *Great Plains Quarterly* (Summer 1998): 257.

³⁰ *Ibid*, p259.

³¹ *Ibid*.

³² Robert E. Ankli, “The Growth of the Canadian Economy, 1896-1920,” *Explorations in Economic History*, 17 (1980): 265.

European capital was necessary to finance essential infrastructure in western Canada; in addition to cities, railways, and improvements on waterways, it facilitated the introduction of banks and credit systems. By early 1913, however, several factors contributed to the increasingly popular view in London that Canadian investment was no longer the great venture it had been in the past. Historians Robert Craig Brown and Ramsay Cook attribute the withdrawal of overseas investment to a growing distrust of Canadian securities by foreign investors who came to realize that while investment opportunities in the Dominion were potentially endless, the returns on those investments were not always forthcoming.³³ At the time, there were other, more attractive investment opportunities. The demand for capital towards European industrial and military expansion caused a steep rise in interest rates, encouraging many investors to redirect funds toward their home market.³⁴ The *Monetary Times*, one of the primary publications of Canada's business and financial community, noted that the "chief bone of contention" was Canada's heavy borrowing, particularly through public flotations.³⁵

In early 1913, Minister of Finance Thomas White was still hopeful, claiming that the previous year had seen the largest surplus on record. He declared without hesitation that 1913 would fare even better.³⁶ Yet, by the summer of 1914, financial experts began to express concern. The editor of the *Financial Post*, John Appleton, warned readers of *Maclean's* "Business Outlook" that "when the European is asked at the present time to

³³ Robert Craig Brown and Ramsay Cook, *Canada 1896-1921: A Nation Transformed* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart Limited, 1974): 199.

³⁴ Feldberg and Elofsen, p266.

³⁵ "Notes on Canada's Borrowing," *Monetary Times*, 52, 2 (9 January 1914): 137; see also "Canada is Persistent Borrower," *Monetary Times*, 52, 1 (3 January 1914): 116.

³⁶ Brown and Cook, p198.

send money to Canada or buy any Canadian security, he shrugs his shoulders and says Canada has had overmuch money recently.”³⁷ Confident that this temporary lack of confidence in Canada would dissipate, Appleton suggested the nation had merely to prove that she could take care of her obligations. Fostering a renewed sense of confidence, however, would take time. He warned that as trade continued to contract in Europe, prices in Canada would “act in sympathy,” and that Canadian manufacturers and traders should avoid tying up large quantities of capital in stock as people simply did not have the buying power to purchase goods. This situation, he warned, would only get worse before improving. Shortly thereafter, as Appleton predicted, the Canadian export and agricultural prices began to fall.³⁸ The sudden withdrawal of foreign investment led to a sharp decline in construction and the production of investment goods (manufacturing plants, machinery, and equipment). This rapid displacement of labour meant that many workers, particularly in urban centers, were left unable to find jobs, creating an urban unemployment crisis.³⁹

Western farmers, who by this time were heavily indebted to overseas financiers, were also in a precarious situation as markets slumped. The thousands of new farmers who had flooded into the west during the Laurier years had been encouraged by promises of endless opportunity to take on more and more debt in an effort to become established.⁴⁰

³⁷ John Appleton, “Business Outlook,” *Maclean’s* (August 1914): 130. Appleton went on to explain that some of those UK financiers who had invested the largest amounts in Canadian securities “will not touch them at the present time.”

³⁸ John Appleton, “Business Outlook,” *Maclean’s* (August 1914): 129.

³⁹ J.J. Deutsch, “War Finance and the Canadian Economy, 1914-1920,” *The Canadian Journal of Economics and Political Science*, 6, 4 (November 1940): 526.

⁴⁰ The personal savings of western farmers were “simply insufficient to fuel farm investment,” forcing farmers to rely heavily on foreign investment. See Jeremy Adelman, “Prairie Farm Debt and the Financial Crisis of 1914,” *Canadian Historical Review*, 71, 4 (1990): 491. Adelman also notes the sharp increase in the price of land

Their heavy reliance on borrowed funds left these farmers in a precarious position and unable to endure an extended economic depression – such as when agricultural prices continued to fall in wartime.⁴¹ The *Grain Growers' Guide* deemed the credit system as “one of the great curses of this country...[and] no doubt one of the chief factors in forcing the farmers to dump their grain on the market and break the price to the losing point in the shipping season.”⁴² Once farms were established, farmers' reliance on the credit system became necessary at every stage of crop movement.⁴³ Mortgage companies became central in this process and facilitated the flow of these funds from Eastern Canada and Great Britain.⁴⁴

In 1912, the trade journal *Canadian Farm Implements* estimated that prairie farmers owed implement dealers approximately \$60 million, and at least 45% of that amount was in arrears.⁴⁵ The *Grain Growers' Guide* estimated prairie debts outstanding at \$170 million, with farmers paying an estimated \$13.6 million per year in interest.⁴⁶ By 1914 more than \$200 million was owed on farm mortgages held mainly by mortgage institutions and insurance and trust companies.⁴⁷ While Canadian chartered banks had largely stayed out of mortgage lending, they too assisted farmers through the provision of three month

between 1900 and 1914 which also turned farmers to rely more heavily on borrowed capital; the price charged by the HBC rose from \$498 to \$21.78 per acre, while the price charged by the CPR rose from \$3.11 to \$16.06. See p496.

⁴¹ Norrie, p268.

⁴² Editorial, “Restricting Machinery Salesman,” *Grain Growers' Guide*, (25 February 1914): 10.

⁴³ Naylor pp.105-106.

⁴⁴ W.T. Easterbrook and Hugh G.J. Aitken, *Canadian Economic History*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1988): 510.

⁴⁵ Adelman, p499.

⁴⁶ Cited in Adelman, p500.

⁴⁷ Easterbrook and Aitken, p510.

advances on crop futures prices.⁴⁸ For other financing needs, farmers were forced to turn to implement dealers who provided short-term three month loans; these were difficult as they often came due at inconvenient times forcing farmers to renew at higher interest rates – sometimes as high as 14%.⁴⁹ This large network of financial arrangements between farmers, banks, and implement dealers created an inflexible situation where more and more funds were locked up in the staples trade, and few farmers had access to liquid capital. Norman Lambert, staff writer for the *Globe* (and future Liberal senator), noted the difficult position of western farmers as the economy struggled: “...So much of the business in western Canada was based upon the borrowed money that came from abroad, and which has [now] been cut off.”⁵⁰ Even more concerning was the fact that if the immense collective debt of western Canada should be recalled in any great amount, the delicate balance between farmers’ borrowing and Canada’s agricultural production would collapse.

Beginning in late 1913 and carrying through 1914, this potential collapse came dangerously close to realization. Considering the seriousness of the situation at the time, its neglect as a more substantial event of study by economic historians of Canada is curious.⁵¹ The forced stabilization in rates of agricultural production resulting from reduced investment coincided with a severe drop in agricultural prices.⁵² The strain of low prices led, for the first time, towards a trend of reduction in acreage devoted to grain crops.

⁴⁸ Norrie, p106.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Norman Lambert, “Can Real Economy Be True Patriotism?” *Globe*, (28 November 1914): 13.

⁵¹ A point also noted by Adelman, p491.

⁵² John Herd Thompson, *Harvests of War: The Prairie West, 1914-1918*, (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart Limited, 1978): 13.

The price decline was further compounded by untimely drought conditions which ensured that western farmers continued to struggle through the summer of 1914, as harvests failed to produce adequate financial yields.⁵³ Reduced crops placed incredible strain on the delicate balance that sustained agricultural financial arrangements – farmers were again forced to renew loans that they most likely could not pay back, often at higher interest rates as banks became wary of further investment in the reeling western economy.⁵⁴ As farmers struggled, many rural Canadians fled the countryside and joined the ranks of urban unemployed, placing more pressure on Canadian cities. The speed at which all of these economic changes occurred left Canada in a precarious position heading into the early months of war.

The Early Wartime Economy

The foreshadowing of a great war in Europe had been evident for some time, but in the final days of July 1914, it had never been clearer. As international tensions mounted in the early days of August, many people struggled to remain calm in the face of such uncertainty and upheaval. Anticipating financial panic, the British government made the decision on July 31 to suspend the London Stock Exchange. Many debtors to Britain were unable to sell securities or pay their creditors, which subsequently led a number of nations to hoard gold. With an imminent war, no nation could afford to lose precious gold reserves.⁵⁵ In Canada, a self-governing dominion that was automatically at war should

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Adelman, p504.

⁵⁵ Adelman, p507.

Britain declare it, the government followed suit and closed the Toronto and Montreal stock exchanges. Such economic intervention was both unprecedented and unsettling to many.

Particularly striking is the underlying protectionism and self-interest exhibited by allies who were about to venture on the greatest cooperative effort of the era. Given this somewhat contradictory behaviour, the Allied governments could hardly be surprised when their own citizens resorted to this same selfish protectionism. A contemporary writer noted the great “psychological effect” of the war on Canada’s people; “it was causing an immense pressure of patriotic fervor on one hand, [and] it was inducing hundreds of business concerns...” on the other.⁵⁶ In Canada, the early days of August saw heavy withdrawals from banks as people became panicked and rumours spread that the federal government was unable to back its currency with gold.⁵⁷ Fearful of what this would mean, many people sought to collect their savings and convert it into gold as insurance against an uncertain future. These “runs” upon the banks took place across the country, and represented what the 1931 Royal Commission on Banking and Currency in Canada would call in hindsight an “incipient financial panic.”⁵⁸ Borden noted that in these early days of August, safety-deposit boxes were secured by individuals in several cities for the sole purpose of hoarding gold.⁵⁹ A serious repercussion of such panic was the threat posed to the banks themselves, who were “legally required to close if they were not able to meet depositor demand for

⁵⁶ N. MacTavish, “Wartime in Canada,” *The Canadian Magazine*, 43 (6 October 1914): 549.

⁵⁷ Duncan McDowall, *Quick to the Frontier: Canada’s Royal Bank*, (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart Inc., 1993): 211.

⁵⁸ *Report of the Royal Commission on Banking and Currency in Canada, 1933*, (Ottawa: J.O. Patenaude, 1933): 22.

⁵⁹ Borden, Robert, *Robert Laird Borden: His memories, Volume I*. Edited by Henry Borden, (Toronto: Macmillian Company of Canada Limited, 1938): 213.

gold or Dominion notes.”⁶⁰ In fact, the Bank of Vancouver came dangerously close to such a collapse.⁶¹

The panic induced by market uncertainty was compounded by a simultaneous drastic increase in consumer prices. On the 5 August 1914, the *Globe* reported a severe increase in British food prices accompanying the announcement of war; concurrently, the paper reported a boost in the price of Manitoba flour upwards of thirty cents per barrel.⁶² Fear and uncertainty over the new war pushed markets to the extreme. Both the speed and rate at which prices rose resulted in another sort of panic, emptying grocers’ shelves of staple foodstuffs and making it difficult to meet demand.⁶³ As early as the third week of August, the *Globe* reported a 100% increase in the price of butter.⁶⁴ While the government and various economists assured the public that such increases were a natural reaction to the outbreak of hostilities, and only temporary in nature, Canadian consumers were not assured.

The *Monetary Times* addressed the rapidly disintegrating situation and encouraged all Canadians: “Do not hoard money. First and foremost – Keep your heads. Be calm. Go about your ordinary business quietly and soberly. Do not indulge in excitement...Let [money] circulate. Try to make things easier, not more difficult.”⁶⁵ The essence of such

⁶⁰ History of the Canadian Dollar, p37.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² “Food Problems in the Old Country – Prices Are Beginning to Soar,” *Globe* (5 August 1914): 16; and “War Boosts Price of Manitoba Flour,” *Globe* (5 August 1914): 6.

⁶³ “Groceries Go Up. Stocks Exhausted,” *Globe* (12 August 1914): 5.

⁶⁴ “Food Prices on the Up-grade,” *Globe* (20 August 1914): 9. The same report included price increases on round steak, sirloin, pork, and veal. The wartime food situation and food prices will be dealt with in greater detail in Chapter 5.

⁶⁵ “Do Not Hoard Money,” *Monetary Times*, 53, 8 (28 August 1914): 10.

advice was a call to selflessness over individualism. Fears that a struggling, indebted Canadian public would rush to collect their remaining funds from the institutions that held the funds, thereby toppling the Canadian banking system, were abound. The plea against hoarding money was reiterated when the *Monetary Times* again admonished those Canadians who were quick to run to the banks: “The hoarding of money is a foolish practice at any time, either in peace or war.”⁶⁶ The *Times* echoed the words of the English chancellor of the exchequer, David Lloyd George, who argued:

anyone who for selfish motives of greed or through excessive caution or cowardice goes out of his way to attempt to withdraw sums of gold and appropriate them to his own use, let it be clearly understood that he is assisting the enemies of his country, and he is assisting them more effectively probably than if he were to take up arms on their behalf; and in the end he would not really benefit himself.⁶⁷

Such warnings reflected the new moral subjectivity of wartime.⁶⁸ Hoarding, at its very essence, was taking from the communal supply to keep for one’s own benefit. It was individualism incarnate, and such “selfish motives of greed” were seen to have no place in Canada’s great war. The warnings of Lloyd George and others expressed an underlying discomfort that arose in the face of this individualism. At a time when the impending war

⁶⁶ “Hoarding Money is Foolish,” *Monetary Times*, 53, 11 (11 September 1914): 26.

⁶⁷ “Hoarding Money is Foolish,” 26.

⁶⁸ See Mariana Valverde and Loran Weir, “The Struggles of the Immoral: Preliminary Remarks on Moral Regulation,” p77, in *Moral Regulation and Governance in Canada: History, Context, and Critical Issues*, edited by Amanda Glasbeek, (Toronto: Canadian Scholars’ Press, Inc., 2006): 75-84. The authors discuss the shifting political and moral subjectivities in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries that reinforced a system of moral regulation. These subjectivities arose to support the project of nation-building.

called for self-sacrifice, a sense of community and patriotism, it appeared that an alarming number of people were opting to serve their own self-interests.

To meet the financial threat of resulting from the run on Canadian banks, on August 3, 1914, the Borden government issued an Order-in-Council that provided protection for banks, allowing them to issue their own notes as legal tender. Additionally, the Finance Minister, Thomas White, increased the number of notes that each bank could legally issue.⁶⁹ Together, these measures allowed banks to fulfill depositor demands and delay the threat of insolvency.⁷⁰ Despite these measures to protect the nation's finances, Canada entered the war in a precarious financial position. The young Dominion was a debtor nation, owing approximately \$408 million to overseas lenders. The arrival of war only added to this burden, initially exacerbating the pre-war depression and pushing the economy into further decline. The financial panic that had swept the nation in the first days of August did not lessen with the official declaration of war. The news instead thrust an already troubled trans-Atlantic market into deeper crisis as financial uncertainty took over; industries that relied on investment were by far hit the hardest. Construction and building companies which had already been struggling in the pre-war period collapsed and railway companies panicked as the last of the overdrawn eastern and British investors withdrew their funds.⁷¹ Existing manufacturing orders were cancelled, and many pre-war

⁶⁹ One British Columbian resident, so unsettled by the financial situation, wrote an essay to the *Vancouver Daily Press* supporting the creation of a provincial currency that, he argued, would be far stronger than the current Canadian dollar. See S. P. Panton, Letter-to-the-Editor, "Suggests a Provincial Currency," *Vancouver Daily Province* (20 August 1914): 18.

⁷⁰ History of Canadian Dollar, pp.37-38.

⁷¹ Norrie, pp.262-268.

infrastructure projects came to an immediate stop. Appleton's "Business Outlook" noted that construction saw an immediate reduction of over 80%.⁷² As a result, urban areas became even more saturated with unemployed workers; in Winnipeg, unemployment reached as high as 90%.⁷³

The Moratorium Question

Concern for the economy was exacerbated when early estimates revealed that the war would cost approximately \$50,000,000 per day – a seemingly unfathomable amount.⁷⁴ Canada itself was to raise \$50,000,000 immediately. This was a small number when compared to the overall projected cost, but still an enormous contribution from the young Dominion. To meet these tremendous costs, much of the amounts would have to be floated publicly through war loans or victory bonds. Given the financial struggles that plagued many due in part to the then long-standing recession or the financial crisis that followed, measures were required to provide economic relief.

The European Allies took immediate action. The British Crown extended a moratorium on any bill of exchange maturing prior to August 4, 1914, making it payable one calendar month after its original date of maturity.⁷⁵ Similarly, the President of France issued a moratorium - a legally binding halt to the right to collect debt – extending the

⁷² Appleton, "Business Outlook," *Maclean's* (December 1914): 115.

⁷³ Norrie, p268.

⁷⁴ "Paying the Piper Regardless of Tune," *Monetary Times*, 53, 8 (21 August 1914): 7.

⁷⁵ Correspondence, from Mr. Perley to Robert Borden, (5 August 1914) in "Documents Relative to the European War, Comprising Orders in Council, Cablegrams, Correspondence, and Speeches Delivered in the Imperial House of Commons," in *Sessional Papers Volume 1, Fourth Session of the Twelfth Parliament, Special Session*, (Ottawa: J. de L. Taché, Printer to the King's Most Excellent Majesty, 1914): 51.

collection of all maturities due before August 15, by thirty days. The French government capped private withdrawals at 250 francs per person.⁷⁶ These measures sought to buy time for the economy to stabilize and prevented further panic-driven runs on Allied banks holding much-needed capital for the war. However, in Canada, the impact of these European measures was calamitous. Canadian banks were placed in an even worse position as the European moratoria prevented them from accessing any assets held in those countries – and for the young Dominion, these were many. This issue would persist during the war and eventually serve as one of many encouragements behind Canada's increased reliance on American investment.

To meet the financial crisis in Canada, the Borden government passed a second Order-in-Council on August 10, 1914, removing Canada from the international gold standard. These financial measures, including the Order-in-Council from early August, were then converted into “An Act to Conserve the Commercial and Financial Interests of Canada,” later referred to as the *Finance Act*. In addition to authorizing the use of bank notes, the act empowered the Governor General, in circumstances of emergency, to authorize banks to issue excess notes throughout the year (previously allowed only during crop-moving season), to suspend “the redemption in gold of Dominion notes; and...to establish a general moratorium.”⁷⁷ The government authorized each measure outlined by the act throughout the war, with the exception of the moratorium, which unlike Britain and France, would never be implemented in Canada at the federal level. Borden, as Prime

⁷⁶ Ibid, p50.

⁷⁷ *Report of the Royal Commission on Banking and Currency in Canada, 1933*, (Ottawa: J.O. Patenaude, 1933): 22.

Minister, had to this point taken a *laissez-faire* approach to dealing with the struggling economy and was reluctant to institute such a moratorium on debts; he was reminded that many British investors with mortgage securities in Canada, particularly the west, had not received payment since 1912, prior to the economic downturn. Any such moratorium would certainly deter future investment.⁷⁸ Thus, it was argued, a moratorium had the potential to threaten the postwar reinstatement of British lending to Canada.⁷⁹

Borden's restrained response was supported widely in the financial and business world. The *Monetary Times* quoted a leading banker who emphasized that "absolutely no necessity exists for a moratorium in Canada at the present time."⁸⁰ The paper reprinted a plea from the *London Times* further suggesting that those with financial struggles appealing for the moratorium measure should "remember those who are worse off than yourself. Pay punctually what you owe, especially to your poorest creditors... Instead of dwelling on your own privations think of the infinitely worse state of those who live at the seat of war and are not only thrown out of work but deprived of all they possess."⁸¹ Somewhat hypocritically encouraging selflessness on the part of borrowers, this injunction towards gratitude ignored the fact that some debtors were simply unable to pay. Moreover, such comments firmly situated debtors and creditors on opposite sides of the moratorium dispute; this, by extension, drew a line between the ordinary and business classes both in Canada and abroad.

⁷⁸ John A. Turley-Ewart, "Osler, Sir Edmund Boyd," in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 15, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003, accessed August 16, 2015, http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/osler_edmund_boyd_15E.html.

⁷⁹ Adelman, p509.

⁸⁰ "More About Moratoria," *Monetary Times*, 53, 8 (21 August 1914): 10.

⁸¹ "Do Not Hoard Money," p10.

Another leading banker, Sir Edmund Walker, President of the Bank of Commerce, expressed his opposition to any moratorium measure:

The declaration of a moratorium by Canada would be a declaration to the world that we had reached the limit of our resources. We are in a quite different position to that of England. England is in the immediate War zone; and moreover the clearings of the world are made through London. The latter is the essential point; and I do not need to elaborate it. Moreover, England is a creditor nation, while Canada owes hundreds of millions to England. In private life it is a wise policy to keep one's credit good; and so in the affairs of nations.⁸²

In this way, debt was elevated from a financial to a moral issue. Walker's voice was joined in chorus by other prominent businessmen, including the meat-packing magnate W. Joseph Flavelle, who adamantly stated: "We want no moratorium in this country. We want no discussion of it in Parliament, much less in the newspapers."⁸³ Opponents of the moratorium loudly reaffirmed that while a moratorium in Great Britain merely delayed payment between debtors and creditors, a similar measure in Canada would mean defaulting on interest or principal payments owed overseas.⁸⁴ During a time when many argued the nation's moral fiber was to be tested at war, defaulting on financial obligations was hardly the best way to start.

While the situation certainly seemed bleak, financial papers provided encouragement that the economy would improve once war orders were placed with Canadian manufacturers. The financial crisis, they argued, was a brief precursor to the "golden opportunities" brought by war, "to make the Dominion more prosperous than ever

⁸² J. Castell Hopkins, *Canadian Annual Review of Public Affairs, 1914*, (Toronto: The Annual Review Publishing Company Limited, 1915): 244.

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

before.”⁸⁵ This inevitable boon to the economy would have the double benefit of addressing unemployment and injecting capital into the capital-starved economy. They further suggested that business leaders must also take part in the shared sacrifice of war – ironically, the moratorium clearly did not qualify as one of those sacrifices. The *Monetary Times* too suggested that businessmen should think with national wellbeing in mind and cease any war-induced panic:

If five thousand people lack faith in the economic strength of Canada, that in the aggregate is a town’s lack of confidence...Sentiment plays a goodly part in business. If sentiment is poor, business will suffer. Waving a flag with one hand and closing the factory gate with the other does not help. Cutting the wages of the workman is just as disastrous to him as the withdrawal of a business man’s bank credit at a critical moment...Every employer should do his best to keep the labour situation as nearly normal as possible. An army of unemployed is a dangerous wound in the economic body.⁸⁶

While businessmen may find the best measure of protection in closing to wait out the storm, the *Times* again urged against such protectionist measures. Such behaviour, in addition to harming the economy, would cause unnecessary panic and loss of confidence among the people. The fabric of national spirit was delicate and as the paper warned, the integrity of that sentiment was key to ensuring that business the economy, and inevitably the war, fared well. The moratorium issue, however, struck at the very heart of that sentiment creating a division between those opposed and those who welcomed any measure providing relief to Canada’s struggling indebted.

⁸⁵ “Canada Does Not Need a Moratorium,” *Monetary Times*, 53, 15 (9 October 1914): 45.

⁸⁶ “How the Facts Compel Confidence,” *Monetary Times*, 53, 9 (28 August 1914): 5.

Flavelle, ever the savvy business-man, argued that opposing the moratorium was the most important national-sacrifice that Canada could make in the present situation. “There is only one interest in this matter, and that is the interest of the credit of Canada and the people of Canada. Our duty officially is to conduct ourselves so that our credit is preserved. Our duty privately is to play the game with good courage and bear the other fellow’s burden rather than ask him to bear ours.”⁸⁷ Interestingly, Flavelle encouraged such sacrifice when the lack of any moratorium legislation meant that he and his cohorts were, in fact, not carrying the financial burden; rather, it appeared to cash-strapped ordinary Canadians that they were forced into near-destitution with only Flavelle’s wishes of “good courage”.

While the financial and business world uniformly opposed the moratorium idea and applauded Borden’s position, Conservative opinion was not so united. Conservative M.P. and newspaperman W. F. Maclean had called for banking reforms since his election in 1911. His early calls saw little traction, but soon gained popularity in wartime.⁸⁸ Maclean repeatedly expressed himself in favour of the moratorium and other banking reforms, and found support for his views in the *Edmonton Bulletin*, the *Regina Province*, the *Winnipeg Free Press*, the *Regina Leaders*, and more.⁸⁹ In addition to supporting a moratorium, Maclean took issue with what he viewed as a “private monopoly” on currency and money in Canada. He argued that by allowing banks to print their own notes, they were in control:

⁸⁷ W.J. Flavelle, cited in “Preserve Canada’s Credit,” *The Monetary Times*, 53, 14 (2 October 1914): 22.

⁸⁸ Tom King, “Maclean’s Bank Reform Plan,” *Grain Growers’ Guide* (16 September 1914): 7.

⁸⁹ J. Castell Hopkins, *Canadian Annual Review of Public Affairs, 1914*, 244.

“The banks are the sole masters of their money. They loan it or they hold it; they take no risks in regard to it, nor in regard to any money in their hands. There is no sentiment in banking.”⁹⁰ Maclean’s comments reveal a concern – shared by many – that the sterility of banking was too far removed from the “sentiment” of the Canadian people and the realities they faced daily. Separating himself from his Conservative counterparts, Maclean blamed the banks in large part for the money shortage Canada was facing. Moreover, he took issue with the Minister of Finance (and his predecessors) who Maclean believed “put himself in the hands of the banks...The business men, the manufacturers, the people, have never been consulted.”⁹¹ Although Maclean was a political Conservative, his background as a farmer allowed him a sympathetic perspective when it came to overstretched rural Canadians.

Maclean’s arguments echoed, in part, that of a farmer from St. Vincent, Ontario who wrote the *Globe* taking issue with both the comments made by Flavelle and the government’s preference for protecting his sort:

Apparently it was all right for the Government to assist the banks with special privilege. ‘But we want no moratorium in the country. We want no discussions of moratorium in the Chamber, much less in the newspapers. We want no special sessions of the Legislature,’ so says this man, who is one of the greatest beneficiaries of special legislation in this country. Evidently in this gentleman’s estimation the great mass of home-makers are unworthy of consideration by the Legislature.⁹²

Both Maclean and the farmer took issue with the special privilege that seemed to be awarded to the business and financial classes, at the expense of ordinary citizens. Even

⁹⁰ W.F. Maclean, “The People and the Banks,” *Grain Growers’ Guide* (7 October 1914): 3. This article first appeared in the *Toronto World*.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*

⁹² A Farmer, Letter-to-the-Editor, “Concerning Moratoria,” *Globe*, (25 September 1914): 4.

worse, in their eyes, was that Flavelle and company exercised this privilege loudly. From the perspective of Maclean and the farmer, ordinary Canadians lacked equivalent political clout and access. More important, as the farmer noted, it was clear that the Dominion government was prepared to go to lengths to protect the business class above the nation's greater mass of ordinary people.

Another Conservative M.P. and newspaperman from Vancouver, Henry Herbert Stevens, echoed Maclean:

Since returning to Vancouver I find condition such as to create alarm for the near future as regards payments on maturing mortgages and land agreements. It is impossible to get new loans on best of security and certain avaricious persons exhibit a tendency to force foreclosure proceedings taking advantage of war conditions...Would urge government to exercise power given recent session to declare Moratorium on all secured debts such as mortgages agreement sale land for period six months. I press strongly for actions.⁹³

As Stevens noted, home-owners facing foreclosure were unlikely to find another source of borrowed funds with which they could meet the demands of creditors. Given the tumultuous financial climate, the situation of many debtors was worsened when a number of mortgage companies called up their mortgages, inflicting what one Toronto mortgage-holder deemed “a serious and unnecessary hardship” on mortgage-holders.⁹⁴ Yet another self-identifying Conservative, I. L. Finch, wrote to Borden and offered his own case as an example of what was happening to “thousands” of sufferers:

My mortgage came due on the 1st Aug and the mortgager...now demand[s] immediate payment and owing to the unfortunate financial condition of the

⁹³ Letter to Robert Borden from H.H. Stevens (15 September 1914), in the Borden Papers, MG 26, H 1(a), Volume 48, Reel C-4237, p22194-22195, Library and Archives Canada.

⁹⁴ A. Mortgagee, Letter-to-the-editor, “Short-sighted mortgagee,” *Globe*, (18 August 1914): 4.

world you can readily understand this is impossible and the consequence is if I cannot arrange the matter satisfactorily, my property, which I value at 3 times as much as the amount of the mortgage will be sacrificed.⁹⁵

He argued that “there are thousands of others in Toronto alone (not to say anything about the rest of Canada) in the same box.”⁹⁶ As evidenced by the number of Conservatives – party-members or self-identifying – who rejected party interests to plea for a moratorium measure, the financial situation had reached a level of seriousness that broke the ranks of partisanship. Conservatives, of course, were not immune to financial hardship amidst the economic crisis.

While Borden’s own partisan ranks may have fractured over the soundness of the measure, other struggling Canadians across the country appealed to the Dominion government on the moratorium issue. R. Watson of Montreal wrote to Borden of the “abnormal increase” in Bailiff’s (Estate) Sales taking place in that city. In the months leading up to and immediately after the outbreak of war, Estate sales had increased in frequency from the usual ten to now as many as thirty-five advertised at one time. “In many...cases all the worldly possessions of the hapless victims are sacrificed to discharge some relatively small debt...A moratorium, if decreed now,” he argued, “would save hundreds of deserving families from absolute destitution.”⁹⁷ Similarly, a letter from a Toronto man provided details how he had made payments on his home mortgage until he had nearly paid the full balance, only to have the mortgage company recall the entire

⁹⁵ Letter to Robert Borden from I. L. Finch (2 September 1914), in the Borden Papers, MG 26, H 1(a), Volume 48, Reel C-4237, p22156-22158, Library and Archives Canada.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

⁹⁷ Letter to Robert Borden from R. Watson (31 October 1914), in the Borden Papers, MG 26, H 1(a), Volume 48, Reel C-4237, p22223-22224, Library and Archives Canada.

remaining balance immediately. As he was unable to pay the residual in one payment, the mortgage company intended to force a foreclosure on his home. Clearly distraught, the man begged Borden to “hold these sharks back” and “see the necessity of [the moratorium] ...for the hundreds of others in the same position.”⁹⁸ The difficulties outlined in such letters were as compounded for mortgage-holders who had found their employment cut off as a result of the depression or ensuing financial crisis.⁹⁹

Appealing to Borden’s patriotic sense, Lieutenant-Colonel McBain, an officer stationed at camp with the First Canadian Contingent, described to the prime minister that many men had volunteered with the first contingent and as such had left their affairs in the hands of “subordinates...where heavy losses may be sustained if some protection is not afforded. I am sorry to say that there are some cases where creditors are lying in wait for a chance to take advantage of their debtors.”¹⁰⁰ A number of newspapers and publications echoed these pleas and called upon the government to enact a moratorium. The *Farmer’s Advocate* stated the matter as fact: “It will be necessary for the present parliament to legislate for the relief of home conditions...it is to be hoped that parliament will not give [Big Business] interests any more consideration than those of the plain people...”¹⁰¹ Alas, Borden did not allow himself to be swayed.

⁹⁸ Letter to Robert Borden from Seasvell [?] (3 September 1914), in the Borden Papers, MG 26, H 1(a), Volume 48, Reel C-4237, p22162, Library and Archives Canada.

⁹⁹ Editorial, “Protect the Small Debtor,” *Globe*, (22 September 1914): 4.

¹⁰⁰ Letter to W.J. Hanna (forwarded to Borden) from Lieutenant-Colonel McBain (2 September 1914), in the Borden Papers, MG 26, H 1(a), Volume 48, Reel C-4237, p22209-22211, Library and Archives Canada.

¹⁰¹ Peter McArthur, “Our Present Problems,” *Farmer’s Advocate*, (27 August 1914): 1518.

The Borden government's refusal to institute a moratorium, Historian Jeremy Adelman has argued, called upon "Canada's largest debtor region, and its largest class of debtors, the prairie farmers...to live up to obligations with the hope (but without any guarantee) that financial services would be forthcoming in the future."¹⁰² Borden believed the government could fight the financial crisis through a policy of fiscal austerity. Unlike the prewar period, it was crucial that the country spend below its revenues; as such, the government cancelled all public works projects, further adding to the unemployment problem.¹⁰³ Seeing that no federal moratorium legislation would be passed, some of the provinces took matters into their own hands; Ontario, Manitoba, Saskatchewan and British Columbia passed legislation protecting borrowers against potential foreclosures for failing to meet payments.¹⁰⁴ Finance Minister White warned against early and more severe versions of provincial legislation, suggesting that it would "react most seriously not only upon the Province itself but upon the general credit of the Dominion. I cannot conceive of any action more calculated to stop the flow of money to Canada than legislation of this character..."¹⁰⁵ Such discrepancies between federal and provincial policies demonstrate the differing priorities.

In addition to what many in the business world felt was an injurious response to the economic situation at hand, the moratorium was also viewed as an opportunity for indebted people to shirk their financial responsibilities – to the even greater detriment of the

¹⁰² Adelman, p510.

¹⁰³ Ibid,

¹⁰⁴ Easterbrook, p510.

¹⁰⁵ Letter to Minister of Public Works from Minister of Finance (26 February 1915), in the Borden Papers, MG 26, H 1(a), Volume 48, Reel C-4237, p22231, Library and Archives Canada.

economy.¹⁰⁶ Following the introduction of the provincial legislation, one western loan company manager warned that “many people who could well afford to pay their obligations are taking advantage of the respite...I think the legislation here has undoubtedly done more harm than good.”¹⁰⁷ The manager of another loan company warned that borrowers will of course take advantage of any relief that is offered to them. The problem would arise when that relief was removed and the borrowers were so far in arrears “as to become discouraged and...give up” any efforts to pay at all.¹⁰⁸ The *Monetary Times*, organ of the Canadian financial world, did not hesitate to propagate this idea. In November of 1914, it published a series of letters from borrowers to their creditors. One letter outlined a borrower’s declaration, that given the financial climate they would be withholding the payment on their principle as they were then legally entitled to do so. They requested the amount of the “lowest possible cash payment” the lender would accept. These sorts of letters were printed with admonishment from the *Times*, who deemed them as “cheeky communications” that only proved no moratorium was needed in Western Canada.¹⁰⁹ In response, the lenders and the *Times* were accused by the *Globe* of concealing the beneficial results of relief legislation and highlighting only the few cases in which the law is abused. At the same time, the *Globe* was sure to admonish those borrowers who did maliciously

¹⁰⁶ This was borne out of the nineteenth-century notion that the poor could easily become “pauperized” and forever-dependent through too much charity and aid. See Mariana Valverde, *The Age of Light, Soap and Water: Moral Reform in English Canada, 1885-1925*, (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart Inc., 1991): 18-19.

¹⁰⁷ “Do Not Like Moratorium,” *The Monetary Times*, 53, 15 (9 October 1914): 11.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁹ “How the Moratorium Works,” *Monetary Times*, 53, 19 (6 November 1914): 9.

take advantage of such relief emphasizing the long-term effect: eternal lack of trust and “commercial ostracism.”¹¹⁰

Bowing to pressure from the federal government, the final legislation adopted by Ontario and the western provinces centered mostly on preventing creditors from seizing assets or compelling payment; however, legislation only applied to the most hard-hit regions of the crisis.¹¹¹ Altogether, these measures did little to aid farmers against high interest rates or eventual recalls of short-term loans, as they were still compelled to make payments on interest in the duration, and eventually pay the entirety of their debts in the end. Ottawa and London prevented provincial governments from passing any stronger measures that may undermine the very commercial relationships that the Dominion and British governments were trying to protect.

Western Farmers

Borden’s willingness to wager the future of prairie Canada in an effort to protect the nation’s financial future was politically expedient in the short-term. However, in doing so he drove a wedge between the government and one of Canada’s most vulnerable classes – the struggling indebted. Provincial governments received letters from numerous individuals pleading for a strict financial moratorium to protect their hard-earned assets and prevent imminent financial ruin.¹¹² Borden too received even more pleas imploring

¹¹⁰ Editorial, “Manitoba’s Moratorium,” *Globe*, (15 December 1914): 6.

¹¹¹ Adelman, p512.

¹¹² Adelman, p511.

him to reverse his decision on the moratorium. W. G. Porter of Calgary, Alberta lamented the situation of many westerners:

...all works has been shut down which leaves the poor man in a very-bad shape not being able to earn wages to support his family with out being able to pay any thing on a home, and in a great number of cases he owes payments on his little home, else young money and girls who have invested their monthly wage to pay for some real estate and now not being able to meet their payments the real estate shark is closing down on them and taking their property from them and in a great many cases they only owe one or two payments on their place and not being able to pay up is driven out or dispossessed and losing all they have paid on the property, and I thought it only right to see if there could be an order in the house of parliament where by there could be an extension of time given say six months or one year that they could not be compelled to make payments on real estate and not loose[sic] their homes, and by that time things will be better and especially in Alberta and in Saskatchewan and Manitoba, if you can get this done it will save thousands of poor people from loosing [SIC] their homes as the many men and real estate sharks are shutting out every one they can.¹¹³

Similar appeals came from the United Farmers Association and western Grain Growers Associations, who joined a chorus of Canadians fearing wartime would be used as an opportunity for speculation by banks and money-lenders.¹¹⁴ Given the preference already shown by the government towards protecting financial interests, this was a valid concern.

In October, a Saskatchewan farmer giving himself the ironic moniker of “Borden Grain Grower” – reflective of both his hometown and his new position at the hand of the prime minister’s rejection of the moratorium option – wrote to the *Guide* in hope that the financial measure may still be passed. If a moratorium was not passed, he warned, grain

¹¹³ Letter to Robert Borden from W.G. Porter (9 September 1914), in the Borden Papers, MG 26, H 1(a), Volume 48, Reel C-4237, p22178, Library and Archives Canada.

¹¹⁴ For example: Letter to Robert Borden from Coteau Grain Growers Association (20 September 1914), in the Borden Papers, MG 26, H 1(a), Volume 48, Reel C-4237, p22216, Library and Archives Canada; Letter to UFA from Robert Borden (2 October 1914), in the Borden Papers, MG 26, H 1(a), Volume 48, Reel C-4237, p22218, Library and Archives Canada.

crops would flounder as farmers were “put to the wall” by machine salesman and mortgage companies:

I tell you the papers are telling us of the big war in Europe, but the farmers of this Western country have war the year round and quite a battle it is, and if those white collared men were in the shoes of the farmers they would not last very long. We could tell you thousands of cases that are going on around these parts of farmers losing their farms, horses, cattle and everything they have, and a good many of them who would pay all these bills if they had a show. Some have lost crops, others are hauled out and almost buried themselves, but it won't be long now.¹¹⁵

Such sentiments noted a clear division between Canada's farmers and the “white collared” class who they felt sought to drive them out of business – after collecting all their funds.

Canadian farmers, particularly in the West, had long viewed the mortgage-lenders and travelling machine salesman as untrustworthy when it came to the financial best-interests of farmers. This sentiment had become even more pronounced during the economic recession of 1913 and early 1914. At the Moose Jaw Convention of the Grain Growers' Association in February 1914, the editor of the *Guide* noted that “the heavy rates of interest and the credit system, with its enhanced prices and long and deceptive terms, are driving the people deeper into debt year by year...There is no English-speaking country...where the farmers are so heavily burdened as in Western Canada.”¹¹⁶ In an effort to further protect farmers, the Grain Growers' Association passed a resolution asking provincial governments to ban travelling machine salesmen. It was believed that if legislation prevented farmers from being caught off guard on their home property, and if

¹¹⁵ Letter-to-the-Editor, Borden Grain Grower, “Farmers Want Moratorium,” *Grain Growers' Guide* (7 October 1914): 8.

¹¹⁶ Editorial, “Moose Jaw Convention,” *Grain Growers' Guide* (18 February 1914): 5.

transactions only occurred in the city where the farmer could enter into discussions on his own volition, vigilant and fully prepared, then perhaps the debt crisis of Western farmers could be mitigated.¹¹⁷

The portrayal of farmers as “dupes” to the spontaneous and deceitful advances of financiers and salesman changed markedly from the pre-war to wartime period. This shift in tone corresponds directly with Borden’s perceived abandonment of the western farmers. Before the outbreak of war, the *Guide* portrayed salesmen as villainous but did not shy away from scolding farmers who found themselves victim – its moralism knew no bounds. In February 1914, shortly after the Moosejaw Convention, the *Guide* emphasized that many farmers in the West had been “ruined thru purchasing farm machinery on credit” but noted that the “the farmer is himself...largely to blame.”¹¹⁸ Farmers were reminded not to buy more than they can hope to pay for in a reasonable amount of time, and to only buy what they need.¹¹⁹ Farmers who had failed to either escape the clutches of a deceitful salesman or keep their wits about them while entering a transaction were reminded that regardless of the perceived “quality” of a contract, they were nevertheless indebted to pay it:

Every farmer who buys implements on time and gives notes in payment should endeavor to meet his notes when they come due. These are contracts, and tho many of them are most unfair, the implement company has the power to enforce the fulfilment of the contract. If the farmer ignores the notices of payment...it will simply mean additional costs and trouble...the time to make better terms is before the contract is entered into. It is useless to fight when you are already beaten.¹²⁰

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

¹¹⁸ Editorial, “Restricting Machinery Salesman,” *Grain Growers’ Guide* (25 February 1914): 10.

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

¹²⁰ Editorial, “Frenzied Business,” *Grain Growers’ Guide* (11 March 1914): 6.

While the farmers were not entirely to blame, in the pre-war period the *Guide* took a gently paternalistic – although clearly fault-finding – tone towards farmers who found themselves in this position.

Following the outbreak of war, however, and Borden's refusal to adopt the moratorium measure, the perception that financial institutions and prominent businessmen were seizing these conditions as an opportunity to line their pockets spread and served to exacerbate public frustration over the struggling economy. Whereas before the *Guide* had encouraged farmers to take responsibility for their debts and to scrutinize lending arrangements carefully, in wartime the *Guide* strongly condemned deceitful money-lenders and machine salesmen as predators upon the wary farming class. The *Guide* published a series of articles in the early months of the war alleging that mortgage- and money-lenders, or "Canada's Enemies", were charging farmers "extortionate rates of interest" upwards of 12% to renew loans that farmers were helpless to pay off in full at the time they expired.¹²¹ The paper argued that the "mortgage company, or the money lender of any kind, that takes advantage of the conditions created by the war to fatten its own dividend by extortion or foreclosure should not only be exposed, but it should be driven out of business. These are the enemies that Canada has the most reason to fear."¹²² This sentiment was echoed in the central Canadian publication, the *Farmer's Advocate*, which repeated, "we are more in danger of commercial traitors at home than of outside enemies."¹²³ The negative view of creditors was strengthened by the perception that they willingly chose to take advantage of

¹²¹ "Canada's Enemies," *Grain Growers' Guide* (7 October 1914): 5.

¹²² *Ibid.*

¹²³ Peter McArthur, "Our Present Problems," p1519.

financial conditions to impoverish the farmer. Within a wartime context where everyday choices were intensely politicized, this was an alarming example of individual interests put ahead of communal wellbeing and shared sacrifice in the face of war. To consciously choose to undermine the wellbeing of fellow Canadians, financial or otherwise, was to lay our lot with the Germans.

To that end, the *Guide* published an editorial on October 14, 1914, issuing a call to farmers throughout the west who had been affected by such policies. Citing letters already received from farmers describing instances where mortgage companies had demanded much higher rates of interest for renewal, even where farms had been greatly improved and were in better security than when the initial loan was issued. Affected farmers were asked to write letters to the *Guide* including particular information: a letter from the lender demanding increased interest, the condition of the farm when the mortgage was first secured, the present condition of the farm, crop results for the last two years and the financial ability of the farmer to look after his family, and finally, how long they had been in Canada. The *Guide* promised to keep the identity anonymous of all farmers who supplied this information.¹²⁴ Farmers across the region answered their call.

Two weeks later, evidence collected, the *Guide* listed the names and board of directors of every offending institution, including the Toronto General Trusts Corporation, the Trust and Loan Company of Canada, the Western Trust Company, the Huron and Erie Loan and Savings Company, the Great West Life Assurance Company, and the Mutual

¹²⁴ Editorial, "Information Urgently Needed," *Grain Growers' Guide* (14 October 1914): 5.

Life Assurance Company of Canada.¹²⁵ The *Guide* accused these men of taking advantage of the war, and printed their names in an effort to publicly shame them for such behavior. The condemnation of the mortgage lenders was exemplified in a cartoon on the following page (see Figure 1), portraying the companies as gun-wielding robbers and the farmers as helpless victims.

By refusing to implement a federal moratorium, Borden succeeded in positioning



Figure 1.1. The Patriotism of Mortgage Companies. 1914, Cartoon. *Grain Growers' Guide* (28 October 1914): p6.

himself with those declared “enemies of the farmers”; meanwhile, the *Guide* seized the opportunity to further cement itself as the champion of western agricultural interests. It brought to light what it saw as the contemptible behaviour of money-lending companies in the west, and garnered public support by highlighting the population’s shared victimization

¹²⁵ Editorial, “Mortgage Companies after Farmers,” *Grain Growers' Guide* (28 October 1914): 5.

at the hands of white-collared profiteers. While Borden's government ignored farmers' pleas, the *Guide* gave them a platform.

Conclusion

In hindsight, the financial crisis was short-lived. The moratorium issue too was a brief moment against the larger backdrop of the war; however, the echoes of these events persisted through to the end of the conflict. The issue of debt and wartime scarcity remained a serious one for many Canadians and put under scrutiny the fact that some members of the business classes began to reap war-induced profits while others drowned in war-induced debt. The months-long debate raised the first in a series of waves of questions regarding the morality of profits in wartime. As early as September 1914, the *Farmer's Advocate* argued that the war provided an opportunity for the "millionaire's share". Financiers and estate owners, the editor argued, now have the opportunity "to go much for the men and the country which have made him what he is."¹²⁶ And yet, as the moratorium issue demonstrated, many members of that class chose not to do so. In this way, the moratorium issue served to aggravate regional and class inequities and exacerbate tensions in the early months of the war, while also failing to alleviate the economic crisis.

A New Brunswick resident in spring 1915 wrote Borden outlining a by-then familiar story of a mortgage that suddenly came due at the outbreak of war; unable to pay, the man was faced with giving up his home. Facing sudden unemployment at the outset of the war, the man wished to continue making small payments until steady employment

¹²⁶ Editorial, "The Millionaire's Share," *Farmer's Advocate* (10 September 1914): 1613.

could again be secured. At the crux of the issue, he argued, was why he should be forced to give up his house in hard times: “although a poor man I cannot see any reason why I should not live as well as those who have plenty of money.”¹²⁷ These increasingly pronounced inequities in the wartime experience of Canadians from different walks of life began to fester almost immediately in the early months of war.

¹²⁷ Letter to Robert Borden from Steury C. Hawkes (4 March 1915), in the Borden Papers, MG 26, H 1(a), Volume 48, Reel C-4237, p22178, Library and Archives Canada.

Chapter 2: “Keep the lifeblood of the nation moving”: Patriotic Consumer Campaigns, 1914-1916

As many Canadians struggled to cope with the financial hardship of increasing wartime debt and material scarcity in the early months of war, the belief emerged that intelligent purchasing could solve Canada’s economic woes. The rise of mass retail and the increasing prominence of large department stores in Canada since the 1870s had slowly placed consumption and consumer spaces at the center of social life.¹²⁸ This increased focus on the material, combined with the patriotic fervor of wartime, led many Canadian consumers to believe that moral consumption had the power to improve Canada’s economic situation and help win the war. Consumer behaviour had historically been plagued by questions of immorality, and the war offered no departure from this theme.¹²⁹

¹²⁸ Donica Belisle argues that the period between 1890 and 1940 saw the rise of department stores and mass merchandisers as powerful agents of Canadian modernization; further, consumers during this period realized their increasing influence over “the direction and character of modern Canadian consumption.” See *Retail Nation: Department Stores and the Making of Modern Canada*, (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2011): 7. For discussion of the key transition between 1880 and 1920 when new technologies allowed for a greater number of goods and personal commodities, see Gary S. Cross and Robert N. Proctor, *Packaged Pleasures: How Technology & Marketing Revolutionized Desire* (Chicago & London: Chicago University Press, 2014): 1-60.

¹²⁹ Most infamously, sociologist Max Weber argued that the “protestant ethic” of early modern Europe perpetuated an ethos of hard-work and self-denial, which translated for many Protestants into the accumulation and investment of wealth; this was further facilitated by the fact that Protestants were encouraged to shy away from public displays of wealth and personal accumulation of material goods, which were viewed as sinful. This Protestant predilection for asceticism, Weber argues, was rooted in the Protestant belief of predetermination, and subsequently contributed to the growth of capitalism. See Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, translated by Talcott Parsons, (New York: Charles Scribners’ Sons, 1958): 176-177. For further discussions on the historic perspectives on the immorality of consumption, see Matthew Hilton, “The Legacy of Luxury: Moralities of consumption since the 18th century,” *Journal of Consumer Culture*, 4, 1 (2004): 101-123; and, Daniel Horowitz, *The Morality of*

It bestowed upon consumer behaviour a familiar morality, but one redefined by the circumstances of war. Canadian consumers seized upon the war as an opportunity to publicly demonstrate their patriotism and commitment to Canada's war effort via what was seen by many as the unquestionably moral decision to support the Canadian economy. Alas, not everyone agreed on the best means to do so and there was much debate over what constituted truly patriotic purchasing in wartime. Some Canadians, particularly from the manufacturing and business classes, suggested a "business as usual" approach, believing that patience and maintaining the status quo was the best means to remain economically viable. Others argued that a patriotic purchasing strategy was necessary to support the nation's economy and war effort. As it became clear the war would last longer than anticipated and require more resources than were readily available, the calls for patriotic purchasing were joined and eventually replaced by calls for patriotic thrift aimed at conserving money and materials for the great challenge ahead. Thus, the early months of war were host to lively debates surrounding the relationship between consumers, manufacturers, and what constituted their patriotic duty.

During this time, the public discussion over the substance and form of patriotic consumption was fraught with even greater concern; how could consumption be rationalized in light of the new morality of wartime? The social and material gratification associated with consumer purchasing was no longer appropriate when viewed alongside the human sacrifice of war. While some argued that increased or maintained levels of personal spending could help improve a declining economy and thus contribute to the war

Spending: Attitudes Toward the Consumer Society in America, 1875-1940 (Chicago: John Hopkins University Press, 1985).

effort, such spending was accompanied by an unsettling fact: personal accumulation and material gain. On the one hand, consumers received goods or services in exchange for their purchases; on the other, manufacturers or business-owners received profits. Personal benefit of this nature, even when the result of economic stimulus, was hard to reconcile with the increasingly prominent ethos of wartime sacrifice.

This chapter examines the consumer debates of the early war period with particular focus on the Business as Usual and Made in Canada campaigns as evidence of the increased politicization of consumption in early wartime. As the previous chapter highlighted the conflict between individual and collective interest during the financial crisis, this chapter explores those same issues within the realm of early wartime consumer campaigns. The consumer debates of the early war period were a rich medium wherein questions of consumer and manufacturer responsibility as well as the varied and contentious meanings of nationalism, patriotism and wartime morality were negotiated. I argue that the “Business as Usual” and “Made in Canada” campaigns reinforced the notion that collective interests should take precedent in wartime, particularly as each appealed to notions of shared sacrifice. Canadian consumers were empowered with a new responsibility as patriotic agents and caretakers of the nation’s economy. As such, consumer choices became increasingly politicized and imbued with new meaning. Purchasing became a public and performative display and often translated to declaring one’s commitment – or lack thereof – to the war effort. I argue that just as the financial crisis had eroded the sense of shared sacrifice, so did the pro-spending consumer campaigns which ultimately benefited Canadian manufacturers and business interests above the consumer. I further argue that, as the war continued into 1915, notions of acceptable consumption shifted from a spending

towards a saving ethos, as Canadian sensibilities became increasingly uncomfortable with the juxtaposition of accumulation and personal indulgence with broader notions of wartime sacrifice.

When the war started, many believed the conflict would be short-lived. Politicians and citizens alike were confident that Allied forces would secure a quick victory and that the war would be finished by Christmas.¹³⁰ At first, business interests in Great Britain and Canada received little indication from government as to how war conditions might affect their livelihood and operation. With the amplification of the pre-war recession into a financial crisis during the summer and fall of 1914, the only message to business owners from the government was a stern condemnation against doing business with the enemy.¹³¹ While most items regularly imported from Germany could be obtained otherwise, a number of industries strained to find alternative suppliers for key materials, such as potash for the drug and chemical trades, and platinum for the electrical trades, etc. Canadian consumers quickly realized that a number of the goods they regularly enjoyed either entirely or partly came from Germany.¹³² John Appleton, editor of the *Financial Post* and monthly editor of the *Maclean's* "Business Outlook," noted that there would be radical change ahead as some factories would run short and be forced to close, while others would see increased

¹³⁰ Robert Craig Brown and Ramsay Cook, *Canada, 1896-1921: A Nation Transformed* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart Limited, 1974): 212.

¹³¹ John McDermott, "'A Needless Sacrifice': British Businessmen and Business As Usual in the First World War," *Albion: A Quarterly Journal Concerned with British Studies*, 21, 2 (Summer 1989): 265.

¹³² J. Castell Hopkins, *Canadian Annual Review of Public Affairs, 1914*, (Toronto: The Annual Review Publishing Company Limited, 1915): 250.

demand to fill the gap left by the absence of German manufactures.¹³³ To resolve this new discrepancy between commercial trade and wartime politics, campaigns were launched to promote both continued consumer purchasing and the importance of buying home-made goods.¹³⁴

Business as Usual

As commerce struggled to adjust to both the declining financial situation and the rapidly changing political climate of war, many businesses continued to exude an optimism that, they hoped, would translate into a continuation of pre-war profits during what many believed would be a short interruption. British newspapers reported on a meeting of prominent London businessmen in September, noting that the group unanimously agreed that the home front's responsibility was to "keep the lifeblood of the nation moving to carry on the work of making and providing."¹³⁵ The notion that everyday commercial life should continue in the face of war was widespread – this idea translated into the popular term "business as usual". The term's use in reference to the war was first promoted by department store tycoon and businessman, Gordon Selfridge.¹³⁶ He posited that nothing would discourage the enemy more than "the maintenance of an 'even keel' in our trade and industry."¹³⁷ "Business as Usual" soon became Selfridge's frequently used catch-phrase;

¹³³ John Appleton, "The Business Outlook," *Maclean's* (November 1914): 115-116.

¹³⁴ Hopkins, *Canadian Annual Review of Public Affairs, 1914*, p250.

¹³⁵ Advertisement, Canadian Street Car Advertising Co., Ltd., "Britain's Motto: 'Business As Usual,'" *Industrial Canada*, (October 1914): 217.

¹³⁶ Lindy Woodhead, *Shopping, Seduction and Mr Selfridge* (London: Profile Books Ltd., 2008): 135.

¹³⁷ Advertisement, Canadian Street Car Advertising Co., Ltd., "Britain's Motto: 'Business As Usual,'" *Industrial Canada*, (October 1914): 217.

it was even adopted by his competitor, the Harrods department store chain. Soon after, the phrase frequently appeared in store windows and advertisements throughout Great Britain. First Lord of the Admiralty Winston Churchill further popularized the phrase in November 1914 when he declared: “the maxim of the British people is business as usual.”¹³⁸ In Canada, a nation who often looked for inspiration from across the Atlantic, the phrase was taken up with vigour. The November issue of *Maclean's* contained a special dedication to Churchill, the British fleet, and their ability to keep “business going as usual”.¹³⁹ Beginning in October, the national organ of Canada’s manufacturers, *Industrial Canada*, printed several full page advertisements promoting the idea. Within the magazine, the American advertising company, J. Walter Thompson, offered its services to Canadian manufacturers to help “direct the patriotic impulse” of Canadian consumers in their direction.¹⁴⁰ Promoters of “business as usual” sought to take advantage of the patriotic outburst in the early months of war and ensure that all profits were kept in Canada.

In appealing to the public to maintain “business as usual”, manufacturers drew on notions of shared sacrifice. One advertisement by the Canadian Street Car Advertising Co., Limited recounted the meeting of London businessmen, presided over by Selfridge, all of whom argued that:

War required two forces ; one of the men who fought with risk of life against the enemy, and another to keep the lifeblood of the nation moving to carry on the work of making and providing. To the one force was the glory and the reward when successful ; to the other the less exciting, less

¹³⁸ Woodhead, 136.

¹³⁹ Hugh S. Eays, “Churchill – The Man at the Helm,” *Maclean's* (November 1914): 15.

¹⁴⁰ Advertisement, J. Walter Thompson Co., Ltd., “To the Canadian Manufacturer: What does ‘Made in Canada’ Mean to You?” *Industrial Canada*, (March 1915): 830.

glorious, but necessary duty to the nation, and war demanded sacrifices from both.¹⁴¹

In this way, the importance of continued commercial activity and “business as usual” on the home front was equated to the work – albeit of a different ilk – of Canadian men heading to fight overseas. Contributing to the apparent selflessness of this home front work, Selfridge and his counterparts claimed loudly that the “business as usual” mantra was rooted in a desire to “provide for the wants of the people” and not driven by a desire for wartime profits.¹⁴² For it to have any success, it was necessary to frame the campaign in terms of this collective sacrifice.

In support of the call towards “business as usual,” a number of companies that had suspended operations in late summer when faced with the financial crisis reopened in the late fall. In particular, *Industrial Canada* recognized Massey-Harris for re-opening its plants over the winter and promising permanent employees four to five days of work every week over the season. The action was to be commended as, the magazine stated, “the company [had] received a staggering blow...[and] there will be a limited sale for implements this winter.”¹⁴³ In fact, it was deemed unlikely that a demand for Massey-Harris implements would be secured until the following spring. Accordingly, keeping the factory open for the winter was viewed as a professional sacrifice on the part of Massey-Harris that would “do a great deal towards maintaining confidence and remedying unemployment.”¹⁴⁴ While this act was intended to assure wary consumers and contribute

¹⁴¹ Advertisement, Canadian Street Car Advertising Co., Limited, “Business as Usual,” *Industrial Canada* (October 1914): 217.

¹⁴² *Ibid.*

¹⁴³ “Massey-Harris Plants Resume,” *Industrial Canada* (December 1914): 490.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

in a visible way to remedying the nation's economic and unemployment woes, it highlighted a common plight for manufacturers. To ease this financial burden, it became clear that a re-focusing of the nation's economic efforts was required, and that consumers must be rallied to support Canadian manufacturers in this difficult time. Businesses and manufacturers thus moved beyond promoting only "business as usual" and turned attention towards a different slogan – "Made in Canada."

Made in Canada

The Made in Canada campaign had had been active for some time prior to the war, but experienced a surge in popularity in late 1914. The Canadian Manufacturers' Association (CMA) first launched the Made in Canada movement as a targeted response to the Liberal party's proposed reciprocity agreement put forth during the 1911 federal election. With the eventual defeat of Laurier's Liberals and reciprocity by Borden's Conservatives, the CMA claimed victory. However, the subsequent Conservative protectionism, while providing some barriers to foreign imports, did not entirely keep foreign goods out of Canadian markets. Thus, while the CMA had defeated the greater threat of a Liberal government, it continued the Made in Canada campaign as a smaller but still significant activity of the association in an effort to convince Canadian consumers of the benefit of purchasing Canadian-made over imported goods.

To promote the campaign, in 1912 the CMA organized a Made in Canada rail exhibit to travel across the country. The train was heavily publicized and made the front page of newspapers throughout western Canada. The inaugural year of the exhibit was so

successful that it was repeated again in 1913.¹⁴⁵ The exhibit attempted to highlight Canadian-made goods by highlighting everyday industrial workers and their families instead of the business elite who reaped profits in Toronto. This recasting of the image of Canadian manufacturers from business elite to average Canadians sought to draw empathy from Canadian consumers and aimed to create allies instead of opponents. During this time, the CMA's approach met with varying degrees of success. The biggest accomplishment of the campaign was that the phrase "Made in Canada" became known in every household, whether it supported the initiative or not.

By the summer and fall of 1914, Canadian manufacturers were experiencing an even greater pressure than before. As overseas investment was withdrawn, unemployment soared, and "business as usual" proved insufficient on its own, the Made in Canada campaign gained new traction. August and September saw renewed calls by the CMA for purchasing of items manufactured in Canada – now with the added benefit that it could be classified as "patriotic" purchasing. The September 1914 edition of *Industrial Canada*, the official organ of the CMA, issued a "Manufacturers' Call to Arms" spanning four pages. Drawing on the rapidly increasing anti-German sentiment of the Canadian public, the CMA urged manufacturers to explain to consumers what they had to offer in place of German products and argued that "now is the time for an aggressive "Made in Canada" campaign."¹⁴⁶ The magazine published a list of German goods sold to Canadians in the

¹⁴⁵ Andre Siegel and James Hull, "Made in Canada! The Canadian Manufacturers' Associations Promotion of Canadian-Made Goods, 1911-1921," *Journal of Canadian Historical Association*, 25 1 (2014): 5.

¹⁴⁶ Advertisement, The Canadian Street Car Advertising Company, Ltd., "Manufacturers' Call to Arms," *Industrial Canada*, (September 1914): 109.

previous year, including the full trade amount of each. Most notable were luxury goods including furs at \$1,600,000 and “fancy goods” at \$1,127,000, with the total amount of imported goods from Germany was listed at \$14,473,833.¹⁴⁷ The Made in Canada campaign embraced Canadian wartime nationalism and attempted to lead Canadians to the seemingly logical conclusion that if consumers did not buy Canadian made goods, they may in fact be contributing financially to the enemy. The campaign was both nationalistic and opportunistic as it preyed upon public fears, utilizing the increased anti-German sentiment percolating across the nation and capturing the patriotic fervor that swept the country in the early months of war. The CMA finished by reminding manufacturers that the association had the means to popularize “Made in Canada” products across the nation – now was the time to take advantage.¹⁴⁸ As the war began to test the patriotism and the commitment of every Canadian to the collective interest of the nation, the CMA hoped that the Made in Canada campaign would become part of that test.

The same September issue of *Industrial Canada* put forth a call to Canadian consumers charging them with their “duty [to] buy Canadian-made goods in preference to any other goods.”¹⁴⁹ While the magazine had presented the earlier appeal to manufacturers in terms of long term commercial opportunity, the appeal to consumers was instead wrapped in a veil of patriotic language pushing the issue beyond one of economics:

This is no longer a commercial appeal. It is the rallying cry of combatants fired with imperial and national patriotism. We must furnish Britain and our friends at war with food and supplies...It is the duty of Canadian citizens to spend every possible dollar at home during the war. Sending

¹⁴⁷ Ibid.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid.

¹⁴⁹ “Canadian Manufacturers and Consumers,” *Industrial Canada*, (September 1914): 164.

money abroad in payment for foreign goods indirectly helps the enemies of Britain, because such action weakens ourselves. Campaigns should be organized by the citizens of every community. The support of the local press, public officials, and consumers should be enlisted...This is no time to indulge whims, prejudices or fancies in favour of foreign manufactures.¹⁵⁰

Once again, manufacturers appealed to the public notions of collective sacrifice. By indicating that support for foreign manufactures was a sign of indulgence, such purchases were immediately imbued with a new meaning. According to Canadian manufacturers, the purchaser of foreign goods was selfish – the actions of an individual setting themselves apart from the patriotic collective. Even more interesting was a warning to “citizens who have means” who, the CMA argued, should not “economize too severely; spend now, keep factories going and retrench later,” lest they should entertain any notions of wartime thrift.¹⁵¹ Wartime purchasing became increasingly politicized as it was closely tied to a sort of performative patriotism; choices that before the war that had seemed completely innocuous were now contentious and instilled with new meaning.

As the CMA’s campaign gained traction in the early months of war, commercial advertisements began echo the “Made in Canada” arguments. Canadian company Windsor Salt, for example, printed an advertisement using the slogan, and stated:

One shot doesn’t destroy a fortress. One man doesn’t make an army corps. One 5c. purchase doesn’t keep a factory open. But – a hail of shots ruins the fortress. Man after man makes an army. And hundreds and hundreds of purchases of ‘Made in Canada’ goods will keep Canadian factories running – give employment to thousands of Canadian workmen – and enable the Canadian farmer to get better prices for his crops. No matter how small the purchase demand “Made in Canada” goods.¹⁵²

¹⁵⁰ Ibid.

¹⁵¹ Ibid.

¹⁵² Advertisement. Windsor Salt. *Farmers’ Advocate* (10 December 1914): 2083.

Such appeals reinforced the notion that “Made in Canada” was to everyone’s benefit, farmers and manufacturers alike. Historian Lizabeth Cohen has pointed to a similar view of consumers as economic saviors in Depression-era and later postwar America.¹⁵³ By choosing Canadian-made products, wartime consumers could rest assured that they were contributing to economic recovery and long term stability.

The urgency of keeping money in Canada could not be over-stressed by the nation’s business interests. To help consumers remember where their money was best spent, *Industrial Canada* published a helpful rhyme:

Table of a Dollar Bill

A farmer went to town to spend
 Some of his hard-earned dough.
 And in a merry jest, and just
 To show his printing skill.
 He printed his initials on
 A brand new dollar bill.
 He spent that dollar that same day,
 Down in the village store,
 He thought ’twas gone forever then,
 And he’d see it no more.
 But long before the year rolled by
 One day he went to fill
 A neighbor’s order, and received
 That same one-dollar bill.
 Once more he spent that dollar bill
 In his own neighborhood,
 Where it would do himself and friend
 The most amount of good,
 Four times in two years it came back.

¹⁵³ Cohen refers to this as the “purchaser consumer” perspective. She identifies 1930s America as a time when the New Deal exhibited two contrasting views of consumers. The “purchaser consumer” perspective saw consumers as a solution and able to pull the economy out of decline by increasing demand. The “citizen consumer” perspective saw consumers as advocates for protection of the public interest. See Cohen, *A Consumer’s Republic: The Politics of Mass Consumption in Postwar America*, (New York: Vintage Books, 2004): 28.

As some bad pennies will,
 And each time he'd go out and spend
 This marked one-dollar bill.
 Had he been wise that dollar might
 Be in his town to-day,
 But just two years ago
 He sent it far away.
 The people who received it then
 I know have got it still,
 For 'twas to a foreign country
 He sent his dollar bill.
 No more will that marked dollar
 Come into the farmer's hands.
 And nevermore will help to pay
 The taxes on his lands.
 He put it where it never can
 Its work of life fulfill;
 He brought about the living death
 Of that one-dollar bill.¹⁵⁴

The whimsical tale reminded Canadians that money spent at home circulated locally to everyone's benefit, and often found its way back to the spender. On the other hand, money spent outside of the community – or in this case, Canada – was lost forever.

Another CMA advertisement drew an even sharper connection between the purchase of Canadian-made goods and what they deemed “the new patriotism”:

There is more than one way of serving your country. We cannot all go forth to fight on the blood-stained fields of France and Belgium, but it is within everyone's power to help crush the monster that threatens Europe...Every dollar you spend for goods “Made in Canada” is increasing the wealth, the resources, of the empire...The new patriotism seizes every opportunity to help – the enlightened patriot insists that everything he buys be “Made in Canada.”¹⁵⁵

¹⁵⁴ Poem, “Tale of a Dollar Bill,” *Industrial Canada*, (April 1915): 959.

¹⁵⁵ Advertisement, Canadian Manufacturer's Association, “The New Patriotism,” *Farmers' Advocate*, XLIX, 1150 (8 October 1914): 1775. Such thinking is also reminiscent of the strong sense of nativism present in Anglo-Canada at the time, expressions of which were amplified during the war. See Donald Avery, “Canada during the First World War: A Case Study of European Immigrants and Anglo-Canadian Nativism,” p272-299 in *Canada and the First World War: Essays in Honour of Robert*

Thus, much like Selfridge and his London compatriots had argued that commercial steadfastness was equal to the human sacrifice being made overseas, Canadian businesses portrayed patriotic purchasing as a tangible way for Canadian consumers to “do their bit” on the home front. Not entirely altruistic, the appeal of the CMA and Canadian businesses to consumers’ patriotism obscured the fact that they, in the end, encouraged Made in Canada as a means to both secure profits during the commercial disruption caused by the war and increase long-term profits by instilling consumer habits that would hopefully carry forward to the eventual peacetime.

Until the summer of 1914, the CMA had been the driving force behind the Made in Canada campaigns. The circumstances of war, however, brought new proponents as the campaign was quickly enveloped within the larger cloak of demonstrative wartime patriotism.¹⁵⁶ As commitment to the war effort was often tested in a public forum, visible displays of support were necessary. Additionally, scholars have suggested that during times of intense nationalism consumption behaviour often becomes increasingly ethnocentric.¹⁵⁷ This was certainly the case in Canada. As it gained in both popularity and visibility by way of increased advertising, Made in Canada was taken up by the National Council of Women (NCWC), the Imperial Order Daughters of the Empire (IODE), and

Craig Brown, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2005); and, Robert Craig Brown and Ramsay Cook, *Canada, 1896-1921: A Nation Transformed*, (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1974): 227.

¹⁵⁶ See Siegel and Hull, p3. The authors note that it became clear during the Made in Canada campaign that while business could introduce the issue, it could not control it.

¹⁵⁷ See discussion in Wan-Hsiu Sunny Tsai, “Patriotic advertising and the creation of the citizen-consumer,” *Journal Media and Communications Studies* 2, 3 (March 2010): 76-77.

other service organizations in the early months of the war. At the executive meeting of the NCWC in November of 1914, the idea of promoting the campaign was discussed thoroughly.¹⁵⁸ Given concern that the campaign was a business proposition or that it should instead have a broader scope, the issue was referred to the Convener of Household Economics Standing Committee with the suggestion that it be reviewed by experts. Following that review, the NCWC passed a resolution in March of 1915 asking each local council to study the Made in Canada campaign and promote Canadian goods and manufacturers where appropriate.¹⁵⁹ However, by this time a number of councils had already taken up the cause under their own initiative.

In August 1914, the Ottawa Local Council of Women addressed the issue of Canadian-made consumer products immediately following the outbreak of war. The meeting was attended by several prominent women, including notable feminist Elizabeth Shortt. They believed that maintaining demand for Canadian-made goods in wartime was crucial and would “largely increase the output of our industries and provide employment for large numbers of workmen.”¹⁶⁰ Consumer choices, it would seem, were accompanied by a new level of responsibility. The group passed a resolution encouraging housewives and other purchasers to favour Canadian-made goods; this move by the local council of the

¹⁵⁸ Minutes from the Executive Meeting, (24 November 1914), in National Council of Women of Canada, “Meetings: minutes May 1913-March 1917,” MG 28, I 25, Volume 24, Reel H-2011, p23-26, Library and Archives Canada.

¹⁵⁹ Minutes from the National Meeting, (12 March 1915), in National Council of Women of Canada, “Meetings: minutes May 1913-March 1917,” MG 28, I 25, Volume 24, Reel H-2011, p23-2p71-74, Library and Archives Canada.

¹⁶⁰ Cited in “To Help Canada in Time of War: Women of the Capital Advise the Purchase of Canadian Goods,” *Vancouver Daily Province* (24 August 1914): 2.

nation's capital was widely publicized in newspapers across the country. In the context of a new war, supporting domestic manufacturing was easily praised.

Soon after, support for the wartime iteration of the "Made in Canada" movement spread across the country. The IODE expressed support for the resolution and their solidarity with the Ottawa Local Council of Women in their monthly publication, *Echoes*.¹⁶¹ On August 19, 1914, the front page of the *Montreal Star* proclaimed that consumers should "Buy Only Goods Made in Canada" and endorsed the CMA's call for patriotic purchasing.¹⁶² The newspaper continued to support the Made in Canada campaign throughout the fall and almost every day in October of 1914.¹⁶³ *Echoes* and the *Star* were joined by newspapers and bulletins across the country, all supporting the campaign either overtly or via pages filled with commercial advertisements branded boldly with the "Made in Canada" slogan. When the NCWC began publication of its own monthly organ in March of 1915, *Woman's Century*, the Made in Canada campaign was a central feature, with the slogan featured prominently on the center of the cover page. The magazine suggested to its readers that buying Canadian-made goods was the sign of "real patriotism" and evidence that Canadians were standing behind their fathers and sons overseas.¹⁶⁴ The NCWC argued that the Made in Canada movement had the power to relieve unemployment and promote national prosperity following the extended economic depression.¹⁶⁵ It was particularly effective in its reach as it appealed directly to women as those who did the

¹⁶¹ "Made in Canada Movement," *Echoes* (December 1914): 32-33.

¹⁶² "Buy Only Goods Made in Canada," *Montreal Star* (19 August 1914): 1.

¹⁶³ For example, see *Montreal Star* (8 October 1914): 11; *Montreal Star* (10 October 1914): 27; and, *Montreal Star* (24 October 1914): 20.

¹⁶⁴ Mrs. Wilson, "Made in Canada," *Woman's Century* (March 1915): 10.

¹⁶⁵ "Measuring Up to a Necessity," *Woman's Century* (March 1915): 7.

“principal part of the purchasing of all articles used in the home.”¹⁶⁶ Moreover, it provided women an important and tangible way to contribute to the war effort by delegating them with a crucial wartime responsibility – the power to ensure the nation’s economic future.

As popular support for the campaign grew, so did the perceived importance of buying Canadian-made goods. The *Nova Scotian* listed the “purchase and use of goods ‘Made in Canada’” as one of the fundamental duties of Canadians in wartime.¹⁶⁷ Likewise, Reverend H. Saunderson of the First Unitarian Church in Toronto encouraged parishioners to consider Made in Canada goods when making household purchases, imbuing the choice with far more than just commercial considerations: “The ‘Made in Canada’ movement is much more than a business movement...It is impelled, not only by commercialism, but by patriotism and idealism.”¹⁶⁸ As it evolved, the campaign became far more than an economic remedy. In the context of wartime, it was a symbol of patriotism and for many, a sign of the nation’s strength. In early 1915, popular songwriter and comedian duo N. Fraser Allan and Stanley Bennett added “The Made in Canada Campaign Song” to their repertoire. An upbeat tune with “lots of snap,” the lyrics encapsulated the entirety of the arguments for the Made in Canada campaign:

Verse 3:
 Canadians are now engaged in every line of trade,
 So let us help to sell the goods that really are home made.
 To keep our industries alive, there must be work to do,
 So good people who are shopping, it is simply up to you
 To start right in this minute, and let everyone demand
 That every article they buy is “Made in Canada” brand.
 If you are offered something else just think of this campaign,
 And help to make your country great by singing this refrain.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁷ “Our Duty,” *Nova Scotian*, 81, 10 (5 March 1915): 6.

¹⁶⁸ “No Sham and Shoddy in ‘Made in Canada,’” *Globe* (2 November 1914): 7.

Refrain:

“Made in Canada” is good enough for me,
 And any other kind of goods I do not care to see,
 We may import a few thing snow, but in a year or two
 By boosting this campaign they will be “Made in Canada” too.¹⁶⁹

The song garnered instant popularity and was performed live at Massey Hall in Toronto. It too reiterated the power of “Made in Canada” purchasing and its ability to “make [the] country great.”

Despite the movement’s widespread and steadily increasing popularity, it met with resistance from several areas. Despite the claim that Made in Canada was the only way to save the economy and ensure the future, some expressed concern that purchasing only Made in Canada goods would, in fact, be detrimental to not only the war effort but also Canada’s future economic prospects in the eventual post-war world – especially if consumers ceased purchasing goods imported from Allied countries. Others, departing from the notion of Empire, felt that the campaign did not go far enough, and that it should become even more localized and focus on the provincial or community-level. Still others found fault with the campaign’s inherent pro-buying message in wartime or felt that it was inherently anti-consumer.¹⁷⁰ While advertisers and manufacturers lauded the campaign, several stakeholders attacked proponents for what could be construed as an anti-Imperial mindset, lack of economic foresight, and their inherent pro-manufacture and anti-consumer

¹⁶⁹ Sheet Music, Words by Stanley K. Bennett and Music by N. Fraser Allan, “The Made in Canada Campaign Song,” Musgrave, 1915.

¹⁷⁰ Canadian-made goods were often more expensive or, in some cases, of lesser quality than those which were imported; in either case, if Canadian consumers were obliged to purchase Canadian-made goods they were often then forced to accept less value for their money.

approach. Discussions on the issue filled newspapers and magazines across the country as debates erupted over what constituted truly patriotic purchasing.

Many consumers supported the general idea of Made in Canada but questioned its scope. The NCWC had probed this issue when first discussing whether to support the campaign, questioning if a Made in Empire slogan might be more suitable.¹⁷¹ In a letter to the *Grain Growers' Guide*, Albertan and pioneer cattle rancher F. W. Godsall wrote that he could not agree with advice to buy goods made in Canada. He argued:

it is the duty and wisdom of consumers to buy British or American made goods and pay the duty on them into the public purse and help his country, rather than buy goods made in Canada, the duty on which...he pays into private pockets.¹⁷²

Similarly, political economist and popular satirist Stephen Leacock warned that the campaign's limited scope may alienate international allies, many of whom exported consumer goods to Canada. He argued that if the campaign was aimed at making Canada more industrious then it may be warranted, but if it was used "as a way for striking at the hand that helps us," it should be rejected.¹⁷³ In particular, Leacock was thinking of American manufacturers who had long enjoyed the Canadian market as a source of reliable revenue. Encouraging Canadian consumers to turn away from the importation of German manufactures was to be commended, but the same could not be said for a sudden rejection of American goods:

¹⁷¹ Minutes from the Executive Meeting, (24 November 1914), in National Council of Women of Canada, "Meetings: minutes May 1913-March 1917," MG 28, I 25, Volume 24, Reel H-2011, p23-26, Library and Archives Canada.

¹⁷² Letter-to-the-Editor by F. W. Godsall, "Help your country," *Grain Growers' Guide* (4 November 1914): 15.

¹⁷³ Stephen Leacock, cited in "Professor Leacock's Mistake," *Industrial Canada*, (February 1915): 714.

Nay, in this winter of crisis, let me rather wear rubbers that are made in Schenectady, and a collar fashioned in Cohoes, and let me hear in my waistcoat pocket the ticking of a Connecticut watch that shall recall to my listening ear the heartbeat of New England...¹⁷⁴

In response to Leacock's criticism, *Industrial Canada* merely pointed to the concurrent "Made-in-the-U.S.A." campaign, arguing that there was absolutely no slight to Allies when persuading citizens to patronize their home industry.

And yet, Leacock was not the only one to voice his concern on this issue. In a letter to *Woman's Century*, Violet McNaughton, well known agrarian-feminist and President of the women's section of the Saskatchewan Grain Growers, criticized the National Council of Women (NCWC) for their eventual and outspoken support of the Made in Canada campaign. Echoing Leacock, McNaughton warned the NCWC that "'Made in Canada' implies... 'Don't buy goods made elsewhere, even in England.' Do we not wish to export?...are we entirely self-sufficient?"¹⁷⁵ McNaughton challenged the "inspired" patriotism which motivated the movement, observing that many followers were simply seizing a performative opportunity to display their patriotism. She instead emphasized the necessary of inter-dependence in the realm of trade. Like Leacock, she feared the impact that such a policy would have on foreign relationships with important trade partners like Great Britain, the United States, and other political and economic allies.

While McNaughton, Leacock and others feared an unintentional snub of Allied wares, others felt the campaign was not restrictive enough. A letter to the *Winnipeg Free*

¹⁷⁴ Ibid.

¹⁷⁵ Violet McNaughton, Letter-to-the-Editor, "Made in Canada," *Woman's Century*, (April 1915): 12.

Press encouraged readers to patronize Winnipeg businesses over those in Eastern provinces:

The worshippers of cheap products in preference to home-made ones have something to think about in connection with Germany, which country extended its trade because of cheapness. We are today paying mighty dear for the 'cheap' products of Germany. The true patriot is the one big enough and brotherly enough to leave his trade at home...¹⁷⁶

The writer condemned the selfish preference for “cheaper goods.” A response to “Printer” commiserated and expressed further frustration at what the writer viewed as the unnecessary and unwarranted patronage of Eastern or foreign businesses: “Thousands and tens of thousands of dollars are sent out of Winnipeg annually by this practice.”¹⁷⁷ The author, identified as “Merchant Tailor” which suggested an affiliation with the local business community, argued instead for a “Made in Winnipeg” campaign. In this way, the Made in Canada campaign revealed the increasing tension between notions of localism, nationalism, and imperialism and an underlying conflict between the desire of Canadians to contribute to the war effort as members of the Empire but also to protect their economic wellbeing – whether at the local or national level.

Farmers, particularly in western Canada, were reluctant to give their full support to Canadian manufacturers, particularly those located in the East, with nothing in return. In January of 1915, R. C. Henders of the Manitoba Grain Growers publicly denounced the Made in Canada movement and challenged its so-called patriotic supporters to demonstrate

¹⁷⁶ Letter-to-the-Editor by Printer, “Theory and Practice,” *Winnipeg Free Press* (1 October 1914): 11.

¹⁷⁷ Letter-to-the-Editor by Merchant Tailor, “Example and Precept,” *Winnipeg Free Press* (6 October 1914): 11.

their patriotism by supporting free trade and the removal of the protective tariff.¹⁷⁸ Like Henders, McNaughton also called upon manufacturers to reciprocate any show of support from consumers:

Have the manufacturers made any promises? In what have the manufacturers shown preference to home buyers? Why does Canadian flour, bacon, cheese and salmon sell cheaper in England, 4,000 miles away, than in Canada?...I simply wish to illustrate that the farmer cannot endorse the 'Made in Canada' movement without question.¹⁷⁹

McNaughton chastised the NCWC for blindly following a trend without properly analyzing the question and its benefit to consumers.¹⁸⁰

In response to McNaughton's criticism, *Woman's Century* published an editorial alongside McNaughton's letter, addressing her various arguments. The NCWC acknowledged that the war had renewed interest in the Made in Canada campaign and that for the first time, women were taking the lead. This, they argued, was not a result of "inspired patriotism" but instead a result of the economic crisis leading into the war; as factories shut down and unemployment rose, a number of families were forced to turn to charitable organizations for help – organizations that were largely run by many of the same women involved with the NCWC. *Woman's Century* put forth the argument that these women acted out of their belief that a Made in Canada campaign would create an increased demand for Canadian products, allowing factories to re-open and workmen to be re-employed; thus,

these women were inspired by earnest patriotic and charitable motives, and that their action has been the means of preventing a disastrous depression

¹⁷⁸ Siegal and Hull, p10.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid.

¹⁸⁰ Ibid.

which would have first paralyzed business in the cities, and then spread to the country districts, causing loss to every farmer in Canada.¹⁸¹

In particular, the NCWC pointed to the threat of unemployment in the early months of war and that it had targeted a large number of women who would have faced a number of “temptations and dangers” when thrown out of employment in the cities. “Was it not a good woman’s movement to try to save these young girls from such temptations by asking all Canadians give a preference to goods made in Canada...?”¹⁸² The NCWC believed steadfastly that Made in Canada helped men, women, urbanites and farmers alike.

When addressing the argument by McNaughton and others that manufacturers must give something in return to consumers, the NCWC admitted that “there are selfish manufacturers and unselfish manufacturers, just as there are selfish farmers and unselfish farmers.”¹⁸³ Instead of pointing to manufacturers and other business interests, they pointed to farmers arguing:

If the farmers bought as much of what is produced by Canadian workmen as Canadian workmen and those dependent upon them buy of the products of Canadian farms, almost every Canadian factory would be working overtime to-day.¹⁸⁴

While *Woman’s Century* would go on to suggest that this was, in fact, not an issue of farmers versus manufacturers, it seemed that the essence of both McNaughton’s and the NCWC’s argument lay in those seemingly opposing viewpoints. Supporters of both manufacturers and farmers accused each other of self-interest when it came to the Made in

¹⁸¹ Editorial, “Mrs. McNaughton Asks Questions,” *Woman’s Century* (April 1915): 12-13.

¹⁸² *Ibid.*

¹⁸³ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

Canada decision. At the root of this debate lay fundamentally different views regarding how best to patriotically serve the war effort.

Those opposed to the campaign were not the only voices calling for manufacturers to give something to consumers in return. Even supporters of the campaign acknowledged this responsibility. Rev. Saunderson, who had been a vocal proponent of the campaign in Toronto, noted that the campaign represented a “sacred agreement” between manufacturers and consumers:

The mark, “Made in Canada,” must be regarded as a sacred seal. It must stand for absolute integrity of manufacture, and eliminate sham and shoddy. Otherwise the mark will arouse suspicion and be the breaking of what should be as binding as a sacred agreement with the people of Canada.¹⁸⁵

The “sacred agreement” was one of mutual understanding and compromise. The *Grain Growers’ Guide*, while supporting the Made in Canada campaign generally, also expressed the view that manufacturers must play their part and offer quality goods at low prices to Canadian consumers. Historically a vocal enemy of the CMA, the *Guide* offered a temporary rapprochement during Canada’s economic crisis: “Necessity demands prompt action which can only be given thru [sic] increased patronage of home made goods by our own consumers.”¹⁸⁶ However, the *Guide* was sure to mention that if manufacturers seized this opportunity to secure additional tariff favours at the expense of the Canadian public, this support would be rapidly withdrawn. The Made in Canada campaign would only work against the backdrop of shared, collective sacrifice. With the support of even the CMA’s greatest opponents, it seemed to many that while Canadian consumers would in many cases

¹⁸⁵ “No Sham and Shoddy in ‘Made in Canada,’” *Globe* (2 November 1914): 7.

¹⁸⁶ Editorial, “Our Trade Re-Adjustment,” *Grain Growers’ Guide* (30 September 1914): 5.

pay more for Canadian made goods, they could rest assured that their money was contributing to Canada's economic wellbeing. The crux of the CMA's appeal was that patriotic purchasing of Canadian made goods was more important than the small sacrifices in price that consumers may have to make.¹⁸⁷

By the spring of 1915 the *Grain Growers' Guide*, while continuing to support the Made in Canada campaign when price and quality were considered equal, grew increasingly frustrated following a government increase in tariffs on imported goods. The CMA appealed to consumers to support Canadian-made goods, while the federal government increased the tariff as a means to secure revenue for the nation in wartime. The *Guide* was quick to point out the diametrically opposed arguments, each one appealing to the patriotism of the Canadian people: "How are the Canadian people to decide which is the right kind of patriotism?"¹⁸⁸ Beyond the confusion resulting from the conflicting patriotic appeals, the *Guide* took issue with the fact that the tariffs only demanded further sacrifice from the consumer, while lining the pockets of manufacturers.¹⁸⁹ No longer was the Made in Canada campaign about shared sacrifice between consumers and manufacturers; rather, with the government increase in tariffs, the campaign now served as a reminder to many of the unequal burden of wartime.

For those who continued to support the Made in Canada movement wholeheartedly, another set of challenges arose. When making purchases, it was not always clear which

¹⁸⁷ Siegel and Hull, p9.

¹⁸⁸ Editorial, "What is the Patriotic Duty," *Grain Growers' Guide*, (10 March 1915): 5.

¹⁸⁹ Editorial, "Manufacturers Approve New Tariff," *Grain Growers' Guide*, (10 March 1915): 5.

products were in fact Made in Canada. The Toronto Local Council of Women identified a lack of clear labelling indicating which products were, in fact, Made in Canada. This made for an extremely difficult shopping experience for the patriotic-minded consumer.¹⁹⁰ To combat this issue, *Industrial Canada* published an extensive “Buyers’ Guide to Canadian Manufactures” spanning over ten pages.¹⁹¹ However, as a trade publication, it’s unlikely that this list reached most consumers. As the war continued, discrepancies in quality and price between Canadian-made and imported goods became more pronounced. A number of local women’s councils re-visited their support of the Made in Canada movement in the later years of the war as prices became higher and quality became more questionable.¹⁹² The strength of the Made in Canada brand was further weakened by the widespread condemnation and notable failure of Canadian-made wartime equipment, such as the Ross Rifle.¹⁹³

Perhaps most remarkable of the Made in Canada popularity during 1914 and 1915, was that the campaign was fundamentally based on a pro-buying mentality that persisted among a significant portion of the population throughout the war. A CMA Advertisement in the *Farmers Advocate* included in large type the slogan, “PATRIOTISM PRODUCES PROSPERITY”.¹⁹⁴ When compared with the immense human sacrifice being made in

¹⁹⁰ Siegel and Hull, p9.

¹⁹¹ “Buyers’ Guide to Canadian Manufactures,” *Industrial Canada* (September 1914): p194-210.

¹⁹² See National Council of Women of Canada – Twenty-fifth Annual Meeting – Regina, Saskatchewan – June 17 to 25, 1919 in National Council of Women of Canada, “Meetings in Volume 27, May 1917-March 1919,” MG 28, I 25, Volume 58, Reel H-2017, p59, Library and Archives Canada.

¹⁹³ Siegel and Hull, p10.

¹⁹⁴ Advertisement, Canadian Manufacturer’s Association, “The New Patriotism,” *Farmers Advocate* (8 October 1914): 1775.

Europe, the notion seems peculiar. Notable farmer and columnist Peter McArthur endorsed the Made in Canada campaign but found fault with this association:

The campaign may be all right but this use of the flag is all wrong. At a time when men are dying for that flag and others are rallying to its protection it should not be used to promote any commercial campaign, however worthy...The patriotism that sends men to die in the trenches in defence of Canada and the Empire is heroic and noble...but the patriotism of profit which urges us to buy so as to support Canadian industries, some of which are loaded with watered stock, is hardly entitled to flaunt the flag.¹⁹⁵

In particular, McArthur found fault with the mass of Canadians who were unable to stir their patriotism for reasons of politics, but now found no barrier to do so for reasons of trade. He concluded:

It is patriotism that rends men sternly and quietly to the firing line but it is something entirely different that sends men clamorously to the dollar line. The flag that we are willing to die for should not be used as an advertisement.¹⁹⁶

McArthur was not alone in the repugnance he felt for capitalist gain in wartime, particularly when it was assumed under the guise of patriotism. However, while McArthur was able to reconcile the goals of the Made in Canada campaign as a necessary means to improving the nation's economy, others were unable to do so, and an increasing number of Canadians were encouraging thrift and saving as the necessity of the day.

Conclusion

More pragmatic members of the Canadian press had been appealing for thrift and conservation since the outset of the war. In the early weeks of August, the *Farmers'*

¹⁹⁵ Peter McArthur, "The Flag," *Farmers' Advocate* (4 February 1915): 160.

¹⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

Advocate warned Canadians to “look ahead and plan to meet all possible complications squarely...Conservation is the watchword.”¹⁹⁷ Emphasizing the uncertainty of war, the *Advocate* advised its readers to conserve money and resources where possible so that they might be prepared for any swift change in events. This sentiment was echoed by the Grain Growers associations who repeated a similar slogan – “Economy is now the watchword.”¹⁹⁸ One month following the outbreak of war, Canadian journalist and feminist Francis Marion Beynon encouraged her readers to undertake an “Economy Day” as war was sure to “mean harder times for years.”¹⁹⁹ These initial calls for thrift and economy appeared in the earliest weeks of war, but took some time to gain a firm hold.

By the summer of 1915, the war had not ended and it was clear to many that business could no longer continue as usual. As more resources were required to sustain the war effort, more Canadians began to turn away from the “business as usual” consumer spending mentality. In an editorial, the *Nova Scotian* reflected on the first year of war:

The popular cry at the beginning was “Business as usual”...People were even advised to spend freely, that business might not be disturbed...Now comes the demand that every unnecessary form of private money-spending shall be abandoned.²⁰⁰

The “business as usual” and “Made in Canada” campaigns had rested on the notion that increased consumer spending of any sort was good for the economy when spent on Canadian-made goods so that money may continue to circulate within the domestic

¹⁹⁷ Editorial, “Conservation is the Watchword,” *Farmers’ Advocate* (20 August 1914): 1866.

¹⁹⁸ Advertisement, Grain Growers’ Grain Company, *Grain Growers’ Guide* (12 August 1914): 24.

¹⁹⁹ Francis Marion Beynon, “An Economy Day,” *Grain Growers’ Guide* (2 September 1914): 12.

²⁰⁰ Editorial, “Muddling Through,” *Nova Scotian* (2 July 1915): 6.

economy. These early campaigns left room for consumer self-indulgence and gratification, as long as money was spent in the proper way. Increasing calls for thrift, however, sought to deny consumers these selfish rewards. The *Nova Scotian* even surmised that if an ethos of thrift had been adopted by Canadians sooner, “the war might be much nearer a successful issue at present.”²⁰¹ These notions of wartime thrift and sacrifice will be explored further in Chapter 3.

²⁰¹ *Ibid.*

Chapter 3

“Give until it hurts”: Thrift and Economy in Wartime, 1916-1918

By the spring of 1915, Canadians were forced to accept that the war was no six-month affair. Notions of acceptable consumption shifted from a spending ethos, represented by the Business as Usual and Made in Canada campaigns, towards a saving ethos, represented by increased calls for thrift and economy. The public was forced to begin preparations for a potentially long-term disruption. The need for thrift and economy was present in public discourse since the first hints of war in the summer of 1914; however, those initial discussions were overshadowed by the financial crisis and subsequent attempts to correct a faltering economy through domestic consumer spending. As war persisted into 1915, the patriotic duty of consumers underwent a gradual redefinition; the ranks of the previously few voices who had called for wartime thrift and economy in 1914 began to swell. The finance minister and other government officials abandoned calls for business as usual and turned their attention to calls for nationwide saving. Early calls focused largely on the material requirements of war, and the inevitable scarcities ahead; they soon expanded to include concern over wartime morality, citizenship, and the future wellbeing of the nation. The Canadian people quickly took up the task with vigour, as evidenced by the more than \$2 billion raised over the course of six public war loans issued between 1915 and 1919. The principles of economy and self-denial were far easier to reconcile than increased consumer-spending and personal material accumulation within the new morality of wartime.

For Borden's government, the continuation of the war made it increasingly necessary to replace the growing sense of social inequality that had arisen in the early

months of war,²⁰² with a new, collective sense that the burden of war was being equally shared. This shift was necessary to encourage the level of voluntarism and patriotic enthusiasm required to sustain the home-front war effort. Earlier loans floated in London and New York were no longer sufficient to finance a prolonged war effort, and Minister of Finance Thomas White anticipated that future funds might have to be secured directly from the Canadian people. To ensure availability of these funds, and public willingness to provide them, Borden's government encouraged several public thrift and economy measures beginning in 1915 under the umbrella of good citizenship and wartime patriotism. Most important, the new appeals for wartime thrift and economy charged everyone with doing their individual part. These early measures built upon the momentum of an already burgeoning popular thrift movement and later developed into a formalized "thrift campaign" launched by the government in the winter of 1916-1917.

Initially, wartime thrift encouraged by the government was framed to meet the material requirements of the war effort. Politicians and other prominent Canadians touted home-front thrift as a necessary means of providing support to the overseas war effort by way of money, food, armaments, and other necessary consumer goods. By saving money and conserving the use of goods on the home-front, a surplus could be made available, and put towards the war effort. While this appeal was, at its core, based on financial and material need, many consumers found the government's appeals for thrift lacking. Beyond patriotic rhetoric exhorting the people to save, the government offered very little in the way of financial education or practical advice when it came to the wartime economy. Ironically,

²⁰² See chapters 1 and 2 for a discussion of the reasons for this sense of social disparity.

there were those patriotic Canadians eager to do their bit who felt that wartime thrift should address not only the conservation of financial and material goods, but also the patriotic and moral development of the national character – a component that many on the home-front believed Canada was lacking, as evidenced by the perceived unequal sharing of the burden of war. These gaps would be filled, instead, by a popular thrift campaign that gradually gained momentum throughout the war and was articulated in appeals for financial thrift and conservation of material goods, particularly food. Popular understandings of thrift were largely negotiated and enforced in physical and discursive public arenas. There, notions of wartime thrift expanded as concepts of conservation, self-sacrifice, and self-denial were imbued with new patriotic and moral sentiments engendered by the realities of war.

The increased politicization and moralistic nature of thrift and saving occurred within the context of a rapidly changing social-public sphere. The social-public sphere, as defined by Hannah Arendt, existed both within the social realm, where popular ideas were developed and negotiated in common public spaces (both physical and discursive), and the public-political realm, where citizens actively engaged in participatory democracy. Community and service-club meetings, retail spaces, newspapers, magazines, and even commercial advertisements were increasingly important mediums within which public discourse engaged with the issue of thrift.²⁰³ Participation in these mediums, however, was not universal. Rather, the sphere in which Canadians contested the notions of wartime thrift and sacrifice was restricted, both in access and scope. For example, poor, immigrant, and

²⁰³ See Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition*, Second Edition, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998): 28-57.

non-white women were often excluded from the public spaces occupied and informed by leading wartime service organizations such as the Imperial Order Daughters of the Empire (IODE) or the National Council of Women of Canada (NCWC).²⁰⁴ When the wartime government offered women a voice in the administration of patriotic affairs, those relegated to the periphery of these organizations were excluded. Moreover, print publications easily excluded those audiences to which they did not cater, limiting the range and accessibility of those discursive spaces. Consequently, public discourses on the issue of wartime thrift – both dominant and competing – were products of the social power structures in which they took place and did not reflect the whole of private interests across Canada.²⁰⁵ Yet, despite limited access to the realms in which policies and understanding was shaped, everyone was expected to abide by the resulting notions with equal force. Political and social leaders constructed a coercive effort that sought to instill habits of thrift among what they perceived as an ambivalent public; interestingly, they identified this ambivalence as residing most strongly amongst those on society’s periphery. Thus, regardless of the increasing visibility in wartime of many “counter-publics,”²⁰⁶ some groups struggled to

²⁰⁴ Wendy Mitchinson, “Introduction” in P.A. Staton, Rose Fine-Meyer, and Stephanie Kim Gibson, editors, *Unfolding Power: documents in 20th century Canadian women’s history*, (Toronto: Green Dragon Press, 2004): 9. Katie Pickles has noted that membership of these organizations was most elitist at the outset of the war. See Katie Pickles, *Female Imperialism and National Identity: Imperial Order Daughters of the Empire*, (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2002): 44.

²⁰⁵ This is in line with Arendt’s observation that common public interest is not a direct accumulation of private interests. See Hannah Arendt, “Public Rights and Private Interests,” in M. Mooney and F. Stuber, editors, *Small Comforts for Hard Times: Humanists on Public Policy*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1977; and, Jurgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, Translated by Thomas Burger (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1991).

²⁰⁶ Nancy Fraser’s conception of the existence of numerous “counter-publics” is a criticism of Habermas’ inclusive public sphere. Fraser points to the inherently non-inclusive nature of the public sphere, particularly on the basis of class and gender. See,

find a voice within the dominant social-public sphere of wartime, while still being held – often forcibly – to its standard.²⁰⁷

This chapter examines early calls for wartime thrift and saving and the launch of the finance minister's formal thrift campaign in the winter of 1916-1917, as well as subsequent popular thrift efforts. While previous chapters pointed to the sense of inequality that became evident during the financial crisis of 1914 and the early months of war, this chapter follows attempts to create a new sense of shared national duty – by way of wartime thrift and sacrifice. I argue that both government and popular appeals for thrift and economy maintained that individual sacrifice and self-denial were necessary to win the war and that this work was the responsibility of every Canadian on the home-front. The ardent nature of these appeals was rooted in the fact that many government figures and social reformers held a persistent belief that Canadians en masse lacked the intelligence, will and capacity to do what was required. As the populace was not equipped to engage in the necessary level of thrift and saving required, an organized campaign was required to instill the necessity and virtue across the home-front. Pointing to further cracks within the façade of wartime unity, an examination of wartime appeals for saving reveals a certain contempt for the masses expressed by those arbiters of thrift. At the same time, proponents of thrift in the public sphere also found that government thrift efforts left them wanting. I argue that perceived inconsistencies within the government thrift campaign, when it came

Nancy Fraser “Rethinking the Public Sphere: A Contribution to the Critique of Actually Existing Democracy,” *Social Text*, 25/26 (1990): 56-80.

²⁰⁷ As is evident by the experiences of consumers during the financial crisis of 1914 (outlined in chapter 1), or by the experiences of Western Canadians during the Made in Canada campaign (outlined in chapter 2).

to the nation-wide effort, led to an increased perception that there was an unequal sharing of the burdens of war. While patriotic Canadians were eager to “do their bit”, the government saving campaign was both contradictory and restrictive. Thus, debates over compulsory saving, who should lead the way, and how it should be organized were central to home-front discourse, and pointed to further wartime divisions along regional and class lines.

Finally, this chapter also explores the evolving definition of thrift on the home front. As before, individual choices became increasingly politicized as thrift and economy, while deemed necessary to win the war, were presented as entirely voluntary measures. The definition of thrift evolved from a nineteenth-century component of personal-betterment to a wartime component of national wellbeing. To ensure national success, ardent supporters of thrift scrutinized financial and consumer choices, lauding personal sacrifice and self-denial in the name of the nation as patriotic, and scorning choices favouring the individual as treasonous. As thrift became imbued with the new morality of wartime, the nation embarked on an unprecedented experiment of social engineering sought to instill sensibilities of thrift and saving within the Canadian public. Supported by a network of propaganda as well as volunteer schemes coordinated by national service organizations, the nation’s attempt to create a new generation of savers took shape. By 1918, the importance of educating children in the ways and means of thrift had become paramount. Thus, I argue that the financial urgency and patriotic vigour surrounding wartime thrift and saving revealed a common desire to ensure Canada’s next generation would carry these wartime ideals into the post-war world, ensuring a better place for all. The following

chapter examines financial thrift; concurrent campaigns for food conservation and material thrift are addressed in Chapter 4.

Defining Thrift

Early wartime understandings of thrift were not a complete departure from the pre-war period. As a concept and practice, thrift had been present in the public vocabulary and moral landscape since the early modern era of Europe beginning in the late fifteenth century – albeit in different forms. Developing alongside – and very much a product of – the burgeoning market economy of the early modern period, the increasing emphasis on thrift during that time was a moral response to the shift from an agrarian-barter economy, to a commercial, money-based economy. Historians James Davison Hunter and Joshua Yates argue that, as part of this transition, commercial life gradually “displaced religious and civic piety as the exemplary activities of social life.”²⁰⁸ Troubled by the increasing emphasis on commercialism and the material, Protestantism – and Calvinism in particular – emerged with a new moral code. Historian Philip S. Gorski has referred to this aspect of the Protestant Reformation as a “disciplinary revolution.”²⁰⁹ This early modern emphasis on thrift promoted frugality in all aspects of life including the financial and the material, articulated practically as both a sense of self-control and self-denial in the face of potential

²⁰⁸ Joshua Yates and James Davison Hunter, *Thrift and Thriving in America: Capitalism and Moral Order from the Puritans to Present*, (Oxford Scholarship Online, May 2012): 8, (DOI: 10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199769063.001.0001). See also Weber, pp.176-177.

²⁰⁹ Philip S. Gorski, *The Disciplinary Revolution: Calvinism and the Rise of the State in Early Modern Europe*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003): xv. The author argues that Protestantism helped create “an infrastructure of religious governance and social control” the served as a model for the rest of the world.

abundance.²¹⁰ Elements of this early modern understanding are evident in early twentieth-century wartime Canada which reflected a similar discomfort with modern consumerism. Gorski also argues that the Protestant Reformation instituted a new system of social observation which reinforced the emphasis on self-discipline and thrift.²¹¹ Early moderners were provided with a new framework in which to observe, evaluate, and make assumptions about their peers; a similar informal surveillance network would act as a means of social enforcement of wartime thrift.²¹²

Understandings of early modern thrift within this context of increasing social surveillance were entrenched within a larger moral framework that viewed excess and luxury in terms of religious sin and moral bankruptcy; thus, the practice of thrift was directly connected to the religious piety and moral fortitude of an individual. Intellectuals and religious leaders debated the meanings and roles of thrift, luxury, and morality within a functioning, commercial economy; thus, the practice of thrift was imbued with new meaning. Historian Warren Susman noted that by the late eighteenth century, the social concern with morality and self-consciousness became more commonly associated with the notion of character and good citizenship.²¹³ The emphasis on this “citizen-man” persisted, and particularly into the nineteenth century, was made evident by the hundreds of published

²¹⁰ This notion was also echoed in the work of Jean-Jacques Rousseau, who in 1750 posited that self-denial and a spirit of self-sacrifice served as a means to undermine the development of individual grandiosity. See *Discours sur les sciences et les arts*, (Chicoutimi: J.-M. Tremblay, 2002).

²¹¹ Gorski, xvi. Gorski argues that this increased level of social control inevitably allowed for increased regulatory and coercive powers of the state.

²¹² This is most prominent within the food conservation campaign, discussed in Chapter 4.

²¹³ Warren I. Susman, *Culture as History: The Transformation of American Society in the Twentieth Century*, (New York: Pantheon Books, 1984): 273.

self-help books, pamphlets, and articles. This new body of literature offered advice towards individual character development and personal success; in particular, Susman noted that self-help literature stressed the important role of individual nature in ensuring the moral order of society.²¹⁴ In this way, the moral health of the individual was directly connected to the moral health of the nation. By the mid-nineteenth century, these works celebrating success and individualism were abundant across the English-speaking world.²¹⁵ Notably, the works of self-help guru Samuel Smiles on *Self-help* and *Thrift* met with great success in Canada – so much so that Canadian re-publishing of *Thrift* in 1889 was the subject of a precedent-setting court case surrounding the issue of Imperial copyright.²¹⁶ Within this context, and ironically, social concepts of thrift leading up to the war became rooted within the gospels of self-help and success.

According to Smiles, society was divided into two groups: the “thrifty” and the “thriftless”, which he also referred to as the “haves” and “have-nots,” or the “savers” and “wasters.”²¹⁷ In this way, he established thrift within a clear dichotomy – someone was either thrifty, or they were not. Smiles argued that thrift was not an innate characteristic; rather, it was an attribute one acquired over time as the result of self-discipline and hard-work:

[People] are all of the same nature, born with the same propensities, and subject to similar influences. They are, it is true, born in different positions; but it rests with themselves whether they shall live their lives

²¹⁴ Ibid, p274.

²¹⁵ Robert Lanning, Carleton Library Series, *The National Album: Collective Biography and the Formation of the Middle Class*, (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2014): 65.

²¹⁶ See Meera Nair, “The Copyright Act of 1889: A Canadian Declaration of Independence,” *Canadian Historical Review*, 90, 1 (March 2009): 11.

²¹⁷ Samuel Smiles, *Thrift*, (Toronto: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1876): 14.

nobly or vilely. They may not have their choice of riches or poverty but they have their choice of being good or evil – of being worthy or worthless.²¹⁸

Smiles' observation is revealing and points to two key beliefs informing the nineteenth-century understanding of thrift: first, the practice of thrift was an individual's choice; second, that choice was directly tied to and indicative of an individual's morality and goodness. This thinking was evident among nineteenth-century social reformers who believed the poor lacked an adequate work ethic that resulted in their lack of thrift; if only the poor could be taught the value of choosing thrift, reformers believed such people might be alleviated of their self-imposed pauperism.²¹⁹ And so, by the beginning of the twentieth century, thrift had taken shape in popular discourse as both a behaviour and material practice that was deeply linked to the measure of an individual's character and their ability to contribute as a productive member of society. Such were the presuppositions informing Canadians' understanding of thrift in the period leading up to the First World War.

Conservation in the Forecast

As the final months of 1914 saw Canadian consumers redefine their roles within the wartime economy, attempts to support the war effort through patriotic purchasing abounded. Many people had foreseen the possibility of an extended conflict and urged Canadians to adopt an ethos of saving as the only intelligent, and sure form of patriotism in such uncertain times. Thus, the Business as Usual and Made in Canada campaigns were replaced by more pragmatic notions of financial thrift and economy. The first appeals for

²¹⁸ Ibid, pp.81-82.

²¹⁹ Mariana Valverde, *The Age of Light Soap and Water: Moral Reform in English Canada, 1885-1925*, (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart Inc., 1991): 18.

thrift and economy reflected two separate mentalities: first, the practical view that it was necessary to conserve money and resources for a foreseeable scarcity in the future; and second, that the same level of sacrifice should be demanded from (and offered by) every Canadian. While Borden's government was preoccupied with the financial crisis and other demands of the new war, early advocates of wartime saving took it upon themselves to convince citizens of the need to prepare for hard times ahead. Two weeks following the declaration of war, central Canada's *Farmers' Advocate* argued that "there is a time of need at hand" and Canadians should plan by conserving financial and material resources immediately.²²⁰ They were joined by western Canada's *Grain Growers' Guide* which similarly proclaimed "economy" as the "watchword" of the early weeks of war.²²¹ In October, the ever-popular Peter McArthur appealed to his readers, citing the "absolute necessity of saving every kind of food product....It is [becoming] evident that before another harvest much of the world may be hungry, and it is a duty to humanity to see that nothing is allowed to go to waste."²²² At this time, McArthur's understanding of thrift and economy was purely material – pointing to the need to reduce material waste. He called on all levels of government to act on this matter, "for the fact that we are in no danger here in Canada of being short of food should not blind us to conditions in other countries...The horrors through which we are now passing threaten not only the nations involved but humanity itself."²²³ In his plea, McArthur pointed to Canada's larger role within the Allied

²²⁰ "Conservation is the Watchword," *Farmers' Advocate*, (20 August 1914): 1866.

²²¹ "Economy is Now the Watchword," *Grain Growers' Guide* (12 August 1914): 24.

²²² Peter McArthur, "A Time of Re-construction," *Farmers' Advocate* (22 October 1914): 1835.

²²³ *Ibid.*

war effort. While Canada may have been far removed from the European war in a physical sense, McArthur believed its position of safety only increased the Dominion's responsibility to support its Allies who were in closer proximity to the conflict. Additionally, framing the issue as a broader humanitarian threat, beyond the war, placed a certain moral responsibility on the young country, which found itself in a unique position to help.

That same month, McArthur expanded his appeal to a broader audience. Introducing the slogan, "No waste!", he argued that unnecessary waste or disposal of food was "a treason against humanity."²²⁴ Here, McArthur connected the moral responsibility of Canada, as a nation, to the actions of its individual citizens. So severe were the shortages McArthur believed the world would experience in the wake of the European war, he wrote:

It is not often that I venture to appeal to the public so earnestly, but the outlook for humanity is so serious that for once I am willing to be classed as fanatic. This is a cause in which I am willing to appear foolish if I can convince people...I call with confidence on the editors, clergymen, statesmen and all who address the public with authority to join me in making 'No waste' a slogan of power...We in Canada are the custodians of the bounty of nature for the good of humanity, and we must not fail in doing our duty.²²⁵

McArthur's sentiments reflected his fears surrounding the material realities of war and his belief in the crucial role Canada and its citizens could play. More important, to neglect this duty was a betrayal of the highest sort. As a vast, resource-rich territory that was physically removed from battle, the Dominion was in an ideal position to provide material support in the months ahead.

²²⁴ Peter McArthur, "No Waste!" *Farmers' Advocate* (17 October 1914): 12.

²²⁵ *Ibid.*

One month later, the *Globe* answered McArthur's appeal by proposing a formal administration of the thrift and economy efforts in Canada, to be implemented by a proposed national commission. The commission would be comprised of twelve men, including three representatives from the banking industry, three from the railway industry, three traders, and three agriculturalists.²²⁶ The paper suggested that any authority for the proposed commission would lie with the federal government. The *Globe* argued that the commission would be both democratic and authoritative as its members came "from the ranks," and the interests of each major sector would be safeguarded. The main work of the commission would be to review the systems of production and manufacturing, transportation, and distribution, with the aim of finding inefficiencies and waste and where they might be eliminated. Essentially, the commission would be responsible for organizing the material resources of the Dominion. By reducing waste in the producer-to-consumer cycle of goods, the commission would reduce hardship on both producers and consumers, clearing the way towards a new, national thrift.²²⁷ While no such commission would be created until the similarly organized Canada Food Board of 1918, this proposal is notable for several reasons.²²⁸ First, it reflected the common desire for equality and shared wartime sacrifice. The emphasis on including representation from each sector aimed to remove opportunities for preferential treatment and ensure that both wartime gains and sacrifices were shared evenly. Second, it reflected the widespread belief that a centralized

²²⁶ "A National Thrift is Needed in Canada," *Globe*, (18 November 1914): 9.

²²⁷ *Ibid.*

²²⁸ While the Imperial Munitions Board (IMB) was established in November 1915, it answered to the British Ministry of Munitions and focused solely on administering contracts for production of war materials. For more information on food control in Canada, including the appointment of the Canada Food Controller and creation of the Canada Food Board, see Chapter 4.

administrative and authoritative body was necessary to achieve the level of national thrift and economy that would be required to bring a successful end to the war.

For the duration of the war, newspapers and magazines continued to be vocal arbiters of thrift and economy as a wartime necessity. Their understanding of thrift and economy extended even further in its application. In January 1915, a *Globe* editorial noted the importance of money in winning the struggle against Germany, claiming that it cost over six million dollars per day to support the British armies in active service – an amount that would only increase once soldiers reached the Western front. British financing was no longer a reliable option and Canada was forced to find alternative revenues:

Canada must lessen expenditure and increase revenue. It is incumbent upon everyone also to live simply and so add to the national capital available for public purposes and for the prosecution of private undertakings.²²⁹

Such sentiments emphasized the common duty of every Canadian to support the public purse in this time of high demand. Collective participation was key and left no room for selfish individualism. Those who ignored this dictum were seen to be socially delinquent and diminishing Canada's ability to execute the war:

The Canadian who spends as much as he earns this year will be a very poor patriot. His savings will be needed to build and operate factories and workshops, and to permit of the construction of necessary public works. By saving a part of his income the thrifty citizen will be able to employ labour more effectively than he could by lavish expenditure.²³⁰

As such, the first six months of war outlined the nature of thrift and set the conditions and expectations for wartime thrift and saving in Canada: first, thrift was understood as a

²²⁹ Editorial, "Canada Must Save Money," *Globe* (20 January 1915): 6.

²³⁰ *Ibid.*

behaviour or practice that could be applied to material or financial goods; second, the application and practice of thrift became synonymous with Allied victory; and third, Canadians both collectively and individually were responsible for making patriotic choices to achieve this victory. Thus, from the early months of war, thrift, the material behaviour, was closely tied to thrift, the symbol of wartime patriotism.

A Thriftless People

While Smiles and other early proponents of pre-war thrift recognized the value of cultivating individuals with strong character and their value in maintaining a well-ordered, moral society, Canadian sensibilities of the early war period viewed thrift as both an individual *and* collective characteristic; in this case, individual habits were directly reflected in the success (or failure) of the collective nation. This relationship between the individual and the nation was particularly troublesome for those who believed there was an inherent lack of thrift among the Canadian people – a fact that threatened a successful outcome of the war. Many members of the intellectual and business classes believed that a proper “habit of thrift” had not been instilled in the current generation. Writer and future conservationist Robson Black explained how Canada’s relative economic success over the previous decades was to blame for this persistent problem: “...the habit of thrift in Canada has been heavily handicapped by periods of boom and by a certain juvenile confidence in to-morrow’s luck.”²³¹ Put simply, the rapid expansion of the Canadian economy in the decade preceding the financial recession of 1913 had provided Canadians with a false sense

²³¹ Robson Black, “Putting the Poorhouse out of Business,” *Maclean’s*, (July 1915): 8.

of financial security.²³² Similar views were often repeated view reflected contemporary views that members of the lower class lacked the mental ability to better their positions.²³³

When citizens were able to save money, Black found the result was often catastrophic:

[The wage-earner's] thrift may, and does at times, heap up millions in the savings banks, but in an appalling number of cases, the ultimate investment is disastrous and the precious proceeds are swept beyond his reach. Thrift unallied to sagacity is of no practical good. How very few of the thrifty know how to place their capital is one of the pitiful...chapters of the Canadian experience.²³⁴

For Black, the lack of financial intelligence amongst the Canadian public threatened the success of any voluntary saving measures. Black's comments, while condescending, reveal a certain cynicism towards the public when it came to their ability to properly engage in and execute a program of wartime thrift. Black was not alone in his pessimism. That same month an editorial in the *Nova Scotian* decried the "growth of wanton extravagance among all classes of our people."²³⁵

Others seemed to take a more optimistic view towards the financial intelligence and capability of Canadians. In January 1915, the *Globe* argued that it would be a great mistake to "lose confidence" in Canada's ability to finance its own undertakings – a task that lay largely on the shoulders of its people:

The citizen who can do nothing else for the common cause can at least practice thrift and provide the capital that is as necessary to the successful

²³² One of the main objectives of the Laurier government from 1896 to 1911, "opening up" the Canadian West had been a primary economic activity. Rapid agricultural expansion increased outputs, resulting in prosperity for farmers, particularly in the decade preceding the war. See Tony Ward, "The Origins of the Canadian Wheat Boom, 1880-1910," *The Canadian Journal of Economics*, 27, 4 (November 1994).

²³³ See Mariana Valverde, *Age of Light Soap and Water: Moral Reform in English Canada, 1885-1925*, (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart Inc., 1991): 19.

²³⁴ Black, p8.

²³⁵ Editorial, "Need of Economy," *Nova Scotian*, (9 July 1915): 6.

prosecution of the war as powder and shell...Thrift is always a virtue. Today it has become a vital necessity...All of the money necessary can be supplied by our own people.²³⁶

Not only did thrift provide a means by which every Canadian could contribute to victory, if people could recognize its value and commit to practicing economy in wartime, Canada could successfully finance its war effort. However, only six months later, the *Globe*, still noting the importance of the “spirit of sacrifice,” observed that it was lacking on the home front: “Some are willing and ask how they can help, but the great mass are absolutely lethargic, and look upon the war as a spectacle upon which they can gaze unmoved as those having nothing at stake...”²³⁷ Here, it was not lack of intelligence pinned as the culprit, but apathy. The *Globe* pointed to “well-to-do people” who had “not even sacrificed any of their leisure” to participate in war work, or volunteer with one of the many patriotic associations. The federal government was also to blame; the *Globe* asserted that “millions could be saved at Ottawa and throughout the country by retrenchment and the inauguration of improved methods of carrying on the affairs of the Dominion and the Provinces.”²³⁸ To rectify the situation and meet the burden of war, the *Globe* called for sacrifice in national affairs and reminded readers that individual sacrifice would call for “spending much less upon themselves” and giving much more for wartime service: “they must [help] provide the silver bullets to bring down the enemies of human liberty.”²³⁹ By drawing a direct connection between thrift and the physical aspect of war via bullets, the *Globe* evoked the

²³⁶ Editorial, “The Duty of Thrift,” *Globe*, (22 January 1915): 4.

²³⁷ Editorial, “Mr. White’s Plea for Sacrifice,” *Globe*, (6 August 1915): 4.

²³⁸ *Ibid.*

²³⁹ *Ibid.*

moral imperative of wartime economy and stressed the importance of individual sacrifice for the benefit of the nation.

Months later, the issue was again addressed in a piece by writer W. A. Craik. He too pointed to the high standard of living in Canada as the primary culprit behind a lack of thrift. Craik noted that the war had already led some people to adopt habits of thrift, but, contrary to the observations of the *Globe*, he only saw evidence of thrift amongst the professional classes.²⁴⁰ Echoing again the popular bourgeois mentality of contemporary social reformers, he suggested that members of the lower classes remained ignorant about how to properly practice thrift. Further, Craik noted what he viewed as evidence of poor character: “there is seemingly very little thrift for thrift’s sake alone.”²⁴¹ Rather, thrift was only undertaken when there was some sort of personal – often material – gain to be achieved.²⁴² Considering the increasing demands of war that could only be met by way of widespread individual sacrifice, this fact was very disconcerting.

In an attempt to re-frame the issue of thrift as something more palatable to the public, Peter McArthur challenged the notion that thrift was only the result of deprivation:

Of course, it is an admirable form of thrift that leads us to avoid waste of all kinds, but it is thrift pushed too far in that direction that has given the virtue a bad name...Thrift that takes the form of cheeseparing policies in business, hoarding of money and meanness in personal dealings is not the kind that is wanted. It will never make the country thrive. We need the thrift that will make business prosper, that will get from the land under cultivation the largest crops possible and will avoid letting any valuable land lie waste.

²⁴⁰ W. A. Craik, “People and Their Bank Accounts,” *Maclean’s*, (September 1915): 39-40.

²⁴¹ *Ibid*, p76.

²⁴² *Ibid*. Views on material gain and luxury are the subject of Chapter 5 of this thesis.

Proper thrift will not only increase our resources but enable us to be more liberal – not extravagant – in all worthy ways.²⁴³

For McArthur, the type of thrift that led to hoarding, miserliness or dishonesty was not the thrift desired in wartime. Rather, he argued that thrift should be associated with its more appropriate counterpart – “thriving”. Then, he argued, “it sounds a whole lot better. It is then a virtue fit for a king. Empire-builders have always been men who throve mightily, and we should strive to achieve the kind of thrift that will make us Empire builders.”²⁴⁴ Reflective of the nineteenth century brand of thrift espoused by Smiles et al., McArthur departed from the rhetoric of wartime sacrifice and denial to promote a thrift that had, for its primary goal, individual success and wealth in the future – albeit delayed by thrift in the present. While this view of thrift as a means of future personal gain never dominated the wartime discussion, McArthur’s attempt to “sell” thrift in a new light is notable for two reasons. First, he recognized that many consumers were not prepared to depart from the material world of things offered by modern consumption. By presenting thrift in a new light, he could rationalize consumer-sacrifice in the present with the promise of future opportunities for indulgence. Second, McArthur’s argument is evidence of the desperation felt by him and other proponents of wartime thrift. As an agrarian and long-time proponent of rural concerns, this argument was a severe departure from his normal writings that embraced the rhetoric of saving and economy generally surrounding the issue of thrift.

While McArthur blamed the public understanding of thrift, others pointed to the dearth of educated women as largely to blame for widespread, thriftless behaviour. Craik recognized women as playing an important role in both encouraging, and more important,

²⁴³ Peter McArthur, “Thrift,” *Globe*, (15 January 1916): 13.

²⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

discouraging thrift.²⁴⁵ Notable feminist and journalist Francis Marion Beynon suggested that “the tendency to be penny wise and pound foolish” was particularly “a feminine trait, probably resulting from women’s lack of experience in handling large sums of money.”²⁴⁶ She blamed the situation on the uncertainty of the farming industry which left farmers cash-poor and often unable to give their wives a substantial allowance. Beynon argued that the practice of handling only small sums of money resulted in “much futile and wasteful expenditure.”²⁴⁷ More specifically, she felt that women who were accustomed to handling larger sums were more practiced in devising and sticking to a budget or plan for spending over a long period, whereas women who handled only small sums were not inclined to plan and often spent money on things that were “not worthwhile.” If, she suggested, “this haphazard shopping on the part of women” was substituted by “an intelligent planning of the family budget,” the contents of savings banks would increase substantially and the standard of living would be raised.²⁴⁸ Beynon’s solution as clear: women required education on the ways and means of practicing thrift soundly. And, it would seem per the widespread views of gendered and working-class ignorance, the public would require substantial guidance and corrective education on the matter before any level of national thrift could be achieved.

Despite the fact that there seemed to be a consensus that education was the solution to any perceived lack of thrift among the Canadian people, many nonetheless pointed to

²⁴⁵ W. A. Craik, “People and Their Bank Accounts,” *Maclean’s*, (September 1915): 39-40

²⁴⁶ “Wasteful Saving,” *Grain Growers’ Guide*, (24 November 1915): 10.

²⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

the fact that no such education existed. Accompanying his critique of lower-class thrift, Craik noted:

...with all this banking machinery, there is a great and grievous lack; and that is an absence of education. What do the masses of the people know about the advantages conferred by the savings banks, except by hearsay or accident? What do they know about the value of thrift, except in a general way?²⁴⁹

Thrift, it would seem, was not an inherent trait, but one that required direction and self-discipline. Author and educator, James Laughlin Hughes (older brother of wartime Minister of Militia, Sam Hughes), also emphasized the need for widespread thrift education, but believed that adults with little to no grasp of thrift were already lost. Instead, he suggested:

The only way to train a race of thrifty people is to begin when children are young, and train them systematically. School savings banks must soon be established in all city and town schools, as part of the regular system of education.²⁵⁰

Hughes noted that his educational scheme was already endorsed by the Ontario authorities responsible for education. Hughes' proposal for a widespread, government administrated program of thrift aimed at instilling thrift in every Canadian child via a state-sponsored, institutional program of social-engineering. While this would hardly assist the current situation in wartime, it would, he argued, ensure the success of future generations.

Similarly, Director of Extension Work at the University of Saskatchewan, S.E. Greenway, noted that schools must play the important role of instilling desirable traits – like thrift – within the children of Canada's increasingly foreign-born population. In the upheaval of wartime, it was even more important to remove opportunities for social

²⁴⁹ Craik, pp.39-40.

²⁵⁰ James Hughes, "Influence of the War on Education," *Maclean's* (May 1916):

delinquency.²⁵¹ Education, he argued, should provide children with an “equal opportunity without regard to race or creed for a thorough grounding in fundamentals.”²⁵² In particular, children should be:

afforded for practice which will develop thrift and similar virtues...and become possessed of the consciousness that there is an exalted physical, intellectual and moral standard which he may attain.²⁵³

Greenway’s ideas were not unique in his time. Historians of immigration in Canada have consistently pointed to use of the education system to assimilate immigrant children and children of immigrants and to imbue them with “Canadian” values.²⁵⁴ For Greenway, the most important Canadian value was thrift. His comments are telling in that he identifies thrift as a virtue, to which he makes a direct connection with intelligence and morality.

To stimulate public consideration of thrift in the early months of war, several municipalities and volunteer organizations offered varying degrees of public education and organized self-denial days or offered advice to the public to help promote the correct means of practicing wartime thrift. Within the first month of war, Beynon used her regular column to advocate for a western “Economy Day”:

...[A]n Economy Day for the Women Grain Growers in which the members explain their methods of economy, money, materials, time or energy. I fancy that such a topic might bring out some useful suggestions for there

²⁵¹ In his study of post-Second World War psychology in Great Britain, Michael Shapira pointed to the common understanding of delinquency as “maladjusted citizenship.” Civilization, he argued, was built on the [common] assumption of collaborative living in a democracy. Delinquency threatened to undermine this collaboration by subverting the common good. See Michael Shapira, *The War Inside*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016): 180.

²⁵² S. E. Greenway, “Canadianizing the Foreign Born: The place of the school garden and school fair in education,” *Grain Growers’ Guide*, (22 March 1916): 7.

²⁵³ *Ibid.*

²⁵⁴ See Howard Palmer, *Patterns of Prejudice: A History of Nativism in Alberta*, (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1982): 56.

are few of us in the West who have not had to practice economy at some time or other in our lives.²⁵⁵

In a similar vein, the IODE planned a “self-denial day” for the spring of 1915, to be followed by local chapters across the nation.²⁵⁶ Some municipalities, like Gananoque, Ontario, went further and began planning entire months dedicated to the promotion of self-denial, to take place in early 1915.²⁵⁷ For all such initiatives, the true value-added was not the proposed day of self-restriction, but the dialogue and discussion prompted by the event itself and by keeping thrift in the forefront of the public mind.

Other initiatives of a less idealistic nature sought to evoke more practical and measurable change. Noting that the circumstances of war established waste as “criminal”, and that Canadian housekeepers had been “simply reckless,” the head of the domestic science department at the Toronto Technical School increased the number of evening classes offered on domestic science. The increased availability of training was a resounding success, as she observed that the classes were “thronged.”²⁵⁸ For those less able or inclined to participate in this way, newspapers were quick to begin offering sample “thrift menus” or helpful hints to ensure “thrift in housekeeping”. By November 1914, the *Montreal Star* and *Vancouver Daily Province* had each established a weekly column on the issue of war thrift and economy, and other newspapers featured frequent advice on the

²⁵⁵ Francis Marion Beynon, “An Economy Day,” *Grain Growers’ Guide*, (2 September 1914): 12.

²⁵⁶ Minutes of the Fifteenth Annual Meeting – Imperial Order Daughters of the Empire, Halifax, (May 26-28, 1915), File 7 “Minutes – Annual Meeting 1915,” in IODE fonds, MG 28 I 17 Volume 11, Library and Archives Canada.

²⁵⁷ “Month of Self-Denial Adopted in Gananoque,” *Globe*, (5 December 1914): 5.

²⁵⁸ Margaret Davidson, cited in “Waste is Now a Crime,” *Evening Telegram*, (14 October 1914): 16.

subject.²⁵⁹ Most notably, these pieces were predominantly either located in the women's section of each publication (if such a section existed), or were written directly to or about the women each advisor proposed to advise. As the primary purchasers and home-makers in each household, Canadian women were quickly identified by all concerned as those most appropriate and most responsible for ensuring wartime thrift.

Alongside the sudden increase in wartime thrift and economy advice, the early months of war saw the terms quickly appropriated for use in commercial advertisements and consumer appeals. Eaton's, Canada's largest department store, initiated an October advertising campaign in western Canada emblazoned with the title: "An Act of True Economy".²⁶⁰ This was followed shortly by a Christmas campaign which advertised "sensible" and "serviceable" presents for all.²⁶¹ Popular consumer product and meat extract, Bovril, was quick to position itself as an economic wartime option: "In hard times you stop the wastage of food in the larder – stop the wastage of food in the *body* also."²⁶² Similarly, the Hinde & Dauche Paper Company claimed in large lettering at the top of each advertisement, "War means economy"; the insinuation, of course, was that such economy

²⁵⁹ Appearing in each newspaper reviewed by the author; for some specific examples see "Suggests Meatless Menus," *Evening Telegram*, (August 25, 1914): 16; and, "The Thrifty Housewife," *Montreal Star*, (19 November 1914): 11; "Province Housewives Weekly Economy Page," *Vancouver Daily Province*, (13 November 1914): 7; "Thrift in Housekeeping," *Globe*, (15 December 1914): 4.

²⁶⁰ For an example, see Advertisement, Eaton's, "An Act of True Economy," *Grain Growers' Guide*, (14 October 1914): 3.

²⁶¹ For an example, see Advertisement, Eaton's, "War or No War," *Grain Growers' Guide*, (9 December 1914): 48.

²⁶² See Advertisement, Bovril, "When Stores are Dear," *Globe*, (7 November 1914): 14.

could be achieved by purchasing Hinde & Dauche paper.²⁶³ For these advertisers, thrift was not a restriction of spending; rather, it was a matter of intelligent spending. By choosing to purchase “thrifty” or “economical” goods, consumers could then claim those same attributes. With the right purchasing decisions, consumers could fulfill their wartime duty of thrift and economy. While many advertisers initially refrained from adopting the vernacular of wartime, it’s clear that the language of thrift and economy was seeping into the landscape of wartime consumerism.

War Loans and Government Thrift, 1914-1917

As popular wartime thrift began to take root in the public mind, the federal government was also forced to turn its attention towards an agenda of public saving. At the end of the 1914-1915 fiscal year, Minister of Finance Thomas White reflected on the first months of war. The so-called financial crisis had been short-lived. While the effects had been felt across the country, and continued to persist in some regions, White noted that Canada had nonetheless “stood the shock of war exceedingly well.”²⁶⁴ He had managed to balance the Dominion’s finances through a series of international loans secured from the Imperial government. These were combined with a series of domestic measures, including increased Dominion tariffs, and increased issue of Dominion notes (as legal tender) undertaken by the Canadian banks.²⁶⁵ Despite the success of these efforts, in 1915, White

²⁶³ For an example, see Advertisement, Hinde & Dauche Paper Company of Canada, Ltd., “War means economy,” *Maclean’s*, (November 1914): 124.

²⁶⁴ J. Castell Hopkins, *Canadian Annual Review of Public Affairs, 1915*, (Toronto: The Annual Review Publishing Company Limited, 1916): 200.

²⁶⁵ Thomas White, *The Story of Canadas War Finance*, (Montreal: 1921): 12-17. From September 1914 to March of 1915, White arranged for advances totally £12 million from the British Treasury.

was forced to find alternative sources of revenue and borrowing for several reasons. First, he believed it was no longer advisable to borrow from the Imperial treasury. Britain's reliance on purchases made in Canada or the United States complicated exchange rates; any withdrawals the Canadian government made in London, meant that Britain had to pay more for purchases made in North America.²⁶⁶ Second, the unemployment caused by the depression and financial crisis of the previous year was, by then, almost entirely alleviated. The current material demands of war could no longer be supplied using previously idle resources.²⁶⁷ These factors, in addition to steadily increasing costs of war, forced White to seek out other options to sustain the increasing costs of war.

White's first order of business was to arrange borrowing in New York. In the summer of 1915, he arranged an issue of \$45,000,000 through J.P. Morgan & Associates, deeming the venture a great success.²⁶⁸ Despite repeated suggestions that he also turn to the Canadian public, the finance minister was skeptical that floating a domestic loan could be successful, noting that the Canadian public had never been asked to raise more than \$5 million at one time.²⁶⁹ White's hesitancy was based on three factors: first, no loan close to this magnitude had ever been put to the Canadian public before, making White concerned that the amount could be met; second, like others, he believed strongly that the general

²⁶⁶ Ibid. See also J. J. Deutsch, "War Finance and the Canadian Economy, 1914-20," *The Canadian Journal of Economics and Political Science*, 6, 4 (November 1940): 529; and, Robert Craig Brown and Ramsay Cook, *Canada, 1896-1921: A Nation Transformed*, (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1974): 230.

²⁶⁷ Deutsch, p530.

²⁶⁸ Thomas White, *The Story of Canadas War Finance*, 19. Further loans were floated in New York of \$75 million in March 1916 and \$100 million in July 1917.

²⁶⁹ Ibid. See also Brown and Cook, p231.

public lacked the financial intelligence to make the loan a success.²⁷⁰ In hindsight, he noted:

My experience with the public has been that most of them do not appreciate the magnitude of sums beyond a million...So large an amount of money seems to be beyond the average comprehension and to be indistinguishable from a considerably less or greater amount.²⁷¹

His third and final concern, even if Canadians were willing to contribute to the loan, was whether they could do so, considering the recent economic recession and subsequent financial crisis in 1914. White would soon learn that he greatly underestimated the abilities of the Canadian people.²⁷²

Despite his reservations, White arranged to float a domestic war loan in November of 1915 with the goal of raising \$50 million from the Canadian public. To mitigate these risks, the first loan was designed as an investment opportunity targeting insurance, trust, and loan companies, as well as the small group of typically large-investors who were already accustomed to buying stocks and bonds. Canadian banks acted as sales agents, responsible for recording subscriptions, receiving payment, and delivering the war bonds. For this work, the banks received a commission on each loan.²⁷³ Since the war loan targeted

²⁷⁰ White, *The Story of Canada's War Finance*, 24. See also J. J. Deutsch, *War Finance and the Canadian Economy, 1914-20*, 6, 4 (November 1940): 527-582.

²⁷¹ White, *The Story of Canada's War Finance*, 32.

²⁷² A point noted by Brown and Cook, p231.

²⁷³ Canadians who purchased war bonds were offered 5% or 5½% depending on the year. On the 1915 loan, the banks received a commission of one-fourth of one percent; on the 1916 war loan the banks received one-half of one percent; and, on the 1917 war loan the banks received nine-tenths of one percent. For more information, see Sidney Homer and Richard Eugene Sylla, *A History of Interest Rates*, (New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1996): 543; White, *The Story of Canada's War Finance*, 22; and, C.A. Curtis, "The Canadian Banks and War Finance," *Contributions to Canadian Economics*, 3 (1931): 10.

a specific, investment-savvy audience, War bond denominations were limited to higher amounts of \$100, \$500, and \$1000.²⁷⁴ Notably, the high subscription amounts limited participation in the loan to institutions and investors with substantial disposable income and restricted participation of working-class or wage-earning Canadians. Despite the limited target audience, Canada's first war loan was a resounding success, exceeding the initial goal of \$50 million and bringing in over \$100 million in public subscriptions. Of that amount, the banks themselves subscribed to approximately \$25 million.²⁷⁵ Beyond the funds raised for the war, the most important accomplishment of the first war loan was that it revealed to the finance minister the vast potential of domestic borrowing, and opened the way to further domestic war loans.

Despite the impressive success of this first attempt at public borrowing on a massive scale, White received a wave of criticism for the restrictive nature of the first war loan. In the months following, numerous individuals wrote to the finance minister wishing to be included in subsequent loans. The barriers faced by small investors were two-fold: first, the limited area in which the bonds were available physically prevented many Canadians from rural or more distant urban centres from subscribing; and second, the fact that bonds were restricted to amounts over \$100 served as a financial barrier. Because the 1915 loan was issued within a very limited time frame, and the financial infrastructure to administer the loan was limited or non-existent in some areas, those regions were not included. The Member of Parliament for Yukon, Dr. Alfred Thompson, lamented the situation in a letter

²⁷⁴ Amounts for coupon bonds. Fully registered bonds were also available in \$5000 amounts. See *Comparative Table Canadian Internal War Loans*, (A.E. Ames & Co, 1919).

²⁷⁵ Curtis, pp.11-13. See also Brown & Cook, p231.

to the finance minister. He explained that the people of the Yukon desired to be included in any future loans and assured White that people of the territory “would make a good showing.”²⁷⁶ In his response, the finance minister explained his reasoning for excluding the Yukon and other rural regions from the initial war loan, but made no indication that he would include them in the future.²⁷⁷ White would note after the war that with Canada’s “scattered population,” a war loan to which all Canadian citizens could contribute had simply not been feasible at that time.²⁷⁸

Other advocates for the Dominion’s small investors appealed to the finance minister, urging him to include smaller bonds in future war loans. The rector of a Winnipeg church quite accurately pointed out that the previous war loan was structured in a way to only benefit the wealthier classes. The minimum subscription amount of \$100 was far out of reach for most working people. Even with a maximum six-month term allowed to complete payments, subscribers were required to make payments of over \$16 per month. At a time when the average Canadian family of five in the year 1914 was earning approximately \$66.00 per month, and basic living expenses were over approximately \$55.00 per month, the extra money required to make payments on the war loan was simply not there.²⁷⁹ The rector pointed to an advertisement for the British war loan, which offered

²⁷⁶ Letter to Thomas White from Dr. Alfred Thompson, (15 February 1916), File 13 “Federal Finances January – June 1916,” in Sir Thomas White fonds, MG 27 II D18 Volume 3, Library and Archives Canada.

²⁷⁷ Letter to Dr. Alfred Thompson from Thomas White, (16 February 1916), File 13 “Federal Finances January – June 1916,” in Sir Thomas White fonds, MG 27 II D18 Volume 3, Library and Archives Canada.

²⁷⁸ White, *The Story of Canada’s War Finance*, p24.

²⁷⁹ *The Canada Year Book 1914*, (Ottawa: King’s Printer, 1915): 534. Statistics are based on the average yearly income of \$800.00 for a family of five. In fact, many families earned less than this amount; the average farm labourer in 1914 earned less than

more variable amounts within reach of “even the poorest people.”²⁸⁰ A domestic war loan in Britain at this time offered subscriptions to the British people for as low as £5.²⁸¹ The rector posed the question directly to White: “have [you] considered the advisability of placing a portion of the War Loan at the disposal of people who can only avail themselves of a very small amount of it...something after the plan suggested in this advertisement?”²⁸² For many Canadians prevented from participating in the Canadian loan, observing the British government execute a similar campaign in a far more inclusive manner was somewhat confounding and extremely frustrating. In an editorial, the *Montreal Star* commended the British government for popularizing their loan to attract funds from both large and small investors; further, it praised the British officials behind the loan for their insight into just what was needed to win the war.²⁸³ While indirect, the veiled criticism of White’s methods is clear.

Other correspondents felt they had already given their full extent to the war effort, and resented being asked to give further. Rand Gibbons of Innisfree, Alberta, asked White to explain how he, and those in his position, should be able to participate in future war loans. Gibbons explained the challenges he faced:

\$36.00 per month. See “Average wages of farm help in Canada, by province, 1909, 1910 and 1914 to 1916,” *Statistics Canada*, <http://www65.statcan.gc.ca/acyb02/1917/acyb02_191702028-eng.htm> Accessed on July 21, 2016.

²⁸⁰ Letter to Dr. Alfred Thompson from Thomas White, (16 February 1916).

²⁸¹ David French, *British Strategy & War Aims, 1914-1916*, (Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2014): 123. At the time, £5 was equivalent to between \$20 and \$25 Canadian Dollars.

²⁸² Letter to Thomas White from Rector of St. Matthew’s Church, Winnipeg, (1 September 1916”, File 14(b) “Federal Finances September – December 1916,” p2120, in Sir Thomas White fonds, MG 27 II D18 Volume 3, Library and Archives Canada.

²⁸³ Editorial, “Patriotic Economy,” *Montreal Star*, (24 July 1915): 10.

I work for \$85.00 per month for seven months in the year, which leaves me \$65.00 per month when my board is paid, out of which I have to support a family of seven for twelve months in the year. The other 5 months of the year I probably earn between \$50.00 or \$10.00 per month.²⁸⁴

In addition to already stretched seasonal wages, Gibbons explained that he had already sent a son to the European trenches, to whom he regularly sent socks, tobacco, and other material items at a cost of around \$7.50 per month. It is evident that Gibbons believed his human contribution to the war effort via his son should be valued. Because Gibbons' son was not aware that he had to assign his pay before leaving the country, the cost of the goods sent to support him came from Gibbons' own earnings. Moreover, Gibbons lived in a rural area, far-removed from urban centres. He posed a common question to the finance minister:

As you are...the authority; of the country in financial matters, and as my case is by no means an isolated one would you kindly suggest some way by which I could keep the home fires burning; and at the same time do something in assisting to provide Imperial credits for the purchase of Canadian foodstuffs, etc., etc.²⁸⁵

Gibbons viewed any further patriotic demands placed upon him with resentment. Similar to other westerners, he was still reeling from the financial crisis of 1914 and the subsequent debt, for which they had received little relief.²⁸⁶

Another correspondent, a district registrar from Kamloops, British Columbia, proposed that if smaller amounts were not offered, an extension should be available on the time given to make payments on the lowest bond of \$100:

A number of clerks in my office, for instance, might be able each to take up a \$100.00 bond if they were permitted to pay for it in payments not to exceed

²⁸⁴ Letter to Thomas White from Rand Gibbons, (30 December 1916), in Victory Loan Campaign Commission, "Thrift Campaign General 1916-1917," RG19 Volume 4005, Library and Archives Canada.

²⁸⁵ Ibid.

²⁸⁶ See chapter 1.

\$10.00 each, but I know that they cannot afford to devote \$20.00 per month for three or four months to such a purpose, since if they did so they would simply be unable to live in the meantime.²⁸⁷

This, he argued, was the only way to reach the small investor with the current denominations. And, the possibility that White would purposely exclude the small investor was, given their eagerness and potential, incomprehensible. Despite these pleas, White stayed his course and the subsequent war loans of September 1916 and March 1917, while expanding their geographical reach, maintained the minimum \$100 purchase price. They were expanded, however, to include larger amounts of \$10,000 and \$100,000 fully registered bonds.²⁸⁸ This again limited participation in the war loans, and any potential benefits, to those who could afford these higher amounts.

To repeat the success of the first loan, White and other members of government began to speak frequently on the need for wartime thrift and saving. White emphasized that “every patriotic citizen of Canada should consider it his bounden duty at the present time to save in order that his savings may be available for the purposes of the war...”²⁸⁹ Only through savings, and accumulation of funds, could Canadians be in a position to contribute to war loans from time-to-time as required for the war. If at any point, subscriptions fell short, Canada’s war effort would suffer. In the spring of 1916, to prepare for a second war loan planned for September of that year, the government launched an extensive advertising

²⁸⁷Letter to Thomas White from District Registrar of Land Registry Office in Kamloops, (7 August 1916), File 14(a) “Federal Finances July – August 1916,” in Sir Thomas White fonds, MG 27 II D18 Volume 3, Library and Archives Canada.

²⁸⁸ *Comparative Table Canadian Internal War Loans*, (A.E. Ames & Co., 1919).

²⁸⁹ White, cited in J. Castell Hopkins, *Canadian Annual Review of Public Affairs, 1916* (Toronto: The Annual Review Publishing Company: 1917): 364.

campaign in the newspapers and magazines of the nation.²⁹⁰ The advertisements (see Figure 3.1) were co-sponsored by the Department of Agriculture and the Department of

Production and Thrift

"GAIN or no gain the cause before the farmers of Canada is as clear as it was last year—they must produce abundantly in order to meet the demands that may be made, and I believe this to be especially true in regard to live stock, the world's supply of which must be particularly affected in this vast struggle."—HON. MARTIN BURRELL, Minister of Agriculture.

THE FOLLOWING STATEMENTS ARE BASED ON REPORTS CONTAINED IN
"THE AGRICULTURAL WAR BOOK, 1916," PUBLISHED BY THE
DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE, OTTAWA, ONT.

<p>LIVE STOCK—The herds and flocks of Europe have been greatly reduced. When the war is over there will be a great demand for breeding stock. Canadian farmers should keep this in mind.</p> <p>MEATS—In 1915 Great Britain imported 664,508 tons of beef, mutton and lamb, of which 364,245 tons came from without the Empire. Out of 430,420 tons of beef only 104,967 tons came from within the Empire.</p> <p style="font-size: small;">The demands of the Allies for frozen beef, canned beef, bacon and hams will increase rather than diminish. Orders are coming to Canada. The decreasing tonnage space available will give Canada an advantage if we have the supplies.</p>	<p>DAIRYING—Home consumption of milk, butter and cheese has increased of late years. The war demands for cheese have been unlimited. The Canadian cheese exports from Montreal in 1915 were nearly \$6,500,000 over 1914. Prices at Montreal—Cheese: January 1915, 15¼ to 17 cents; January 1916, 18¼ to 18½ cents. Butter: January 1915, 24 to 28½ cents; January 1916, 32 to 33 cents.</p> <p>EGGS—Canada produced \$30,000,000 worth of eggs in 1915 and helped out Great Britain in the shortage. Shippers as well as producers have a duty and an opportunity in holding a place in that market.</p>
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WRITE TO THE DOMINION DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE AND TO YOUR
PROVINCIAL DEPARTMENT FOR BULLETINS ON THESE SUBJECTS

Tens of thousands of Canada's food producers have enlisted and gone to the front. It is only fair to them that their home work shall be kept up as far as possible. The Empire needs all the food that we can produce in 1916.

PRODUCE MORE AND SAVE MORE MAKE LABOUR EFFICIENT	SAVE MATERIALS FROM WASTE SPEND MONEY WISELY
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THE GOVERNMENT OF CANADA

THE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE	THE DEPARTMENT OF FINANCE
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Figure 3.1: Government of Canada, Advertisement, "Production and Thrift," Maclean's, (June 1916): 80.

Finance, and focused on the dual goals of "production and thrift". The advertisements primarily focused on the importance of increased agricultural production, with brief

²⁹⁰ Ibid, pp.363-364; see also "Promote Thrift and Greater Production: Government Starts Extensive Advertising Campaign Throughout Canada," *Globe*, (24 March 1916): 9.

mentions of saving materials and spending “wisely” at the bottom of the ad-copy. As White often explained, “Canada’s ability to support the War rests upon her credit, and that credit,

Production and Thrift

CANADA’S CALL FOR SERVICE AT HOME

Produce More and Save More

The Empire needs food. If you are not in the fighting line you may be in the producing line. Labour is limited—all the more reason to do more than ever before. Grow food for the men who are fighting for you. The Allies need all the food that you can produce. Every little helps. You are responsible for your own work. If you cannot produce as much as you would like, produce all you can. Work with the right spirit. Put fighting energy into your effort and produce now when it counts. The more you produce the more you can save. Producing and saving are war-service.

Make Your Labour Efficient

In war-time do not waste time and energy on unimportant and unprofitable work. Economize labour. Put off unproductive work till after the war, and, if possible, help in producing something needed now. Let us not waste labour. Canada needs it all. If possible help to feed the Allies. Make your backyard a productive garden. Cultivate it with a will. Make your labour count for as much as possible.

Do Not Waste Materials

There should be no waste in war-time. Canada could pay the annual interest on her war expenditure out of what we waste on our farms, in our factories, in our homes. Every pound of food saved from waste is as good as a pound of increased production. The way for a nation to save is for every individual to save. France is strong to-day because of thrift in time of peace. The men and women of Great Britain are not only “doing” but are learning to “do without.”

Spend Your Money Wisely

Practise economy in the home by eliminating luxuries. Wasting our dollars here weakens our strength at the Front. Your savings will help Canada to finance the war. Save your money for the next Dominion War issue. There can be no better investment.

THE GOVERNMENT OF CANADA

THE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE THE DEPARTMENT OF FINANCE

Figure 3.2: Government of Canada, Advertisement, “Production and Thrift,” *Woman’s Century*, (May 1916): 21.

both at home and abroad, depends in large measure upon our national production.”²⁹¹ As such, the cooperation between the two ministries and the dual focus on increased production and thrift was a logical connection. A second version of the advertisement (see

²⁹¹ Hopkins, *Canadian Annual Review of Public Affairs, 1916*, p363.

Figure 3.2), also titled “Production and Thrift”, offered a greater focus on reducing waste and saving money. This version emphasized the importance of saving as a valid and active form of war-service, and pointed to the examples of individual and nation-wide thrift in the Allied countries of Britain and France. It also drew a direct link to saving money and supporting government war loans: “Your savings will help Canada to finance the war. Save your money for the next Dominion War issue. There can be no better investment.”²⁹² Perhaps most interesting, this version of the government’s advertising campaign was the only one selected to appear in 1916 in the popular women’s magazines, *Woman’s Century* and *Everywoman’s World*.²⁹³ Given the central role of women in managing day-to-day household consumption and their perceived removal from modes of production, this was likely a purposeful strategy. The government made a specific appeal to the organized women of Canada, requesting help from the NCWC in promoting thrift across the nation.²⁹⁴ This is consistent with the observation by historian Joan Sangster that middle-class women were often courted by the government as political allies.²⁹⁵

To further aid in the promotion of thrift and saving, under the direction of the Minister of Agriculture, the government printed the *Production and Thrift* for public distribution in 1916. The book consisted of over two-hundred pages presenting a collection of essays, speeches, and quotes from prominent officials and so-called experts on the titular

²⁹² Ibid.

²⁹³ Ibid. See also, Government of Canada, Advertisement, “Production and Thrift,” *Everywoman’s World*, (May 1916): 27.

²⁹⁴ “More Help From Women,” *Woman’s Century*, 4, 1 (July 1916): 10.

²⁹⁵ Joan Sangster, “Mobilizing Women for War,” 157-193, in *Canada and the First World War: Essays in Honour of Robert Craig Brown*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2005): 158.

subjects. To support these appeals, the reader was offered numerous facts and figures on imports and exports, war purchases in Canada and overseas, and many other financial indexes. White, in his own chapter, appealed to public reason by explaining the financial situation of the war and outlining the need for saving.²⁹⁶ Other contributors appealed to readers on behalf of the soldiers overseas, suggesting that failures to increase production and undertake economy in consumption were equivalent to helping the enemy on the battlefield.²⁹⁷ Finally, writers equated the work of production and thrift on the home front as equivalent in necessity to the service of soldiers overseas. For those readers who found the numerous exhortations repetitive, the sentiments were summarized in a helpful, less-formal poem:

Every penny saved helps You and your Country.
 Every penny spent unnecessarily helps the enemy.
 Save your money now; later it may save you.
 Some can serve their country by fighting;
 Some can serve their country by working;
 All can serve their country by saving.²⁹⁸

In this way, saving was presented as a valid, necessary form of war-time service; spending, portrayed as patriotic service in the first months of war, was now viewed as directly contributing to the enemy.

Following these efforts, White launched a second and third war loan in the fall of 1916 and spring of 1917. However, he remained unconvinced of the Canadian public's potential to contribute.²⁹⁹ These issues maintained the structure of the original loans,

²⁹⁶ Thomas White, *Production and Thrift*, (Ottawa: 1916): 13.

²⁹⁷ "Thrift, "The Necessity for Public and Private Economy," *Production and Thrift* (Ottawa: 1916): 190.

²⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹⁹ Brown and Cook, p231.

offering bonds in only \$100, \$500, or \$1000 amounts.³⁰⁰ Again, despite these restrictions, the loans were a resounding success; the loan of 1916 called for \$100 million and subscribed over \$150 million, and the loan of early 1917, called for \$150 million and subscribed over \$200 million.³⁰¹ However, a large portion of the public – still feeling excluded from these efforts – remained critical.

Public Response

The government's early attempts to instill thrift amongst the public were met with a mixed response. In general, Canadians supported the calls for thrift with unprecedented eagerness. However, the government was criticized for espousing idealistic messages that carried little practical use. Speeches and slogans, while sufficiently stirring public patriotism and support for the issue, fell short when it came to meaningful, and practical work. While White and his counterparts championed the need for wartime thrift and saving, very little was forthcoming from the government in the way of financial education or practical suggestions for wartime economy. What was thrift? How was it achieved? To these questions, the public was left with no answer from the government. Further, while Canadian consumers were exhorted to save every penny, they found opportunities to put that money towards the war effort also lacking – this was particularly true for the average Canadian, or small investor. The first war loan was limited to the wealthier classes, directly excluding those legions of Canadians with small amounts to contribute. Given the

³⁰⁰ *Comparative Table Canadian Internal War Loans*, (A.E. Ames & Co, 1919).

³⁰¹ *Ibid.*

emphasis on this valuable form of war service, this was a confusing contradiction for a public looking to do their bit.

Following the government's release of *Production and Thrift*, it became clear that their effort had missed the mark. A booklet filled with high-level facts and figures was of little use when it came to undertaking individual thrift daily. Moreover, rural Canadians resented that much of the booklet was targeted at residents of agricultural communities. Arguing that most of the thrift was occurring in the countryside, the magazine argued that profiteering, excessive leisure, and the greatest amounts of waste were occurring in the city. *Farmers' Advocate* welcomed an improved, revised war book from the government – if it was aimed at the “urban dweller”:

The average farmer knows more about thrift and has practiced more of it than the average city man every dreamed of...But why not show them why and how they should eliminate waste, why they should work longer hours in their own interest and in the interests of their country, why they should make nothing more than a reasonable profit on work or transactions and above all things show them how to eliminate waste in civic government. What is sauce for the goose is sauce for the gander.³⁰²

Criticisms highlight the divisive nature of government advice – particularly when it singled out one group over another. Such comments further reveal wartime regional tensions between urban and rural Canadians; moreover, they reiterate the perception that the burden of war was unequally shared across the nation.

Acknowledging the value of the message in the more than 200 pages of *Production and Thrift*, an editorial in the *Winnipeg Free Press* criticized the narrow scope. The editorial again re-visited the importance of early intervention and outlined the need to teach

³⁰² Editorial, “Where Another ‘War Book’ Might Do Good,” *Farmers' Advocate*, (22 June 1916): 1065.

Canadians about thrift at a young age: “If a nation is to become economical, that habit must be taught in the very nursery itself...[Children] must be taught to discern the difference between elegance and vulgarity.”³⁰³ For the author, Canadian adulthood was already too forgone to be repaired with any great effect, and because of this, the youth and the children were no longer benefitting from the invaluable lessons of thrift that had been handed down to their parents. In fact, he argued:

the youth and children even have wasted more pocket-money than their parents and grandparents ever spent upon other personal needs. Every one of us has heard or has witnessed continual extravagance that would have appalled the last generation.³⁰⁴

Comments such as this reflect the disappointment with which the wartime generation recognized that nineteenth-century ideals of thrift and frugality had given way to consumerist ideals of the twentieth-century. The rise of modern consumerism and the new world of goods served to disrupt these traditional values. This criticism arose despite the resounding success of the first war loan in 1915, and further repeated the concerns expressed in the early months of war – that Canadians were no longer inherently thrifty and lacked the necessary financial intelligence. As with so much of the war effort in Canada, comparisons were often made to similar efforts in Britain – here too, Canada fell short. Even though an increase-in-cost of living was making Canada one of the most expensive places to live in the empire, an editorial from the *Vancouver Daily Press* observed: “...we are less thrifty, more self-indulgent, more extravagant, and more wasteful than the people in the Old Land.”³⁰⁵ Canadians, while maintaining so much of their

³⁰³ A Bookman, Editorial, “A Reader’s Notes,” *Winnipeg Free Press*, (5 June 1916): 9.

³⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁰⁵ Editorial, “Need for thrift,” *Vancouver Daily Press*, (19 May 1916): 6.

European heritage, were realizing they had abandoned the most important parts. If Canadians could be seen to correct their behaviour, it might alleviate much of the financial stress currently placed on the nation. However, mere words on behalf of the government were not sufficient; education was required.³⁰⁶

White faced increased pressure from both the public and the financial reality of the war to broaden the scope of the government's thrift efforts. To this end, White received numerous letters offering insight and assistance. Louise Minty wrote to White, identifying herself as the honorary secretary of the recently formed British United Workers. The organization had been formed, she explained, "to influence public opinion to national self-denial and the finding of the vast sum needed to carry the war to victory, through the one and only appeal to honour and patriotism."³⁰⁷ In particular, the group arranged for speakers on the subject across the country. They also offered advice to communities on how to form local war savings associations. The purpose of Minty's letter was to present White with several pamphlets and posters about thrift and economy that she felt had achieved success in England, to see if they might achieve similar success in Canada. Minty finished by offering her personal services: "If I could only have a personal interview with you, I feel I could really be of definite help."³⁰⁸ In his reply, White politely pointed out that the situation in Canada was far different than that in England, and "it by no means follows that what has been efficacious there in the way of promoting thrift and savings would be equally so" in

³⁰⁶ Ibid. See also, "The Need for Economy," *Winnipeg Free Press*, (30 June 1916): 10.

³⁰⁷ Letter to Sir Thomas White from Louise Minty, (31 August 1916), in Victory Loan Campaign Commission, "Thrift Campaign General 1916-1917," RG19 Volume 4005, Library and Archives Canada.

³⁰⁸ Ibid.

Canada.³⁰⁹ Despite public requests for exactly the type of material being offered, White stood his ground. Louise Minty was not the only one to encourage White to follow the British example; he received similar suggestions from others both on the home front and living abroad.³¹⁰ When it came to financial policy in wartime, White was not shy to stray from the British example as he had done during the financial crisis, and would continue to do for his national thrift campaign.

Alternatively, other supporters of a Canadian thrift campaign were concerned with the purely voluntary nature of White's campaign. One correspondent outlined his casual acquaintance with Robert Borden and George Foster before offering to make arrangements to devote his full-time services to White, arguing: "My training [and] natural inclinations fit me specially for such work as the engendering of thrift [and] the bringing in of loans from the masses."³¹¹ The author further suggested that White reach beyond a system of voluntary thrift and that the finance minister not shy from "compelling those who will refuse to save..."³¹² Such suggestions reflected the fear that when given the chance, individualism may trump the collective sacrifice demanded by war. This became an even greater issue when the author suggested that the future of Canada's relationship with the United States depended largely on the extent to which Canadians may acquire the habit of

³⁰⁹ Letter to Louise Minty from Sir Thomas White, (12 September 1916), in Victory Loan Campaign Commission, "Thrift Campaign General 1916-1917," RG19 Volume 4005, Library and Archives Canada.

³¹⁰ A number of examples from the summer and fall of 1916 are available in Victory Loan Campaign Commission, "Thrift Campaign General 1916-1917," RG19 Volume 4005, Library and Archives Canada.

³¹¹ Letter to Thomas White from H.K.S. [?]mmings, (29 December 1916), in Victory Loan Campaign Commission, "Thrift Campaign General 1916-1917," RG19 Volume 4005, Library and Archives Canada.

³¹² Ibid.

saving during the war, adding that he hoped White planned on “engendering thrift upon a permanent rather than a temporary basis.”³¹³ As White prepared for the formal announcement of his national thrift and savings campaign, he had no shortage of helpful suggestions.

As the announcement approached, scheduled for the early new year of 1917, news of White’s plan to launch a national campaign began to circulate among the public. Just as he had received helpful suggestions in forming his plan, so White received many helpful suggestions on how to fix his plan in its current, and many believed flawed, state. Burdick A. Trestrail, Director of Publicity and Promotion at Canada’s Williams & Sons, wrote to White outlining what he believed to be faults in his plan for thrift. First, he believed that White’s plan was only going to target the middle and upper classes and miss the main target (or what Trestrail believed should be the main target) of the working-class individual – small investors. He believed the way to attract this key demographic was not by persuading them to save money through speeches and public appeals, but rather to “get a hold on their future earnings, so that they cannot squander them.”³¹⁴ Trestrail’s proposal entailed issuing war bonds of no less than \$50 or \$100 denominations and arranging for working class families to pay for them on an installment plan of around \$1.50 per week, per bond. The effect on the working-man, he argued, was that: “THIS TIES HIM UP...He cannot go on spending every week so long as he has got to meet these payments. He must save, and save continuously, and by the time he has paid for his bond, or bonds, he has the habit, and when

³¹³ Ibid.

³¹⁴ Letter to Thomas White from Burdick A. Trestrail, (30 December 1916), in Victory Loan Campaign Commission, “Thrift Campaign General 1916-1917,” RG19 Volume 4005, Library and Archives Canada.

his last payment is made he is asked to buy more.”³¹⁵ In essence, this argument was grounded in deceit of the working class; by inviting them to take part in the patriotic financial effort, Trestrail sought to tacitly diminish their ability to engage in delinquent spending. This is reminiscent of Marxist complaints that the working classes were victims of false consciousness and is further evidence of widespread cynicism towards the public in wartime.³¹⁶ All the feedback received by White, both before and after his plans for the thrift campaign became public, reflect once again the increased politicization of choice in wartime.

More closely aligned with White’s preference for voluntary thrift was Secretary of the Women’s National Service Committee, Adelaide Plumtre, who suggested instead that White issue a series of open letters, each targeted at a different segment of society. She outlined the success of open letters as a tool frequently used by her committee. Early in the war, two open letters on peace and recruitment were printed by her committee, and each was circulated through their membership, printed in local papers, and then reprinted by a number of national papers. Plumtre offered to repeat this success for White’s campaign: “It strikes me, that if you are inclined to accept my suggestion or offer, I might co-operate with [an expert] to produce some fresh and attractive propaganda on thrift.”³¹⁷

³¹⁵ Ibid.

³¹⁶ While Marx himself never used the term, it is widely associated with the Marxian school of thought and is drawn from his discussion on commodity fetishism. See Ron Eyerman, “False Consciousness and Ideology in Marxist Theory,” *Acta Sociologica*, 24, 1-2, (January 1981), 43-56. For Marx’s discussion on commodity fetishism see Karl Marx, *Capital, Volume 1 and 2*, Translated by Samuel Moore, Edward Aveling, and Ernest Untermann, (London: Wordsworth Editions Limited, 2013): 46-54.

³¹⁷ Letter to Thomas White from Adelaide Plumtre, (1 January 1916), in Victory Loan Campaign Commission, “Thrift Campaign General 1916-1917,” RG19 Volume 4005, Library and Archives Canada.

While White would not directly accept this offer, Plumptre and other organized women would certainly take advantage of this approach as a popular thrift movement took shape.³¹⁸

Despite the many criticisms addressed to White in late 1916, in his post-war review of the period John Castell Hopkins noted that “White remained high in public esteem.”³¹⁹ On January 3, 1917, the finance minister formally announced his new thrift campaign in a speech to the Toronto Board of Trade:

The people of Canada should practice economy, which results in greater national saving. Every man over 21 understands how to economize, and every man can carry it out if he wants to carry it out. Let us economize. Let us make our savings serve the purpose of war. Let the people of the Dominion, by thrift and economy, make their dollars fight the Huns.³²⁰

White drew attention to higher wartime wages, and the way they might be diverted from spending on consumer goods, to supporting the war effort. White commended the work done by Canadian thrift to date, pointing to substantial increases in Canadian bank deposits.³²¹ In fact, public deposits in Canadian banks had increased by more than 24% since 1913. Including deposits made outside of Canada, the amount had increased by almost 30%. The greatest increases had occurred between 1915 and 1916, following the success of the first war loans.³²² However, as it became apparent that 1917 would mean even greater material contributions to the war effort, White explained that greater sacrifice and self-denial from the Canadian people was also needed to meet this demand.

³¹⁸ This will be explored in Chapter 4.

³¹⁹ Hopkins, *Canadian Annual Review of Public Affairs, 1917*, 292.

³²⁰ Ibid, p294.

³²¹ In particular, he noted that 1915 saw an increase in bank deposits of over \$200,000,000.

³²² *Canada Year Book 1916-17*, (Ottawa: King’s Printer, 1917): 559. Calculated using bank deposit records.

Charles Alexander Magrath, western surveyor, former Conservative MP, and future Fuel Controller of Canada, spoke to the Canadian Club of Montreal in support of White's new thrift campaign. Magrath urged the nation to adopt the slogan "Give until it hurts." True sacrifice and self-denial demanded personal deprivation at some level. Magrath further outlined the nation's need for funds to support the war effort. To achieve this, he again urged the importance of thrift on an individual level:

National thrift must begin with the individual, and the appeal to be effective must be to the individual. Each one of us must have it hammered into him as a concrete fact. Every man who grasps, and accepts, the idea that by personal self-denial he is helping his country to win the war, becomes at once the centre of an ever-widening influence. The leaven of thrift must work outwards from the individual to the crowd...³²³

According to Magrath, only by convincing individual Canadians of the necessity of thrift could the message spread effectively.

At first, the new thrift campaign focused on encouraging Canadian consumers to save money so that they may purchase Victory Bonds as part of the upcoming Victory Loan – the first in a new series of war loans. Even after the success of the first three war loans, White remained skeptical that future loans would succeed. He later reflected that this skepticism was due to the fact that in the early years of war, Canadians simply did not have more money to give.³²⁴ By 1917, however, increased wartime production had put more money into circulation; moreover, extreme shortages overseas forced White to adapt. The finance minister planned the first Victory Loan for 1917. Unlike the previous war loans,

³²³ Charles Alexander Magrath, *Some Features of National Service: Address before the Canadian Club, Montreal*, (8th January 1917): 9.

³²⁴ Thomas White, "The War Finance of Canada," *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 107, Social and Economic Conditions in the Dominion of Canada, (May 1923): 213.

out of necessity, it had a much broader reach. In addition to taking subscriptions for a longer period – nineteen days opposed to eleven days, the longest subscription period of the previous loans – the loan offered a new, lower subscription rate of \$50. To execute the campaigns, White arranged a carefully orchestrated collaboration of various Canadian entities, public and private. The Canadian press was entrusted with publicity of the loans, and, White believed, was largely the reason for their success. Schools, churches, voluntary societies insurance companies, loan companies, and banks, were actively enlisted to promote the loans and organize contributions.³²⁵ To promote the first Victory Loan, the government published several informative pamphlets, outlining Canada's financial position, why money was required, and what it would be used for.³²⁶ Immediately the loan was a resounding success. It achieved 820,035 subscriptions, compared to the previous war loans which saw subscriptions of 24,862 in 1915, 34,526 in 1916, and 40,800 in the early months of 1917.³²⁷ Based on this exceptional result, further loans were issued in 1918 and 1919; White would later refer to these schemes as “the greatest financial achievement of Canada during the war.”³²⁸

As White, Magrath, and other prominent Conservatives spoke in favour of the thrift campaign to various clubs and organizations, the nation's press provided swift endorsement. The public commended White for the enthusiasm with which he had launched the campaign – a not surprising reaction considering the long-standing public

³²⁵ Ibid, p62.

³²⁶ E.R. Wood, *Some Facts and Figures Regarding Canada's Victory Loan 1917*, Issued by Canada's Victory Loan Committee in Co-operation with the Minister of Finance of the Dominion of Canada, 1917.

³²⁷ *Comparative Table Canadian Internal War Loans*, (A.E. Ames & Co., 1919).

³²⁸ Thomas White, *The Story of Canada's War Finance*, (Montreal: 1921): 58.

demands for such an initiative. Perhaps the most obvious criticism against White's new campaign was that it had taken too long to arrive.³²⁹ Others maintained that the campaign, as it was, represented too weak a measure, relying solely on voluntarism. There were many who continued to believe that only compulsory thrift could be successful. Once again, the importance of choice, and the fear that consumers would not make the right choice, were clear. Pointing to North America's removal from the physical theatre of war, the *Monetary Times* steadfastly argued: "...the individual cannot be preached into the desired degree of the practice of thrift...Real thrift, as it is practiced by the nations in the cauldron of war, has yet to be learned in Canada."³³⁰ This physical separation from the realities of the Western Front, critics argued, removed the sense of urgency and necessity from White's appeals for wartime thrift. Instead, adoption of voluntary thrift and economy measures was immediately relegated to the realm of personal choice. Those who failed to make the moral and patriotic choice to engage in thrift, the *Financial Post* pointed out, were then leaving the burden of financing the war to those patriotic few who accepted their duty and purchased war bonds. It was instead suggested that a compulsory tax would be both more effective, and more fair.³³¹ Some pointed towards the British example:

³²⁹See "War bonds and Taxes," *Financial Post*, (6 January 1917) in Victory Loan Campaign Commission, "Newspaper Clippings Thrift Campaign 1916-1917," RG19 Volume 4006, in Library and Archives Canada. This criticism is also evident in the many calls for thrift throughout 1915 and 1916, outlined earlier in this chapter.

³³⁰"Economy and State," *Monetary Times* (12 January 1917) in Victory Loan Campaign Commission, "Newspaper Clippings Thrift Campaign 1916-1917," RG19 Volume 4006, in Library and Archives Canada. See also "To Encourage Thrift," *Toronto Star*, (11 January 1917) in Victory Loan Campaign Commission, "Newspaper Clippings Thrift Campaign 1916-1917," RG19 Volume 4006, in Library and Archives Canada.

³³¹"War Bonds and Taxes," *Financial Post*. See also, "Thrift and Taxes and High Cost of Living," *Financial Post*, (6 January 1917) in Victory Loan Campaign

The government of Great Britain tried to induce its people to practice thrift voluntarily but the attempt was a failure. Today coercive methods are being employed and the people who refused to be truly loyal willingly are being forced to do as they ought by law.³³²

This support for a sort of forced patriotism was widespread, as it was viewed by many as the only way to ensure a truly shared sacrifice for the war effort. By this point, White had already drafted the *Business War Profits Tax Act* of 1916, and the *Income Tax Act* to be introduced later in 1917. He believed “the prevailing sentiment of the public was given expression in [these] two important measures.”³³³ Additionally, the popular enthusiasm for thrift, and the developing popular thrift movement, supplied sufficient momentum for the minister’s financial needs. Further compulsory financial measures on the part of the government proved unnecessary, as the three subsequent Victory Loans raised more than \$1.7 billion dollars.³³⁴ And yet, while the Minister’s financial needs were met, the nation’s moral needs were hitherto unsatisfied.

Popular Thrift Campaign, 1916-1918

As the established leaders in household consumption and the self-appointed guardians of the nation’s morality, women played an important role in both ensuring and encouraging national thrift. Without hesitation, they filled the gaps left by the government campaign. An editorial in *Woman’s Century* proclaimed: “women can exert an all

Commission, “Newspaper Clippings Thrift Campaign 1916-1917,” RG19 Volume 4006, in Library and Archives Canada.

³³² “Don’t be a hypocrite,” *Calgary Herald*, (13 January 1917) in Victory Loan Campaign Commission, “Newspaper Clippings Thrift Campaign 1916-1917,” RG19 Volume 4006, in Library and Archives Canada.

³³³ White, *The Story of Canada’s War Finance*, 54. See Chapter 5 for further discussions on these two measures.

³³⁴ *Ibid*, pp.58-59.

important influence. They are in charge of the domestic spending departments and are by far the biggest buyers in the country.”³³⁵ As individual administrators of household thrift and economy, it only made sense that collectively women could act as the social administrators of national thrift and economy. The largest women’s organization in Canada, the NCWC, was quick to acknowledge this duty and delegate it to their members:

[women] can do still greater service to their country by earnestly co-operating with the Government in its campaign of thrift and production...If women respond to this call as they have done to other appeals, and even without appeals, they will not only have ensured victory in battle but the future prosperity of the Dominion.³³⁶

Thus, the responsibility of ensuring victory was thrust upon the shoulders of women; framed in these terms, thrift demanded the highest regard. Shortly following the announcement of White’s government-orchestrated thrift campaign, the NCWC appointed a series of War Thrift Committees to be administered by each local council.³³⁷ Local committees were responsible for establishing “thrift centres” in each city. Each centre offered practical demonstrations to visitors on various methods of household economy: including food preparation, backyard gardening, and intelligent buying. Emphasizing the national benefit of thrift and economy, the organizers of the Toronto Thrift Centres went so far as to establish their own motto, “thrift for our country’s sake.”³³⁸ Administrators organized sub-committees on saving and public speaking, with the hopes they could “popularize thrift that

³³⁵ Editorial, “Production and Thrift,” *Woman’s Century*, (July 1916): 3.

³³⁶ Editorial, “Production and Thrift,” *Woman’s Century*, (April 1916): 3.

³³⁷ Letter to Mrs. Newhall from Corresponding Secretary, 17 February 1917, in “Conservation of Natural Resources, National Council of Women Committee: Correspondence 1917-1917,” 857, in NCWC fonds, MG 28 I 25 Volume 66, File 3, Library and Archives Canada.

³³⁸ “War Time Thrift,” *Woman’s Century*, (March 1917): 20.

it will be the virtue exceeding all others.”³³⁹ In this way, women collaborated with the government in a widespread program of social-engineering, meant to instill sensibilities of thrift and saving within the Canadian public. As evidence that greater attention to thrift was everyone’s responsibility, a special effort was made to locate thrift centres “among the rich as well as the poor.”³⁴⁰ In this way, the NCWC quickly positioned itself as the authorities of thrift in each community, offering direction and practical advice where the government did not.

While the NCWC was a national umbrella organization for other women’s organizations across the country, and charged with administering the national campaign, some women’s organizations sought to branch out. In a similar vein to the NCWC’s thrift centres, and in a somewhat intentionally duplicative effort, the IODE established a national Thrift Campaign Committee.³⁴¹ Local chapters of the IODE were charged with canvassing their communities, collecting waste paper, rags, and scrap iron or brass. This was then sold to scrap collectors at the going rate; the resulting funds were then put towards various war causes. The efforts of the IODE were very successful with some chapters pulling in collections of well over \$1,000, and the Ottawa chapter earning over \$8,000 in one year.³⁴² During this time, it’s important to note that the IODE intentionally duplicated the efforts of

³³⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

³⁴¹ Minutes, Regular Monthly Meeting of the National Executive, IODE, 7 February 1916, in “Minutes of the National Chapter of Canada Imperial Order Daughters of the Empire, 11 November 1914 to 7 February 1915,” 297, in IODE fonds, MG 28 I 17 Volume 2, File 5, Library and Archives Canada.

³⁴² “Findings and Resolutions from Minutes of the National Annual Meeting of the IODE,” in “Minutes – Annual Meeting 1918,” 159-160, in IODE fonds, MG 28 I 17 Volume 11, File 10, Library and Archives Canada.

the NCWC; this approach was adopted by the executive following the temporary disassociation of the IODE from NCWC, which it no longer recognized as an umbrella organization.³⁴³ The IODE criticized the failure of the NCWC to publicly renounce their pre-war federation with the International Council of Women which included membership in Germany, Austria-Hungary and Bulgaria – now enemy combatants; to further express their disapproval, the IODE passed a public resolution severing their connection with the NCWC until such public renunciation was issued.³⁴⁴ The IODE's choice to sever its war work from that of the NCWC is evidence of the divisions that existed within organized women's war work. Moreover, it's further evidence of the high expectations of conduct in wartime, both at the individual and organizational level.

In addition to the visible work of organized women, newspapers and magazines across the country continued to be arbiters of wartime thrift. Print media acted as valuable forums where women could exchange practical tips on how to correctly engage in wartime thrift, and discuss the very issues on which White and the government had remained largely silent. Perhaps most important, they sought to define and educate the Canadian people on what exactly constituted wartime thrift. In early 1916, Elizabeth Shortt, a leading member of the National Council of Women of Canada, noted that there were several kinds of thrift.

³⁴³ “May 15, 1918, Special Meeting of the National Executive IODE,” in “Minutes of the National Chapter of Canada Imperial Order Daughters of the Empire,” 5, in IODE fonds, MG 28 I 17 Volume 3, File 2, Library and Archives Canada

³⁴⁴ Katie Pickles, *Female Imperialism and National Identity: Imperial Order Daughters of the Empire*, (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2002): 17. While this disagreement was particular to wartime, Pickles has noted that competition between the IODE and other major women's organizations was commonplace.

Not only was thrift a matter of doing without for the benefit of the war, but it was also a matter of intelligent spending: "...there is that harder and more intimate thrift that spends one's self in making one dollar do the work of two – both in purchasing power and benefits secured."³⁴⁵ Echoing this sentiment in the pages of *Woman's Century*, Kathleen K. Bowker insisted that "intelligent spending...is the true economy."³⁴⁶ She advocated for careful study of product advertisements appearing in every paper, a practice that allowed the astute woman to get "the real worth of her money, at bargain sales or elsewhere."³⁴⁷ By careful comparison and thoughtful consideration for quality and value, women could make intelligent purchases of necessary items while ensuring their adherence to wartime thrift.

Equally important, print media offered a forum to discuss what thrift was not. It was not to be confused with the self-indulgent and immoral spendthrift. While the thrifty person engaged in meaningful sacrifice and self-denial, the spendthrift spent money extravagantly with little regard for others. According to Smiles, still the widely accepted expert on thrift, the working class was most guilty of this offense.³⁴⁸ While Smiles went so far as to brand spendthrifts as "akin to lunatic[s],"³⁴⁹ the *Winnipeg Free Press* branded spendthrifts as traitors.³⁵⁰ As thrift and saving were at the forefront of the popular mind,

³⁴⁵ Mrs. Adam Shortt, "Thrift All to the Good," *Globe*, (29 February 1916): 8.

³⁴⁶ Kathleen K. Bowker, "Active National Service," *Woman's Century*, (March 1917): 19.

³⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁴⁸ Smiles, p 27.

³⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p105.

³⁵⁰ Address by President Schurman of Cornell University, "The Spendthrift is a Traitor," reprinted in *Winnipeg Free Press*, (4 June 1918): 9.

the expression of negative sentiments against excessive spending, luxury and extravagance mounted.³⁵¹

While the spendthrift was firmly established as delinquent in wartime, so was that selfish brand of thrift in which money was saved and hoarded for one's own benefit. *Western Home Monthly* identified this economy ending in miserliness as a "false economy,"³⁵² which threatened the war effort. Proponents of thrift sought to ensure that thrift was not understood only as miserliness or an unpleasant alternative to indulgence. In yet another attempt to push the public towards thrift, Peter McArthur lamented:

There is probably no subject which is so thoroughly misunderstood or so unpopular as thrift. In the popular mind it is associated with meanness, stinginess, and all disagreeable qualities...It is unfortunately true that what is commonly known as thrift is simply a combination of meanness and dishonesty.³⁵³

Most troubling, was the fact that this popular misunderstanding was grounded in personal gain. Instead, McArthur explained that thrift was far more than merely saving money; it was efficiency, self-control, foresight, prudence, self-confidence, and "all that makes character."³⁵⁴ True patriotic thrift was for the benefit of all, which also benefitted the individual. Echoing Smiles' reference to lunacy, McArthur further insisted that thrift was both "wiser and saner."³⁵⁵ By casting it in this positive light, he hoped to dispel the myth that patriotic thrift could only be achieved as a result of personal suffering.

³⁵¹ Public discourses surrounding the issues of luxury and extravagance are explored further in Chapter 5.

³⁵² Editorial, "Economy," *Western Home Monthly*, (May 1915): 26.

³⁵³ Peter McArthur, "Thrift," *Farmers' Advocate*, (23 December 1915): 2049.

³⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

Proponents of thrift also took it upon themselves to not only educate the nation, but also to censure those who failed to meet their patriotic duty. While all Canadians and institutions were subject to public scrutiny, no group was more vehemently censured than those women who were seen to shirk their patriotic duty. A letter from “Waste Not, Want Not,” to the Women’s section of the *Globe* argued:

We are being urged to save and we need the exhortation, but it is useless to save with the right hand if we waste with the left. We waste food, clothes, household goods, gas, electric light, and so on; we waste other peoples’ things just as readily as our own. It is partly due to ignorance, partly to indolence, partly to the fear of being thought ‘mean.’ We are too ignorant to know the use of much that we waste, too lazy to trouble, too dependent on the opinions of others to think out our own standard of values, and so enable ourselves to resist what the maid or the neighbours will think...³⁵⁶

The author pointed to the futility of the war work undertaken by patriotic women when the apathy of others threatened to undermine the effectiveness of their work. In wartime, ignorance and apathy were viewed as enemies of patriotism and were insufficient excuses for inaction.

To counter this threat, Katherine Caldwell, editor at *Everywoman’s World*, deemed her female readers as “An Army of Savers”, encouraging them to recognize “women slackers” and counter their negative effects on patriotic work:

We must admit them – with reluctance and with shame...Let each one of us assume the responsibility of each one of these women slackers. Let every Canadian woman who wills for victory for the allies, every woman who has a thought for our men who have given all or who are fighting the good fight to-day, every woman who appreciates the terrible daily sacrifices being made by Great Britain and our allies – let each of those women say, ‘I will

³⁵⁶ Letter to the Editor, Waste Not Want Not, “Waste a National Crime,” *Globe*, (18 February 1916): 8.

do not only my own share of saving, but *I will do what one woman slacker should be doing!*³⁵⁷

Caldwell's comments identify several important themes. First, she deputized her readers with the responsibility of surveilling their peers and identifying those who were not performing their patriotic duty. Second, her language implicitly associated thrift work not only with Allied victory, but with the moral quality of empathizing with the men fighting overseas and the women enduring greater hardships on the home fronts of the other Allied nations. The implication of these associations was clear; women who did not participate in patriotic work lacked a commitment to victory and lacked patriotic empathy. The shame of being identified in this way, against the patriotic backdrop of wartime, cannot be underestimated. In this way, informal surveillance networks became an important means by which to monitor and enforce wartime thrift. Such tactics were employed to an even greater extent in Canada's food conservation campaign, discussed in Chapter 4.

However, not all criticism met with fond reception. One disgruntled housewife wrote to *Everywoman's World* and took issue with the reproachful tone offered by what she deemed "paper and platform thrift women". She countered:

There may be wasteful wives among us, but tell me this, would Canada be the country it is today if the bulk of our women hadn't known the meaning of real thrift? Lord help us! Will they never quit their little a,b,c lessons to the housekeeper who has forgotten more on the subject than they'll ever know?³⁵⁸

³⁵⁷ Katherine Caldwell, "An Army of Savers: Canada is Calling for Another Army," *Everywoman's World*, (September 1917): 25.

³⁵⁸ Martha by the Day, Letter to the Editor, *Everywoman's World*, (March 1918): 55. This sentiment was echoed in a letter from Belle Stone (of the UFWA) to the *Grain Growers' Guide*. See Belle Stone, Letter-to-the-Editor, "Thrift," *Grain Growers' Guide*, (28 February 1917): 41.

The author pointed to a stark division between the typically urban, middle- and upper-class women of the NCWC and its member organizations, and the women who, she argued, had been engaging in everyday thrift out of necessity long before the arrival of war. The *Farmers' Advocate* echoed this sentiment, further highlighting the divisions between rural and urban Canada: "Farmers have always of necessity been thrifty in their manner of living so any enforced condition of thrift will never be felt to the same extent in the country as it would among the urban population."³⁵⁹ Another woman wrote to the women's page editor of the *Globe* asking, "what are we doing that we are so privileged to criticize others?"³⁶⁰ While Canadians could find common ground in the fact that wartime thrift was necessary, there were those who fought against the constant barrage of advice and condescension.³⁶¹

Children and War Thrift

By 1918, the education of young Canadians in the ways of thrift had become paramount. Early that year, the IODE arranged for Canadian publication of three collected volumes of childhood stories, each carrying a series of moral lessons about thrift: *Bedtime Stories*, *Garden Stories*, *Animal Stories*, and *Fairy-tale Stories*.³⁶² Within the first pages of each, a description read: "New National Literature for Children...Funny Pictures, Original Characters and Jolly Stories Teaching Valuable Lessons in Citizenship, Thrift and

³⁵⁹ "The Duty of the Individual," *Farmers' Advocate*, (19 September 1918): 1515.

³⁶⁰ N.M.A., Letter-to-the-Editor, "To the Women of Canada," *Globe*, (22 February 1916): 8.

³⁶¹ This subject is discussed further in Chapter 5.

³⁶² See Caroll F. Smythe, *Bedtime Stories*, (Toronto: E&H. McLean, 1918); Caroll F. Smythe, *Garden Stories*, (Toronto: E&H. McLean, 1918); Caroll F. Smythe, *Animal Stories*, (Toronto: E&H. McLean, 1918); and, Caroll F. Smythe, *Fairy-tale Stories*, (Toronto: E&H. McLean, 1918).

Production.”³⁶³ This was followed by a message for mothers and teachers, instructing them to read these stories to children. The collections provided a series of short stories each teaching a different patriotic lesson. Examples include “Carrie Carries Parcels” about a young girl who saves money by refusing delivery and carrying her purchases home,³⁶⁴ and “Mr. Busy Buzzy Bee”, a tale urging children to be “as busy as bees” while conducting war work for the duration of the conflict.³⁶⁵ The books were made available in every school, and advertised widely in *Echoes*, the official magazine of the IODE.

In mid-1918, the government released its own publication aimed at school-aged children – the *War Thrift Book*.³⁶⁶ Distributed in schools across the country and aimed at a slightly older audience than the IODE’s collection of children’s stories, the *War Thrift Book* covered a broad range of topics; it outlined Canada’s reasons for entering the war, why Germany must be fought, the importance of saving and investing money, and the importance of buying Victory bonds. Making connections to military service on the Western Front, the opening pages of the book proclaimed, “Every boy and every girl can go ‘over the top’ in a very real sense by saving money and lending it to Canada.”³⁶⁷ To encourage saving, Minister White launched a special campaign as part of the 1918 Victory Loan, aimed at involving children in patriotic saving and teaching them the value of wartime thrift. “Thrift stamps” were made available for purchase at post offices. Children were given a thrift card to which they could attach 16 stamps at the cost of \$0.25 each;

³⁶³ *Ibid.*

³⁶⁴ *Bedtime Stories*, p5.

³⁶⁵ *Animal Stories*, p10.

³⁶⁶ *Canada War Thrift Book*, (Ottawa: King’s Printer, 1918).

³⁶⁷ *War Thrift Book*, p10.

once full, it could be turned in to the post office for a larger thrift certificate with ten spaces, each of which could be filled by one full thrift card. Children could turn in a completed thrift certificate for a \$50 Victory Loan.³⁶⁸ The *War Thrift Book* encouraged children not to “throw [their] money away on candy or an amusement when there is work that money should do...Earn money, save money, and lend it to Canada...Then you are helping your country (as every patriot should).”³⁶⁹

While children’s wartime publications were rich with patriotic language and reveal much of adult-thinking at the time, it is impossible to determine how and to what extent children absorbed the patriotic material they were taught.³⁷⁰ Regardless, attempts to include children in the patriotic work of wartime is significant for several reasons: first, it emphasized that thrift and sacrifice were universal responsibilities from which children were not excluded – everyone was responsible for contributing to the war effort for the greater good of the nation; second, institutional presentation and endorsement of patriotic ideas gave added weight to their value and necessity; and third, by teaching and encouraging children to take part in patriotic thinking and practice at a young age, all of society would benefit in the future. This sort of formalized social-engineering of the patriotic had the added benefit of teaching the importance of community wellbeing over that of the individual – something that Canada’s war effort had sought since the beginning.

Women, Thrift, and Civic Reciprocity

³⁶⁸ *War Thrift Book*, p47.

³⁶⁹ *Ibid*, p49.

³⁷⁰ A fact noted by Susan Fisher in *Boys and Girls in No Man’s Land: English-Canadian Children and the First World War*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2011): 43.

While much of the work towards promoting and teach war thrift was done with the overall war effort in mind, many women also hoped that it would lead to greater change. In one example, the Ottawa Women's Canadian Club arranged for a special publication of a patriotic edition of the *Ottawa Free Press*, including helpful hints and editorials on thrift and war budgeting, by prominent figures Lady Borden and Lady Foster. While the goal was to spread the gospel of thrift, the Ottawa women took the opportunity to enumerate their own expectations of civic reciprocity from the government in response to their dedication to the war effort.³⁷¹

Canadians of all classes will pay their share and pay it cheerfully, but on certain conditions. The Government, to whom as trustees they entrust these enormous sums, must deal effectively and honestly therewith. The money must not be diverted from its purpose by reason of inefficiency and carelessness, or extravagance, or the demands of patronage, or the dishonesty of officials. Economy of the most strict and rigid character must be enforced in all branches of the public service.³⁷²

It was not enough for the government to espouse encouragements of wartime thrift to Canadians; it too must be seen to be engaging in self-denial and sacrifice on an institutional level.

Similarly, an article in *Woman's Century* commented on the government's strong appeals to women:

When women are invited to exercise thrift in their domestic concerns they have the right to rejoin that economy and integrity also mark the conduct of the country's business. When they are told they can do more to help by further sacrifices, they can be forgiven if they demand greater vigilance in the administration of public affairs, a patriotism that rises superior to

³⁷¹ See John Rawls, "The Idea of Public Reason Revisited," 205-234, in *The Idea of the Public Sphere*, edited by Jostein Gripsrud et al., (Plymouth: Lexington Books, 2010): 207.

³⁷² Cited in "Urges Thrift on Government," *Evening Mail*, (6 March 1917): 14.

personal and partisan advantage and greater devotion to the enduring interests of the nation and the community.³⁷³

Such statements are indicative of the perceived social contract into which women gladly entered with the government in wartime. Moreover, they demanded a greater reciprocity from the government in all affairs – a commitment to national and community interests above all else. Once again, touting the importance of the many over the individual, the NCWC sought to use wartime voluntarism as a catalyst for change. As social leaders of the home-front effort, Canadian women sought to cement their political claim to citizenship.³⁷⁴

This claim was, to some extent, answered in early 1918 when the government convened a Women's War Conference at which the issue of thrift was at the forefront, along with agricultural production, recruitment, and food conservation (discussed in the next chapter). Attending the conference were representatives from many women's organizations, including the two largest – the NCWC and IODE. Representation was ensured from every province and in connection with diverse forms of patriotic work including agriculture, industry, and other services. Moreover, attendance from Ontario and Quebec was limited so as to ensure contributions at the conference were as balanced as possible. This careful design and selection of conference attendees reflected the public's growing concern with wartime inequality – particularly on a regional basis. Speaking on the issue of thrift, Sir George Foster reiterated the important role of Canadian women, reaffirming concepts already well understood by both the speakers and the attendees:

We have one million five hundred thousand families. In each of those families the woman is the central pivot around which the family swings, the

³⁷³ "More Help from Women," *Woman's Century*, (July 1916): 10.

³⁷⁴ Sangster, pp.159-160.

prime factor in whatever goes to make up the household budget where the element of extravagance or thrift and saving is.³⁷⁵

The meeting of patriotic like-minded people passed several resolutions over the course of the conference including expressed support for White's saving campaign, and an assertion that only necessary expenditures in the name of efficiency were appropriate in wartime.³⁷⁶

While the recycled rhetoric of the women's war conference accomplished little of substance in the short-term, its symbolic importance is noteworthy. The government's commitment to the voices of women served to both further validate the importance of female voluntarism in wartime, and provide the appearance of greater female access to participatory citizenship. In a way, the conference sought to fulfill, at least partly, the social contract into which so many women felt they had entered.

Conclusion

To achieve the "astounding sum" contributed by Canadians during the war, it took much work to instill thrift in the Canadian public. In an unprecedented collaboration between the federal government and social leaders – and Canada's organized women in particular – proponents of wartime thrift worked ardently to convince Canadian consumers of the value of thrift and economy; this unparalleled social experiment sought to create sensibilities of thrift and saving within the Canadian public. As a result, White's financial campaign was a resounding success. However, Canada's campaign for material economy required much greater time and attention from all involved. Whereas appeals for wartime

³⁷⁵ Sir George Foster, cited in *Report of the Women's War Conference, Held at the Invitation of the War Committee of the Cabinet, February 28—March 2, 1918*, (Ottawa: The King's Printer, 1918): 9.

³⁷⁶ *Ibid*, p14.

thrift were rooted in freeing money for the war effort, thrift within the context of material conservation and food control was rooted in freeing food for Allies and potentially feeding loved ones overseas; thus, this aspect of thrift and conservation was imbued with a much more direct and emotionally laden meaning for many Canadians, particularly women. The next chapter explores thrift and economy within the context of both government and popular food control, and the final chapter of this dissertation examines profiteering, hoarding, luxury, and other consumer delinquency which contradicted the dominant narrative of thrift, conservation, and sacrifice in wartime Canada.

Chapter 4

'We are saving you – You save food': wartime food control, conservation and economy

Perhaps the most contentious class of commodities during the war, food played a central role on both the overseas and home fronts. As European fields were ravaged by trench warfare and German submarines increasingly interfered with Atlantic trade routes, food shortages became a stark reality for inhabitants of Great Britain and the western front. North America quickly became the primary supplier of foodstuffs to the Allied countries, and as the “breadbasket of the Empire,” the burden to fill shortages in Britain and the trenches fell largely upon the shoulders of Canada. The critical need for foodstuffs both at home and abroad contributed to the severe rise in the cost of living, both in Europe and in North America. The public outcry in response to the sharp increase in prices called for immediate government intervention. As the situation became more acute, the Canadian government was forced to intervene and appointed a Food Controller in June of 1917. To incorporate food control within the existing framework of the Canadian war effort, the government drew on the already prevalent notions of wartime thrift and saving, and extended these to include the material goals of food economy and conservation, with the aim of freeing up surplus food for the overseas effort. Thus, an integral component of the wartime thrift mentality was articulated through food control; there, the moralized rhetoric of war-saving took on a more tangible connection to both the war effort and popular expressions of wartime thrift. Whereas previous appeals of wartime thrift had been rooted in providing money for the war effort, thrift within the context of food control was rooted in freeing surplus food for Allies and feeding loved ones overseas; thus, framed as a means

to directly assist family members on the Western Front, this aspect of thrift and conservation was imbued with a much more direct and emotionally laden meaning for many Canadians, particularly women.

Canadian food control of the First World War has received sparse attention from historians who have instead focused on other aspects of the home front, or on the more extreme regulatory food measures of the Second World War.³⁷⁷ While Canadians of the first war were able to avoid the formalized coupon rationing that would mark the experiences of many in the second war, the reliance on a predominantly voluntary scheme as the backbone of First World War food control efforts makes it a unique and important case. In fact, the experience and knowledge gained from food control in the First World War would largely colour the framework of rationing schemes and other food measures adopted between 1939 and 1945.³⁷⁸ In light of this connection, it is interesting also to note one of the starkest differences. Historian Ian Mosby has observed the high level of public support that rationing and other food control measures achieved during the Second World

³⁷⁷ In his work on First World War propaganda, Keshen gives cursory attention to food control, as does Desmond Morton in his study of soldier's families. See Jeffrey Keshen, *Propaganda and Censorship during Canada's Great War*, (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 1996): 52. See also Desmond Morton, *Fight or Pay: Soldiers' Families in the Great War*, (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2004): 204-210. Similarly, Morton & Granatstein examine food shortages but focus primarily on campaigns for increased agricultural production, as does John Herd Thompson in his study of wartime agriculture. See Desmond Morton and J.L. Granatstein, *Marching to Armageddon: Canadians and the Great War 1914-1919*, (Lester & Orpen Denny's, 1989): 83-91. See also, John Herd Thompson, *Harvests of War: The Prairie West, 1914-1918*, (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart Limited, 1978). Morton and Granatstein examine shortages but focus more on agriculture/increased production campaigns.

³⁷⁸ Ian Mosby, *Food Will Win the War: The Politics, Culture, and Science of Food on Canada's Home Front*, (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2014): 64.

War; however, the same cannot be so easily claimed for the food control of almost a quarter-century earlier. While many consumers appealed to the Borden government to reduce the cost of food, the price-fixing and rationing measures long demanded by the public were never adopted by either the Food Controller or its successor, the Canada Food Board. This encouraged an already present popular dissatisfaction as it became even more clear that the financial and material burdens of war, particularly in the realm of food, were not equally shared by all Canadians. The wartime buzzwords of thrift, conservation, economy, and community began to ring hollow as they were seen to originate from hypocritical government bureaucrats who were out of touch with public realities. But, similar to the thrift campaign and despite criticisms levied towards institutional food control, volunteer efforts on behalf of individuals and organizations promoting food thrift and economy were both immense and unprecedented. The National Council of Women and its member service organizations took up the mantle of food conservation and economy with vigour. The idealism behind food thrift engendered nation-wide participation, and at the same time, spawned vocal criticisms of what many viewed as misguided, misdirected, and often unfair government measures. In this way, wartime food conservation serves as a stark example of how the patriotic and voluntary spirit fought to prevail over the prevalent and visible social inequalities which threatened to undermine the home front war effort.

This chapter examines thrift and economy within the context of both institutional food control and popular efforts towards food conservation during wartime, paying particular attention to public demands for increased regulation. I argue that Canadian food control, by rejecting the public's call for price fixing and rationing, remained largely ineffectual in the eyes of the public, and allowed for a system that emphasized social

inequalities of class and gender. I further argue that tensions between institutional and popular food control illuminate underlying tensions between rural and urban Canadians. Additionally, institutional food control illuminated class tensions as it further emphasized to the public that the material burdens and sacrifices driving the war effort were not equally shared. However, where organized food control succeeded was in perpetuating established notions of wartime thrift and saving, and creating what many perceived to be a meaningful forum and outlet for individual and collective participation in the war effort, regardless of its actual effectiveness and contribution to Allied victory. Within the larger context of wartime thrift, food control offered a more tangible, measurable, and sensual means of patriotic expression than other volunteer efforts.

Wartime Food Prices

When war broke out in 1914, food supplies became an immediate concern of the Allied nations, particularly in Great Britain. By early 1917, the food situation had become the most pressing issue of the war, as it directly affected the greatest number of people. Indirectly, it had the potential to affect the very outcome of the war effort. Livestock and crop yields were greatly depleted in Europe, and while 1915 had produced a record harvest in the Canadian prairies, the wheat crops of North America fell short the following year.³⁷⁹ To supply Great Britain and the European Allies with wheat, Allied governments believed that 971,000,000 bushels were needed; however, when considering the crop yields in those

³⁷⁹ John H. Thompson, “‘Permanently Wasteful but Immediately Profitable’: Prairie Agriculture and the Great War,” *Historical Papers/Communications Historiques*, 11, 1 (1976): 193. Between 1913-1917, France’s grain crops dropped a total of 57% as a result of the war; see Jeffrey Keshen, *Propaganda and Censorship during Canada’s Great War*, (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 1996): 52.

countries, in addition to those available for export from North America (after what was required for domestic use), there remained a shortage of approximately 370,000,000 bushels for Great Britain and the European Allies.³⁸⁰ In addition to other foods needed for the war effort, like meats, fruits, and vegetables, this shortage placed tremendous strain on the food supply. Despite this, in Canada, there remained more than enough food to feed the population; by the end of the war, acreage devoted to wheat crops in Canada had doubled.³⁸¹ The problem was rather how to increase production and through substitution and conservation, free-up available foodstuffs for export to overseas Allies.³⁸²

An additional problem lay in the resulting increase in prices as traditional food supply chains were altered to cater to the needs of war. As previously discussed, the high cost of living was already an issue prior to and leading into the war; however, the food situation of 1916-1917 severely amplified the problem. Like other classes of commodities which had become scarcer as Canadian production refocused on the war effort, food was no exception when it came to dramatic price increases. Likewise, there was little the government could do to control prices as the nation's commerce remained intrinsically linked to the international wartime economy. The Canadian Department of Labour published the change in the average price of foods in 60 centres (considering thirty 'necessary' or common items) between May 1914 and May of 1917, showing a 59%

³⁸⁰ J. Castell Hopkins, *The Canadian Annual Review of Public Affairs. 1917*, (Toronto: The Canadian Annual Review, Ltd., 1918): 361.

³⁸¹ Thompson, p193. The increase in wheat acreage came at great expense. Thompson argues that short-term modes of agricultural expansion negatively impacted prairie farms in the long term by promoting cereal monoculture, and the abandonment of summer-fallowing and other dry-farming techniques.

³⁸² T.A. Crerar, *Report of the Canada Food Board, 1918*, (Ottawa: 1918): 2.

increase from \$7.42 to \$11.82.³⁸³ Some of the most notable increases during this same period include flour (increase of 112%), potatoes (increase of 135%), beans (increase of 167%), granulated and yellow sugar (increase of 75%), bread (increase of 75%), bacon (increase of 56%), butter (increase of 52%), and eggs (increase of 44%).³⁸⁴ While the above list represents only a few examples of staple items, virtually all Canadian foodstuffs experienced a rise in pricing during this period.

While prices continued to increase, Allied concern over the actual food supply was somewhat relieved following the abundant North American harvest of 1915. In his post-war review of the British food situation during the war, Sir William Beveridge observed that during the second year of war, discussions of “food supply” had almost disappeared from the pages of Hansard, and was instead merged into the larger question of the race between wages and prices. While the government continued to take action behind the scenes, he states that in general discussion at least, the public and parliament largely forgot about the “food question” during 1915, until the situation became acute in 1916.³⁸⁵ However, the same placidity cannot be said of Canadians in regard to food during that same time. While commodity prices were high across the board, the wartime price increases in foodstuffs struck a particularly sharp chord with the Canadian public.

³⁸³ Hopkins, *The Canadian Annual Review of Public Affairs*. 1917, 440. In it's *How to Live in Wartime* pamphlet of 1917, the National Service Board issued slightly varying numbers, citing an increase from July 1914 to July 1917 as an increase from \$7.41 to \$11.61.

³⁸⁴ The National Service Board, *How to Live in War Time*, (Ottawa: J. de L. Taché, 1917): 17.

³⁸⁵ Sir William H. Beveridge, *British Food Control*, (London: Oxford University Press, 1928): 9-10.

In October 1915, the topic of high prices was at the forefront of NCWC discussions as Mrs. Shortt, the Provincial Vice-President of the Ontario branch, in reference to a council report on household economics questioned why the prices of eggs and butter were still so high.³⁸⁶ In January of 1917 *Maclean's* reported: "...most staple articles of food are going up almost to prohibitory prices...[b]utter and eggs are becoming luxuries; and at their present rate of skyward flight will soon be found only on the tables of the very rich."³⁸⁷ Additionally, the magazine pointed out that those who could not keep up with rising prices were often forced to go without. February of 1917 saw women in Montreal storm the city hall in desperation, as they claimed that the rising cost of food made it impossible to feed their families.³⁸⁸ That spring Lucy Bell of Innisfree, Alberta, noted that in May of 1917 flour had become unaffordable, while butter had reached fifty cents per pound, meat thirty cents per pound, eggs forty cents per carton, and, in general, food prices were "getting worse all the time."³⁸⁹ When compared to the prewar costs of meat at fourteen cents per pound, butter at twenty-six cents per pound, and eggs at twenty-six cents per dozen, the increase was striking.³⁹⁰ The burden of rising prices was felt nation-wide as many Canadian consumers struggled to 'get-by' in wartime. Some organizations suggested the means to tackle price increases was to work together with the local Housewives Leagues, and engage

³⁸⁶ (National Council Meeting of October 21, 1915), "Meetings: Minutes May 1913 – March 1917" MG28, I25, Volume 24, File 1, Reel H-2011, p200, Library and Archives Canada.

³⁸⁷ "Business Outlook," *Maclean's*, (January 1917): 76.

³⁸⁸ "East Side Mothers Crusade for Food," *The Globe*, (21 February 1917), 3.

³⁸⁹ Letter, Lucy Bell to Mr. and Mrs. Bell, *William Henry Bell Collection*, First World War, (15 May 1917), *Canadian Letters and Images Project* [www.canadianletters.ca], accessed on 2 January 2015.

³⁹⁰ James Powell, *The History of the Canadian Dollar* (Ottawa: The Bank of Canada, 2005): 90.

in boycotts of overpriced goods.³⁹¹ But there is little evidence that such boycotts occurred at any grand level in Canada, or had any measurable effect.

Perhaps even more aggravating, the public perception that the wartime burden was not equally shared – a theme that permeated the thrift campaign rhetoric in the later years of the war – continued to spread. While the heightened cost of foodstuffs was felt on a national level, it was clear that not everyone was subjected to this hardship. As the price of flour rose in the early days of war, uneven increases in price across the country did not escape notice. A Mr. Ashwell wrote to the *Vancouver Daily Province* inquiring why sugar cost twenty cents *more* per 100lbs in Vancouver than it cost in Winnipeg.³⁹² In her study of food in the Lakehead region during the war, Beverley Soloway noted that Fort William, in April 1916, experienced the highest prices in Canada for milk and bread; this regional spike in prices prompted Thomas Crothers, Minister of Labour, to threaten the local food dealers who had raised prices with prosecution and other heavy penalties, should they not lower prices immediately.³⁹³ In a letter to the city council, he expressed his confusion and consternation at why prices should be so much higher in Fort William than in other parts of Canada, arguing that there was “no good reason”.³⁹⁴ Anger and confusion over the seemingly unpredictable instances of war inflation could be found at even the highest levels.

³⁹¹ “La cherté de la vie,” *La Bonne Parole* (December 1916): 4.

³⁹² Geo. H. Ashwell, Letter-to-the-Editor, “On Price of Sugar,” *Vancouver Daily Province* (13 August 1914): 8.

³⁹³ Beverley Soloway, “Victory in the Kitchen: Food Control in the Lakehead during the Great War,” *ActiveHistory.ca* (2014) <http://activehistory.ca/papers/victory-in-the-kitchen-food-control-in-the-lakehead-during-the-great-war/> (Accessed 13 January 2015).

³⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

Popular perceptions of unequal sharing of wartime burdens were not limited to regional disparities within Canada but extended to Imperial disparities as well. Since Canadians were giving men and resources to carry out their Imperial duty, many expressed consternation when it appeared that their British counterparts were experiencing a greater reprieve from prices than they were in Canada. Mr. Macaulay from Welcome Pass, BC, asked the *Vancouver Daily Province* in early 1915 why bread should cost four cents per pound in England while it was sold in his province for five cents per pound.³⁹⁵ Another woman asked the *Montreal Star* in late 1916 why a two pound loaf of bread in that city should cost the same as a two and one-half pound loaf in England.³⁹⁶ While many Canadians willingly made sacrifices for the Allied war effort, they could not understand why they should be making sacrifices so that their British counterparts could pay less for the very things Canadians were conserving at personal and national expense.

As the war dragged on, these apparent inequalities became amplified in the public mind. Moreover, the government's inaction on the issue did little to assuage a disgruntled and price-fatigued Canadian public. While the government recognized the need for conservation of food supplies, it had to this point relied solely on public goodwill and cooperation, publishing advertisements calling for voluntary reduction of food waste, conservation of staple foods, and increased production of foodstuffs.³⁹⁷ A cooperative

³⁹⁵ Chas. F. Macaulay, Letter-to-the-Editor, "High Cost of Living," *Vancouver Daily Province*, (15 February 1915): 8.

³⁹⁶ Hilary, Letter-to-the-Editor, "The Prices of Food," *Montreal Star* (2 September 1916): 10.

³⁹⁷ Advertisement, "Production and Thrift," *Maclean's* (June 1916): 80. These advertisements, or variations thereof, appeared in every publication reviewed for this thesis.

measure between the Departments of Agriculture and Finance, this campaign was not accompanied by any formal regulation. Rather, they were one part of the larger, voluntary government-sponsored thrift campaign initiated by the Minister of Finance in late 1916. Given the lack of compulsion or regulation behind this advertisement scheme, Canadian consumers were, for the time being, left without a satisfactory resolution to the food problem.

From the perspective of consumers, the lack of a formalized government regulatory policy to this point was perplexing. Even before the food situation reached the critical point in late 1916, the government had been petitioned for the need of some sort of food control measures from the very outset of the war. As early as August 1914, the *Grain Growers' Guide* called upon the government to regulate the price of food immediately following the outbreak of war, arguing that “the war will bring hardship and privation enough to this country if the prices are kept at the normal level.”³⁹⁸ The *Guide* argued that it was the responsibility of the government to take preventative action against those individuals or dealers who might seek to take advantage of the war by raising prices unnecessarily. If the public could foresee this danger so clearly, many wondered why the government’s perception of this same issue seemed to be so clouded. Given the already high cost of living, the fear of wartime profiteering at the expense of patriotic citizens in wartime was rife.³⁹⁹

³⁹⁸ “Regulating the Price of Food”, *Grain Growers' Guide*, (19 August 1914): 5.

³⁹⁹ The issue of profiteering will be explored further in Chapter 5.

As early as November of 1914, the National Council of Women, with great foresight, passed a resolution to

...petition the Dominion Government to enact a law, to come into immediate force (in order to conserve the food raised in Canada, for its natural uses...feeding the multitudes) that during the continuance of this most terrible war, no grain, nor vegetable of whatsoever kind shall be diverted from its natural use to be employed in the manufacture of alcoholic beverages, and that all brewers and distillers shall discontinue for the present the manufacture of the same.⁴⁰⁰

While the intention behind the above resolution was partially linked to wartime prohibition, the notion that foodstuffs must not be wasted in wartime and should be conserved to feed the masses was paramount. Cereals, in particular, would become the most difficult foodstuffs to manage for the duration of the war as high prices of meat and vegetables forced many lower-income families to turn to breadstuffs to supplement calories. At the same time, Allied governments struggled to free these necessary grains for shipment overseas.

Food Control

As Canadians became increasingly disquieted over the food situation, pleas for the federal government to alleviate the rising cost of foodstuffs continued. In September of 1916, labour groups petitioned the government for a federally appointed body to regulate food and fuel prices.⁴⁰¹ In November of 1916, the NCWC petitioned the Prime Minister again, this time directly:

⁴⁰⁰ “Resolution 28” (Executive Meeting of November 24, 1914), “Meetings: Minutes May 1913 – March 1917” MG28, I25, Volume 24, File 1, Reel H-2011, p34, Library and Archives Canada.

⁴⁰¹ “Labour Men Want to Restrict Food Prices in Canada” *Montreal Star* (4 September 1916): 1.

The high cost of living is already being acutely felt by very many women of fixed and limited incomes, and the question of how their families are to be properly nourished and the food paid for is causing anxiety among many others than the number who are known as the poor. This then is our reason for urging these resolutions upon you.⁴⁰²

The letter contained a resolution requesting that the Dominion Government determine how the increased cost of living might be “remedied by wise measures”.⁴⁰³ An editorial in *Western Home Monthly* went so far as to claim that “the government, supine or incompetent, has proven itself utterly useless in such an emergency, and it is as plain as the nose on a man’s face that it is afraid to move.”⁴⁰⁴ Such comments reveal the abandonment and disappointment felt by many consumers as their government failed to provide relief during a time of crisis. However, afraid or not, Borden’s government would be forced to move on the issue in the following spring.

In November of 1916, the British parliament gave powers of food control to the Board of Trade, with the understanding that a Food Control Department would be organized. In December, the British government created a Ministry of Food and on 26 December 1916, appointed Lord Devonport as its first Food Controller. Given the increasing number of food queues in that country, regulation of food supply was immediately implemented. At first, orders were issued under authority of the Board of Trade “at the request” of the Food Controller; on 10 January 1917, all relevant powers were transferred expressly to the Food Controller.⁴⁰⁵ When the United States joined the war in

⁴⁰² Letter, To Robert Borden From National Council of Women of Canada, (25 November 1916) “Correspondence 1915-1917” MG28, I25, Volume 65, File 13, Reel H-2020, p776-777, Library and Archives Canada.

⁴⁰³ Ibid.

⁴⁰⁴ Editorial, “The High Cost of Living,” *Western Home Monthly* (December 1916): 3.

⁴⁰⁵ Beveridge, p33.

April 1917, it too immediately appointed Herbert Hoover, the man who had been in charge of organizing food for the American efforts to provide Belgian relief, as the American Food Controller.⁴⁰⁶ In addition to food control schemes in Great Britain and the United States, the early months of 1917 also saw France and Italy establish formal systems of compulsory food rationing.

The Canadian government was under more public pressure than ever to respond to the growing food crisis. The spring of 1917 saw Germany renew its policy of unrestricted submarine warfare, forcing Britain to make a priority of keeping supply routes open and rationing its existing food supply. Lord Devonport, in his first months as British Food Controller, had turned to Canada as the most logical source of Imperial foodstuffs and informed Prime Minister Borden of the British hierarchy of food needs so that Canada might be able to prioritize items for export to the Allies; topping the list was wheat, flour, and oatmeal, followed by bacon, ham and cheese.⁴⁰⁷

In the wake of other Allied food control schemes, the calls for Borden to act intensified. In May, the Duncan Board of Trade appealed to the Prime Minister to appoint a food controller;⁴⁰⁸ this was followed shortly after by similar appeals from the City Councils of Winnipeg, Halifax, and other large communities across the country. Also received were requests from various organizations, including the Toronto Boot and Shoe

⁴⁰⁶ Joan L. Sullivan, "In Pursuit of Legitimacy: Home Economists and the Hoover Apron in World War I," *Dress*, 26 (1999): 32.

⁴⁰⁷ Letter, To Robert Borden from Walter Long, (19 March 1917) "Borden Papers," MG 26, H 1c, Volume 164, Reel C-4371, p89127, Library and Archives Canada.

⁴⁰⁸ Letter, To Robert Borden From the Duncan Board of Trade, (5 May 1917) "Borden Papers," MG 26, H 1c, Volume 186, Reel C-4385, p102368, Library and Archives Canada.

Workers Union Local 233 and the Toronto Ratepayers' Associations, as well as the Victoria Conservative Association, the Trade and Labour Councils of St. John, Moose Jaw, Sault Ste Marie, and Steelton, the Citizens League of Sydney, the Edmonton and Nanaimo Boards of Trade, the London Mothers' Club, the Bread and Cake Manufacturers' Association of Canada, and many others, in addition to a number of private appeals.⁴⁰⁹ The Borden government could no longer ignore the public outcry against the rising cost of foodstuffs.

Much like other voluntary efforts during the war, the cooperation of Canada's women would be crucial to any type of food control or food conservation scheme – and of this the government was aware. As has already been established, women's organizations had been central in helping Canadians cope with the changing conditions of wartime. In addition to pressing for government intervention, the NCWC had initiated a campaign encouraging families to bake more at home and to grow their own fruits and vegetables when possible, so as to avoid high bakers' and grocers' prices.⁴¹⁰ They tasked a number of local Household Leagues, answerable to the organization's national Convenor of Household Economics, with helping Canadians navigate the waters of wartime inflation. In addition to encouraging consumer action, in particular the application of social pressure on the government to implement price regulations over foodstuffs, the household leagues attempted a number of means to bring down food prices for their members. In many cities,

⁴⁰⁹ Letter, To Robert Borden From Various, (May 1917) "Borden Papers," MG 26, H 1c, Volume 186, Reel C-4385, p102311-102420, Library and Archives Canada. A number of additional requests of a similar nature not found in these archives, are detailed in Hopkins, *The Canadian Annual Review (1917)*, 363.

⁴¹⁰ Mrs. Wilson, "Household Leagues," *Woman's Century*, 2, 10 (March 1915): 14.

household leagues purchased large quantities of staple foodstuffs – cereals, oats, tea and sugar – and then passed on the savings to their members by selling the items with no overhead charges.⁴¹¹ *Woman's Century* published articles on how to purchase the “highest nutritive value at the lowest cost” during wartime, and as we have seen, educated women on “intelligent buying” and how to apply this when shopping for foodstuffs.⁴¹² The NCWC was also one of the main voices behind the appeal to government for the legalization of the use of margarine in wartime, as a much cheaper alternative to butter (the sale of margarine in Canada had been banned since 1886).⁴¹³ In an attempt to lower milk prices for consumers, the NCWC also encouraged all local councils to advocate that ice-cream be treated as a luxury during wartime, so that large quantities of milk might be released for ordinary consumption.⁴¹⁴ By early 1917, the women's clubs of Canada had established themselves as the forefront of consumer advocacy and domestic food management in wartime.

In preparation for what was then an inevitable appointment of a food control system, a member of the government reached out to a prominent leader in Canada's leaders

⁴¹¹ “Household League of Ottawa,” *Woman's Century*, 2, 10 (March 1915): 14. While this report focused on activities in Ottawa, it discussed similar activities in numerous other cities.

⁴¹² John W.S. McCullough, “The Best Foods to Buy During the War,” *Woman's Century*, 3, 2 (August 1915): 14. The subject of ‘intelligent buying’ came up repeatedly in each issue, beginning in early 1915.

⁴¹³ Report of the Corresponding Secretary to the Executive Committee, (16 November 1916) in National Council of Women of Canada, “Official Documents (Vol. XXV) 1916, MG 28, I25, Volume 108, File 1, p1034, Library and Archives Canada. The Council passed and forwarded the resolution after an initial request from the Peterborough local council.

⁴¹⁴ *Ibid*, p1038.

in food domestic food management. At a special meeting of the national executive of the IODE, the minutes detail how

Mrs. Gooderham spoke of an informal meeting which had been held at her residence on the evening of the 8th of May at which various members of the Executive and the advisory board had been present. A message had been received by telephone from Ottawa relative to the 'Food Problem' and asking the Order to stake steps to urge the members of the Order to pledge themselves to two meatless and two potatoless days every week.⁴¹⁵

The IODE accepted the duty without question, and immediately drafted a resolution which they sent to the Associated Press "in the spirit of humble service" asking members to pledge themselves to observe the meatless and potatoless days as requested by the enigmatic phone call from Ottawa. This "voluntary measure" conveniently mirrored compulsory regulations put in place by the British Food Controller in the previous month.⁴¹⁶ Additionally, they primed the public for further upcoming measures by impressing "the terrible gravity of the situation and the imperative need of loyal and immediate co-operation," and encouraged every woman "to acquaint herself with the various aspects...of this many sided problem."⁴¹⁷ This appeal appeared in every major news publication across the Dominion.

With the support of the IODE and the larger National Council of Women, on June 16, 1917, the government passed an order-in-council under the *War Measures Act* creating the position of Dominion Food Controller, and on June 20, Hon. William J. Hanna accepted

⁴¹⁵ A Special Meeting of the National Executive I.O.D.E., (10 May 1917), in National Council of Women of Canada, "Minutes of the National Chapter of Canada Imperial Order Daughters of the Empire" (8 February 1917-8 May 1918), MG 28, I17, Volume 2, File 6, p67, Library and Archives Canada.

⁴¹⁶ Beveridge, 36. These compulsory regulations, put in place by Lord Devonport in April 1917, would be repealed a little more than a month later as it was discovered that such regulations put increasing demands on the short supply of cereals.

⁴¹⁷ *Ibid*, pp.68-69.

the position along with C.A. Magrath, who was appointed as Canada's first Fuel Controller.⁴¹⁸ Hanna was a close advisor to Borden, and well known for his accomplishments in the Ontario legislature where he was largely responsible for the 1914 *Ontario Temperance Act* and for prison legislation. There was even speculation that he was in line to become a future leader of the Ontario Conservative Party and Premier of Ontario.⁴¹⁹ When Hoover had been appointed to the American Food Administration he had accepted the position with the condition that he not be paid. He felt the position would "carry more moral leadership if he were a volunteer alongside his countrymen in war."⁴²⁰ By the time Hanna was appointed, Hoover was being lauded in both the American and Canadian press. Not to be upstaged, Hanna too accepted his post with no salary, and immediately set to work attempting to solve the nation's food woes.

The early months of British Food Control occurred under the purview of Lord Devonport, who left the position by the time of Hanna's appointment. Yet, Hanna's initial program took several cues from the first British Food Controller. Under the oversight of Devonport, several regulations were passed governing the lengthening of the extraction of wheat (11 January 1917), placing restrictions on the use of grain in brewing (29 March 1917), and eventually the taking over of large flour mills (20 April 1917).⁴²¹ Devonport would also impress upon the public a voluntary rationing scheme, but this largely fell flat. Although some headway was made in regards to regulating supplies, Devonport's months

⁴¹⁸ Order-in-Council, P.C. 1579, (8 June 1917).

⁴¹⁹ *Robert Laird Borden: His Memories, Volume 2*. Edited by Henry Borden. (Toronto: The Macmillan Company of Canada Limited, 1938): 730.

⁴²⁰ Hoover, cited in Rae Katherine Eighmey, "Food Will Win the War': Minnesota Conservation Efforts, 1917-1918," *Minnesota History*, (Fall 2005): 274.

⁴²¹ Beveridge, p34.

as British Food Controller were marked in the eyes of the British public by disorganization, avoidance of priority issues, and a lack of appreciation of public realities. Devonport found himself in the precarious position where the more action he took, the more he was criticized for the actions he did not take. By May of 1917, only a few months after his appointment, the Food Committee of the Royal Society submitted a report to the British parliament outspokenly condemning the utterances, activities, and policy of British Food Controller.⁴²² By the end of that month, pressure had reached such a point that Devonport offered his resignation.⁴²³ Lord Rhondda was appointed as the new British Food Controller on 15 June 1917 – the beginning of his tenure coincided with Hanna’s appointment in Canada.

The early months of Rhondda’s tenure as food controller were marked by a number of overarching goals which guided his many actions. He focused more heavily on fixing prices through expanding government control of food supplies, he embarked on a program of decentralization whereby he asked over 2000 local authorities to appoint food control committees who were answerable to the food controller, and he launched a rigorous propaganda campaign to enlist voluntary compliance from the British people.⁴²⁴ This structure primed the British public for the necessary condition of compulsory rationing at the end of 1917, when the food situation reached its most critical point. Rhondda’s

⁴²² Beveridge, p49.

⁴²³ Ibid. Devonport offered his resignation on grounds of “ill health” although following a review of relevant documents, Beveridge concludes that this resignation was linked to declining public opinion.

⁴²⁴ Ibid, p50.

administrative structure and extensive campaign efforts would also serve as a guiding influence in Canadian food control.

Hoover's brand of food control differed greatly from that of Britain's, in avoiding compulsion and excessive regulatory measures, and instead relying predominantly on the voluntary cooperation of the American public. The official position of the American government remained that there was no compulsory need for Americans to reduce overall consumption of foodstuffs; however, food conservation campaigns invoking voluntary participation were so successful that in 1919 it was estimated that about 70% of American families had "joined the food administration" during the war.⁴²⁵ Where Hoover did foray into regulation, mainly in the realm of buying and selling agricultural products, far fewer intrusions were made into the free market. Hoover's greatest regulatory accomplishment would be the creation of the Grain Corporation and Sugar Equalization Board which attempted to organize the selling of wheat and sugar from the United States to South America.⁴²⁶ Observing the approaches and experiences of his counterparts to June 1917, Hanna's approach to food control would carefully combine aspects of both the American and British models.

Under the new system, Canadian food fell into three categories: first, food produced as a surplus beyond domestic needs and available for purchase by Allied governments; second, food meant to fulfill domestic needs and subject to regulation by the food

⁴²⁵ Helen Zoe Veit, *Modern Food, Moral Food: Self-Control, Science, and the Rise of Modern American Eating in the Early Twentieth Century*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2013): 19.

⁴²⁶ Ian F.W. Beckett, *The Great War* (Harlow: Pearson Education Ltd., 2007): 382.

controller; and third, food produced as a surplus and exported to third party individuals or organizations.⁴²⁷ A system of formal rationing, like the one eventually adopted in Great Britain, was immediately dismissed by Hanna as impractical due to Canada's vast geography and decentralized population. Moreover, while the food situation was critical, it was not yet deemed to have reached a point serious enough to warrant the vast administration that would be necessary for such a scheme.⁴²⁸ Rather, the food controller was vested with a number of duties and powers that enabled him to control food through three means: first, by directing purchases by and exports to Allied countries; second, by licensing and regulating food dealers within Canada; and third, granting import and export permits for food commodities that fell outside the umbrella of Allied purchases.⁴²⁹ This system of supply regulation was modelled after Devonport's brand of British Food Control. Hanna also followed the lead of Lord Rhondda, his contemporary, by augmenting supply regulation with vast public campaigns for increased production and food conservation that used a variety of tactics to gain voluntary compliance.

Upon taking office, Hanna was well-aware that the greatest issue in the public mind was the steadily increasing cost-of-living; however, he found himself in a precarious position as his powers fell short of allowing him address this issue directly.⁴³⁰ Yet, he did not hesitate to take action where he could. On the domestic front, Hanna was quick to pass several regulations, aimed at curbing food in the context of luxury. The food controllers

⁴²⁷ Crerar, *Report of the Canada Food Board* (1918): 17.

⁴²⁸ *Ibid*, p4.

⁴²⁹ *Ibid*.

⁴³⁰ Hanna's report of January 1918 highlighted this contradiction and the difficult position he was in upon accepting the role of Food Controller in the summer of 1917. See W. J. Hanna, *Report of the Food Controller* (Ottawa: 1918): 13.

first regulations enforced a shift in the perception of food as an indulgence to food as a necessity of basic survival. In this way, food control was introduced to the Canadian public as an officially endorsed scheme of widespread culinary asceticism.

In August 1917, an order-in-council placed restrictions on public eating places. Over 16,000 notices were sent to public eating places across the country, including hotels, restaurants, boarding houses, clubs, etc.⁴³¹ The serving of beef or bacon was limited to one meal per day and Tuesday and Thursday were deemed “meatless days” – a habit that had already been encouraged by the I.O.D.E. and NCWC since the weeks leading up to Food Control. As well, restaurants were required to offer bread substitutes to reduce the consumption of wheat, and in every public eating place a notice was to be hung reminding patrons of the Allied food needs, urging them to choose substitutes when possible, thereby conserving items most required for export overseas. Restrictions were placed over the use of wheat in the manufacture of alcohol.⁴³² Further limits were placed on the purchase of canned fruits and vegetables, and people were encouraged to eat fresh produce as much as possible, as preserved items were more easily sent overseas.⁴³³ By November 1917, another order-in-council prohibited the export of butter, milk, sugar, wheat, meats, fish, and other items to any nation except the United Kingdom or its territories.⁴³⁴ These regulations were supported by a complex licensing system which was begun under the purview of Hanna, and would be later expanded throughout 1918 by his successor, the Canada Food Board.

⁴³¹ “Important Saving of Beef and Bacon is Shown,” *Canadian Food Bulletin*, 1 (6 October 1917): 1.

⁴³² Order-in-Council, P.C. 2190, (9 August 1917).

⁴³³ Order-in-Council, P.C. 2352, (24 August 1917).

⁴³⁴ Order-in-Council, P.C. 3211, (15 November 1917).

By requiring licenses for the manufacture and distribution of staple foodstuffs, the Food Controller kept tabs on food supplies across the country, while also drawing an income to sustain the activities of his office.

To help with the logistics of enacting food control across the vast expanse of Canada, Hanna modelled the structure of his office after the decentralized structure of British food control. By the end of 1917, Hanna had formed eight committees responsible for eight areas of food control: The Control of Public Eating Houses Committee, the Fish Committee, the Milk Committee, the Live Stock Committee, the Fruit and Vegetable Committee, the Millers' Committee, the Packers' Committee, and the Cold Storage Committee. Each committee comprised experts in the respective field, and would report and make recommendations to the food controller as necessary.⁴³⁵ The food control office itself was divided into several departments, including Education and Publicity, Production and Conservation, Domestic Science, Office Staff, Exports (Licensing and Accounting), Provincial Branches, and International Relations. This organizational structure was closely modelled after the British scheme.

To keep the public informed of work being done by the Food Controller, Hanna began publishing the *Canadian Food Bulletin*. The first issue appeared on 6 October 1917, and continued bi-weekly publication until early 1919, producing a total of 22 issues.⁴³⁶ It was distributed regularly to a list of over 30,000 recipients.⁴³⁷ The introductory issue

⁴³⁵ Hanna, *Report of the Food Controller*, p26.

⁴³⁶ The first ten issues of the *Canadian Food Bulletin* were published under authority of the Food Controller, while the remaining 12 issues were published under authority of his successor, the Canada Food Board.

⁴³⁷ Hanna, *Report of the Food Controller*, pp.28-29. The list included "legislators, federal and provincial judges, clergymen, professors, crown attorneys, bank managers,

contained pieces on the benefits of food conservation measures – namely, that regulations enforcing meatless days in public eating houses, along with reduced wheat consumption, had resulted in a fifty-one percent reduction in the consumption of bacon, and a forty percent reduction in beef during the preceding month.⁴³⁸ The second most notable aspect of the premier issue was a lengthy contribution explaining the precarious position of the Food Controller and the difficulty with fixing prices. Authored by Hanna himself, the article suggested that price-fixing – something the food controller was unwilling to do – would result in “a complete disruption of all trades, a total breakdown of real estate values, and utter demoralization of labour conditions in their cities...”⁴³⁹ Instead, he argued:

The first duty of the Food Controller...is not to cut prices, eliminate middlemen, ‘sell at cost,’ or correct in a day economic evils which an unthrifty and luxurious use has allowed, even encouraged, to grow up, but to protect Canada, the Canadian troops, and our share of the wall of the Empire, against disaster through famine! – I use the word without exaggeration. I can do this only by decreasing consumption and, as far as possible, increasing production. Against the other price-raising factors, against competitive buying by foreign governments, against unequal distribution of resources, against speculators, greedy middlemen and wasters, the public will be vigilantly protected.⁴⁴⁰

Boards of Trade, public libraries, school inspectors, district representatives of Agricultural Departments, officials of labour unions and secretaries of all labour union branches, 6,000 of the leading business firms of Canada, officers of the Y.M.C.A., branches and members of the National Council of Women, Daughters of the Empire, Women’s Institutes, W.C.T.U., all clubs in Canada, every daily, weekly and monthly newspaper and magazine in Canada, Commercial Travellers’ Association officers, secretaries of local boards, Wholesale and Retail Merchants’ Associations...and the mayors, advocates, and physicians of the Province of Quebec.”

⁴³⁸ “Important Saving of Beef and Bacon is Shown,” *Canadian Food Bulletin*, 1 (6 October 1917): 1.

⁴³⁹ W.J. Hanna, “The Cost of Lower Prices,” *Canadian Food Bulletin*, 1 (6 October 1917): 3.

⁴⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

Principally, the *Bulletin* was the official organ of the food controller, where he could explain and promote his programs, engaging with the concerns of the public. The wide distribution of the *Bulletin* allowed Hanna a controlled space to shape the wartime food problem in the image of his choice.

Clearly unwilling to pursue price-fixing, Hanna instead focussed heavily on voluntary public food conservation and reduction of food waste. The necessary condition of success for this voluntary campaign would lie in widespread individual participation.⁴⁴¹ Given the extensive demands for government intervention, the public was primed for direction from the food controller. Accordingly, through the pages of the *Bulletin*, in cooperation with advertisement spots purchased in major publications throughout the Dominion, the food controller carefully crafted his appeal to the public. Unlike his counterparts in Europe, Hanna had the added challenge of convincing a public, who was physically distant and removed from the European war, that the principles of food conservation were valid and urgent.⁴⁴² Canadian food control had to calculate a way to overcome this hurdle. As such, Hanna's program was pervasive, reaching as many Canadians as possible through a variety of means; his program was patriotic, appealing to the wartime nationalism that was, by 1917, the dominant public expression and sentiment; and his program was righteous, drawing on the moral imperative to help loved ones overseas. These factors were underlined by the very fact that food was an inescapable part

⁴⁴¹ W.J. Hanna, "Canada Must Practise Food Thrift," *Maclean's*, 31, 1 (October 1917): 44.

⁴⁴² In a report of his work to January 1918, Hanna lamented that Canada's distance from the war was perhaps his greatest challenge, suggesting that "we hardly felt that we were involved in the war at all." This was second only to the habitual abundance he believed was inherent to Canadian life. See Hanna, *Report of the Food Controller*, 12.

of everyday life, and Hanna's campaign was bolstered by the success of the Finance Minister's concurrent thrift campaign. More so than other wartime appeals, the calls for food conservation invaded the realm of the personal, calling for material sacrifice in the most basic of human activities – eating. Reinforced by an extensive network of educational programs, this approach made food control impossible to avoid in both the physical and emotional spaces of everyday life.

Food control, by the end of 1917, became one of the most pervasive aspects of the volunteer war effort. In addition to the *Bulletin*, Hanna appeared frequently in newspapers and magazines of both his own volition, contributing frequent editorials on particularly relevant issues.⁴⁴³ Beyond these personal contributions, he ensured that food control received extensive coverage in the press. During his time as food controller, over 143 official dispatches were telegraphed to every single daily newspaper in Canada. At the end of his tenure in January, 1918, Hanna suggested that an average of one-half column per day of official food control content had appeared in the larger papers during the previous six months. For papers in smaller or more rural communities, the food control office sent a weekly editorial by mail to 960 English-language and eighty-two French-language papers. Additionally, special articles were sent to large “illustrated weeklies” and

⁴⁴³ Hanna's press appearances are too numerous to list here, but some of his most notable print contributions outside of the *Bulletin* include a three page editorial in *Maclean's* (W.J. Hanna, “Canada Must Practice Food Thrift,” *Maclean's*, (November 1917): 43-45); and, a New Year's editorial in *The Globe* premier issue of 1918 (W.J. Hanna, “World Food Shortage Must be Canada's Problem During 1918,” *Globe*, (2 January 1918): 15. These are in addition to the numerous mass-print government advertisements for food control bearing his name and likeness that appeared in every major publication, as well as the hundreds of speeches which he gave during his tenure, also reported on frequently by every major publication. Of course, these were also supplemented by independent press coverage of his successes and failures.

magazine editions of the dailies, published in larger cities.⁴⁴⁴ For anyone who opened any newspaper or magazine, the issue of food conservation would have been impossible to avoid.

In addition to the omnipresence of food control as a subject in the press, Hanna was sure also to give food control an inescapable visual presence. In addition to advertisements, Hanna commissioned a number of posters to be placed in post offices, railway stations, and other public centres across the country. Hanna's posters did not contain images, but rather large, block letters in bold type with emphasis on phrases like "DO NOT WASTE" and "FOR VICTORY" and "FIGHT WITH FOOD".⁴⁴⁵ They were clear and assertive in their messaging. In addition to posters, over 16,000 public eating places were sent notices of regulations that were to be posted clearly for all patrons.⁴⁴⁶ And, in December of 1917, fifty of the leading hotels and restaurants in the country were issued cards, with blanks to be filled in, to show the "saving effected by the white flour, beef and bacon regulations" which had gone into effect a few months earlier. These, too, were to be displayed in a most prominent position, so as to catch the eye of every patron.⁴⁴⁷ Hanna also initiated a domestic pledge card campaign, modelled after the regulations in place at public-eating houses; these cards carried affirmations of food conservation, and were meant to be prominently displayed in every participating household. Eventually, this would be

⁴⁴⁴ Hanna, *Report of the Food Controller*, p28.

⁴⁴⁵ Posters, "Fight with Food," "Do Not Waste," "For Victory," (1914-1918), War Records Survey Posters, National Archives Poster Collection, Library and Archives Canada.

⁴⁴⁶ "Important Saving of Beef and Bacon is Shown," *Canadian Food Bulletin*, (6 October 1917): 1.

⁴⁴⁷ "Hotels Effect Saving," *Canadian Food Bulletin*, 4 (17 November 1917): 14.

extended by some local committees into a “Junior Pledge Card” scheme targeted at school children; boys and girls were asked to sign cards bearing the slogan “Lick your plate or be licked” and a “gospel of the clean plate pledge” encouraging them to finish all food, to not buy candy, to not complain over conservation meals, and to assist in war gardens during their spare time.⁴⁴⁸

The final capstone to Hanna’s campaign were the circulation of motion pictures; two films, entitled “Everybody’s Business” and “Waste Not, Want Not,” were put into circulation and were eventually played in over 160 theatres in the country.⁴⁴⁹ The first film was produced in Britain under the auspices of the British food controller and portrayed the conversion of a British family to adherence of food control measures, after the main character experiences a dream in which Germany is victorious. The second film was produced by the Food Controller’s Office in Ottawa and used a documentary style to illustrate the food situation and encourage food conservation measures.⁴⁵⁰ When considered cumulatively, Hanna’s food control consisted of a carefully constructed campaign that deliberately permeated both public and private life. For Canadians on the home front, the food control conversation was unavoidable.

The food control campaign was extensive, and yet, its voluntary nature left the public free to remain passive if they desired. However, this option was made increasingly difficult by the public nature of food and food-related activities in Canada. Changes in manufacturing and retailing over the decades leading into the war had made shopping both

⁴⁴⁸ “Lick Your Plate or Be Licked,” *Canadian Food Bulletin*, 14 (13 April 1918): 15.

⁴⁴⁹ “Food Films are Popular,” *Canadian Food Bulletin*, 12 (9 March 1918): 12.

⁴⁵⁰ “Food Control Films,” *Canadian Food Bulletin*, 3 (3 November 1917): 12.

an increasingly public and social experience. Thus, the choice to adhere to food conservation measures encouraged by the food controller was no longer a private one. Purchases could be scrutinized by shopkeepers and fellow customers to determine if they fell into the realm of the patriotic. In this way, the food control scheme established an informal mass surveillance network aimed at curbing the “voluntary” nature of food conservation. By assigning specific days as “meatless” or “wheatless”, Hanna had created a point around which the public could rally together in demonstration of their culinary patriotism; however, the presence of such days made it increasingly obvious when people were not participating. By not engaging in the performative aspects of public food conservation, individuals ran the risk of being labelled as ‘unpatriotic.’ Given the already pervasive notions of wartime thrift and self-denial, that this should happen in great numbers was unlikely. Hanna’s voluntary program was largely successful due to the promotion of informal surveillance networks in the public sphere – networks that were already on the lookout for “unthrifty” activity.⁴⁵¹ In the context of food control, citizens were directly encouraged to report any cases of “wilful waste” as part of their “patriotic duty”.⁴⁵² This was reinforced by frequent reminders in the *Food Bulletin*, whereby those who countered conservation efforts or broke food control regulations were publicly shamed, their delinquency and corresponding punishment(s) laid out in full for their peers to see and judge.⁴⁵³

⁴⁵¹ Veit acknowledges a similar environment in the American food conservation movement. See Veit, *Modern Food, Moral Food*, 19.

⁴⁵² “Report Wilful Waste: Idle Rumor Dangerous,” *Canadian Food Bulletin*, 18 (24 August 1918): 23.

⁴⁵³ One example of such public shaming was published in December of 1917. A restaurant owner was fined \$25 for serving beef at more than one meal in one day.

Hanna's food control was given further success as it became wholly integrated into the impressive wartime volunteer efforts of Canadian women. By 1917, the NCWC and its affiliates had proven themselves to be the leaders and authorities on domestic economy. Hanna accepted and relied on this fact heavily, placing much of the responsibility for food control's success on the enthusiastic cooperation of women's organizations, and their ability to pass the message forward and engage all Canadian women on both an individual and collective level. In the fall of 1917, Hanna appealed

It is...the woman of the house who can do the greatest part in this national campaign of food thrift. The woman can see to it that no food is wasted, that remnants of roasts and ends of loaves are not thrown into the garbage, that all oversupplies of vegetables and puddings are kept for a reappearance or for inclusion in a new dish...The woman can do her share by adhering to such rules for food regulation and regular abstinence as may be laid down. She can devise economies and plans for reducing the food consumption on her table. She can refrain from placing expensive and elaborate meals for company. She can stop serving dainty and expensive lunches, afternoon teas and after-theatre suppers...⁴⁵⁴

Whereas men were given a passive role, expected not to "grumble" and to "accept all restrictions cheerfully", women were given an extremely active role, charged with determining and carrying out the very logistics of food conservation.⁴⁵⁵ This message was continually reinforced in materials issued by the food controller's office. In *Win the War Suggestions and Recipes*, the authors argued that "without women's sacrifices there will

During Hanna's tenure, punishments were few and far between, but would increase greatly under the tenure of the Canada Food Board, beginning in 1918, when enforcement and punishment measures were expanded greatly. For above example, see "He Served Beef at Two Meals," *Canada Food Bulletin*, 6 (14 December 1917): 4.

⁴⁵⁴ Hanna, "Canada Must Practise Food Thrift," p44.

⁴⁵⁵ Ibid. Hanna's editorial was followed by two lists: "What Women Can Do" and "What Men Can Do". The tasks of men fell largely into the category of eating less and refusing restricted foods, whereas the tasks of women fell largely into determining alternative menus, more intensive shopping practices, and devising ways to use all leftovers without wasting any food.

be but little money, as men can't give if all they earn is squandered or carelessly wasted by their womankind."⁴⁵⁶ Once again the remedial burden was placed squarely on women's shoulders, and apparently, so was the initial fault.

While women may have been the primary targets of conservation propaganda, the messages relied on the patriotism that suffused the majority of Anglo-Canada. Like all wartime appeals, food posters encouraged people to "do their bit" through conservation.⁴⁵⁷ Participation, while voluntary, was underscored by the *necessity* of national and imperial duty in wartime. Such appeals were imbued with a sense of urgency as newspapers printed longer, and more frequent casualty lists in the later years of the war. In such an environment, posters depicting soldiers in action, accompanied by the appeal "We Are Saving You – You Save Food," aimed to strike a poignant note with Canadians on the home front. Food conservation presented an easy way for people of all ages to contribute to the war effort, and it reinforced the trend towards "total war."⁴⁵⁸

Another common theme found across official food control materials was a strong emphasis on family. While patriotism had been adequate motivation for much of the volunteer efforts in wartime, the food controller made a special appeal to those women

⁴⁵⁶ "Win the War Suggestions and Recipes," in Wilson, Barbara M. (Ed.), *Ontario and the First World War: A Collection of Documents*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press and the Champlain Society, 1977): 125.

⁴⁵⁷ Posters, "We Are Saving You – You Save Food," (1914-1918), War Records Survey Posters, National Archives Poster Collection, Library and Archives Canada.

⁴⁵⁸ See Arthur Marwick, *War and Social Change in the Twentieth Century*, (London: MacMillan Press Ltd., 1974), 217. The author defines "total war" as "a war involving whole populations; a war in which organisation of the domestic front becomes as important as organisation of the military front; a war into which is thrown every resource of science and technology, and every resource of propaganda: an 'all-out' and 'all-embracing' war."

who had been touched more directly by the war effort. For, in addition to helping British or French citizens who faced imminent starvation, the food conservation efforts were also aimed at feeding soldiers serving on the western front – soldiers whose relatives remained in Canada. Food propaganda exploited this relationship, portraying women who donned kitchen aprons – their own wartime uniforms – accompanied by text proclaiming, “She Helps Her Boy to Victory!”⁴⁵⁹ The Food Controller repeatedly reinforced such messages, decreeing:

Women of Canada, your work is of vital importance and the kitchen dress has become a uniform in which you may serve the Empire and humanity even as your men in the King’s uniform. *Their service cannot become effective without your help* [emphasis added].⁴⁶⁰

These appeals by Hanna were especially poignant as they were frequently accompanied by encouragement from British Prime Minister Andrew Lloyd George, British Food Controller Lord Rhondda, American Food Controller Herbert Hoover, and of course, Robert Borden.⁴⁶¹ With so many prominent and respected figures offering their endorsement for the food control campaign, public participation, while not compulsory in a legal sense, certainly became compulsory in the court of public opinion. Moreover, the

⁴⁵⁹ Posters, “She Helps Her Boy to Victory,” (1914-1918), War Records Survey Posters, National Archives Poster Collection, Library and Archives Canada.. In her examination of the American wartime food campaign, Marsha Gordon noted how the apron was mythologized through wartime propaganda and transformed into a symbol of national significance. See Marsha Gordon, “Onward Kitchen Soldiers: Mobilizing the Domestic during World War I,” *Canadian Review of American Studies*, 29, 2 (1999): 79.

⁴⁶⁰ W.J. Hanna, “Hot Breads,” *The Grain Growers’ Guide*, (17 October 1917): 35.

⁴⁶¹ An often reprinted quote from Lloyd George was: “The kitchen must help as well as the workshop and the trenches.” For an example, see Advertisement, “Save Food, Serve Empire,” *Maclean’s* (July 1917): 103.

uncertainty of the war's outcome left Canadians on the home front particularly susceptible to the opinions of their peers, lest anyone should be blamed in the case of defeat.

The patriotic and emotional rhetoric behind food control was underpinned by a definite emphasis on education. From his appointment, Hanna recognized that “the voluntary enlistment of the whole people in a campaign of waste elimination, food substitution and greater production, was essential, and that such enlistment would only be possible when the public were thoroughly aware of the facts.”⁴⁶² It was this belief that necessitated the initiation of a comprehensive and persistent educational campaign on the subject of food conservation. As part of the many press despatches sent to the Canadian Associated Press, weekly war menus for each of the seven days would also be sent regularly as part of the transmission.⁴⁶³ Additionally, 630,000 copies of the pamphlet “War Meals” were distributed to the public, 600,000 copies of the pamphlet “Canning for Victory,” 150,000 copies of the pamphlet “Eat More Fish” and 30,000 copies of a handbook for speakers on the subject of food control. All of these items were printed in both English and French.⁴⁶⁴

After seven months of dedicated service, Hanna resigned his position as food controller on January 24, 1918, citing ill health.⁴⁶⁵ On February 11, 1918, the department

⁴⁶² Hanna, *Report of the Food Controller*, p17.

⁴⁶³ *Ibid*, p28.

⁴⁶⁴ *Ibid*, p29.

⁴⁶⁵ A month earlier, his son had died in a tragic accident while serving as a lieutenant in the Royal Air Force, serving in Italy. While Hanna cited ill health at the time of his resignation, his health did not prevent his assuming the presidency of Imperial Oil later that year. See Gayle M. Comeau, “Hanna, William John,” *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, 14 (University of Toronto/Université Laval: 1998). (www.biographi.ca/en/bio/hanna_william_john_14E.html), Accessed February 18, 2015.

was reorganized and expanded with the creation of the Canada Food Board. It boasted an expanded board and was vested with all the powers of the previous Food Controller, and reported directly to the Minister of Agriculture. The position of Food Controller and Director of Food Conservation was Henry B. Thomson of Victoria, B.C., the man who had previously acted as assistant to Food Controller Hanna. Also receiving appointments were C.A. Dunning, an M.L.A. in Regina, as the new Director of Food Production, and J.D. McGregor of Brandon, Manitoba, as the new Director of Agricultural Labour.⁴⁶⁶ McGregor had declined the position as Manitoba's provincial Minister of Agriculture earlier in the war, but during his time on the food board, was often referred to as Western Canada's Food Controller.⁴⁶⁷ Former Prime Minister Wilfrid Laurier criticized the creation of the Food Board, as the new combined government salaries totalled \$300,000 per annum, an increased cost he felt was not warranted, nor did it complement the increased calls for efficiency and thrift that were occurring by this point in the war.⁴⁶⁸ T.A. Crerar, who as the Minister of Agriculture was ultimately responsible for the Food Board, defended its creation, stressing the need for more extensive government operations to respond to the "tendency of the Canadian people towards extravagance and the need of lessons in thrift."⁴⁶⁹ Much like those proponents of the financial thrift campaign, Crerar deemed his fellow citizens a thriftless people.

⁴⁶⁶ J. Castell Hopkins, *The Canadian Annual Review of Public Affairs. 1918*, (Toronto: The Canadian Annual Review, Ltd., 1919): 510.

⁴⁶⁷ Gordon Goldsborough, "James Duncan McGregor (1860-1935)," *Memorable Manitobans*, (Manitoba Historical Society, 1914).

(www.mhs.mb.ca/docs/people/mcgregor_jd.shtml), Accessed February 18, 2015.

⁴⁶⁸ "Food Control Under Fire," *Globe*, (28 March 1918): 5.

⁴⁶⁹ *Robert Laird Borden*, p785.

The Food Board carried forward all existing food regulations, and was vested with new expanded powers. Thomson continued to deem compulsory rationing inadvisable; however, the Board intensified regulations governing the transportation and storage of bulk foodstuffs. Further restrictions were placed on the sale of food by dealers, and these were supported by new anti-hoarding orders.⁴⁷⁰ Much like the food controller of 1917, the Canada Food Board relied heavily on the self-enforcing power of informed public opinion to regulate and shame those who attempted to circumvent official directives.⁴⁷¹ By this point, the British system of food control was almost entirely compulsory, including a national rationing scheme; the American model remained chiefly voluntary. In 1918, the amalgamation of regulation and voluntarism made Canada's food program distinct from its British and American counterparts.

Still relying on the vast promotional network instituted by Hanna, members of the Food Board sought to expand their reach in 1918, a period which Morton and Granatstein called Canada's "weariest year".⁴⁷² In addition to the continued support of the press, the Board enrolled 8,000 commercial travellers to undertake specialized publicity work across the country.⁴⁷³ The Board focused heavily on making food propaganda available and visible at the point-of-sale in retail establishments. By doing so, conservation messages would be carried "not simply into the homes but into the very kitchens of the people."⁴⁷⁴

⁴⁷⁰ Hopkins, *The Canadian Annual Review of Public Affairs. 1918*, 511. Hoarding will be discussed further in Chapter 5.

⁴⁷¹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁷² Morton and Granatstein, p190

⁴⁷³ Hopkins, *The Canadian Annual Review of Public Affairs. 1918*, p511.

⁴⁷⁴ T.A. Crerar, *Report of the Canadian Food Board, Feb. 11 – Dec. 31, 1918*, (Ottawa: King's Printer, 1919): 62

Additionally, the Food Board sent out directions for window displays, and employees were given training on how to address the issue properly and effectively with customers. The Board continued existing publicity efforts implemented by Hanna; the Food Board distributed over 500,000 leaflets, thousands of informative phrases were passed along for incorporation into newspaper and catalogue advertisements, as well as an array of new posters and window cards. By the summer of 1918, a whole section of the Board was created solely devoted to writing specialized articles for dissemination to the national and localized press. By increasing the number of local organs and magazine affiliates, the Food Board hoped to make food conservation of more “intimate family interest to distant readers.”⁴⁷⁵ Moreover, the Board created an expansive network to assist in their grand scheme of social-engineering, under which Canadians would be taught the value of food conservation and economy.

To properly organize the expanded publicity network, the Food Board mimicked Rhondda’s organization in Britain, and created twenty-five separate divisions across the country. In each area, a prominent retailer was appointed as Divisional Representative. In turn, he appointed a prominent retailer as representative in each local community. In this way, the publicity section of the Food Board was directly represented in over 700 cities and towns throughout Canada, with the cooperation of between 25,000 and 30,000 retailers. All official material, at every level, bore the phrase: “Issued by the Canada Food Board.”⁴⁷⁶

⁴⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁷⁶ Ibid.

Canadian Women and Food Control

In the early months of 1919, as T.A. Crerar reflected upon the wartime food campaign, he praised the women of Canada who “by the arts of the peace and the practice of simple, homely virtues...rendered a service to humanity that will ever redound their credit.”⁴⁷⁷ Women had been leaders in both the thrift campaign and the calls for food control long before the government had taken action, and as the food controller and subsequent Canada Food Board had directed their appeals to women, so women had once again answered.

Food conservation was already a focus for the NCWC in the early months of 1917, and with the appointment of Hanna in June of that year, they re-doubled their efforts. The Council understood that they would play a crucial role in the success of Canada’s first foray in food control:

A Food Controller might dictate, but it would be an impossible task for him to enforce his mandates by getting into our kitchens or our dining rooms no matter what sized staff he could employ as food police – the responsibility of enforcements rests upon ourselves, upon our love of freedom, of democracy, of right versus might, and we can confidently hope that the women of Canada will give the utmost support to Mr. Hanna, not only in conserving food in their individual communities, but in encouraging and fostering that spirit of endurance and service based on the determination to win the war at all costs.⁴⁷⁸

The NCWC, at the urgent request of the Food Controller, undertook a vigorous campaign. Letters were sent to all local councils with suggestions for general lines of work. The national secretary of the council sent regular letters to all the member societies appealing

⁴⁷⁷ Crerar, *Report of the Canadian Food Board, Feb. 11 – Dec. 31, 1918*, p64.

⁴⁷⁸ “Our Organized Women Move: Will Canada Follow?” *Woman’s Century*, 5, 2 (August 1917): 10.

for greater activity. In turn, reports of all the work done by local councils were forwarded by the secretary to the food controller and later food board.⁴⁷⁹ Several committees of the NCWC were tasked with researching various conservation issues in an effort to distribute educational material to its member organizations. The convenor of the Committee on Household Economics distributed reports detailing new methods in conservation and substitution methods in the kitchen. In another example, the convenor of the Committee on Agriculture for Women distributed several reports on the rabbit and the guinea fowl, “with particular reference to their care and value as a food resource.”⁴⁸⁰ These animals could be easily kept in a city lot and would serve as an “excellent substitute for those meats so terribly needed in Europe...”⁴⁸¹ Other materials were “borrowed” from the United States Food Administration, including a new code of wartime food etiquette entitled “The New Table Manners” which claimed that “Economy luncheons are now in vogue,” amongst other ‘new’ trends rooted in conservation.⁴⁸² These educational endeavours by the NCWC supplemented the already vast educational program emanating from the food controller’s office. Indeed, the Council applied its respectable and far-reaching endorsement to Food Controller appeals, increasing drastically the reach of Hanna’s message.

⁴⁷⁹ “Report of the Corresponding Secretary to the Executive Committee of the National Council of Women of Canada,” in MG28, I25, Volume 58, File 5 “Notes related to Meetings in Volume 26 June 1917-March 1918”, Reel H-2016, p1378.

⁴⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁴⁸¹ Letter, To Corresponding Secretary [NCWC] From Mrs. Hamilton, January 28, 1918, in MG28, I25, Volume 66, File 1, “Agriculture, Standing Committee on Agriculture for Women, NCW: correspondence 1918-1919,” Reel H-2020, p835.

⁴⁸² “The New Table Manners,” *Woman’s Century*, 6, 9 “Special Issue,” (September 1918): 111.

Such educational efforts were supplemented by a number of community-based cooperative efforts. These schemes were too plentiful to list here in totality, but the most common included the continued promotion of backyard or vacant-lot gardening, as well as a number of volunteer canning centres established by local organizations. The fruits of their labour were sent overseas to help alleviate the food situation in Europe. Other groups organized series of food demonstrations open to the public, to assist the public in coping with new conservation menus, and to help home-chefs become familiar with unfamiliar substitutes like fish. Perhaps most notably, the women's organizations of New Brunswick, in cooperation with clergymen, school-teachers, and local representatives of the Canada Food Board, initiated a province-wide voluntary-rationing scheme. An eight-page booklet outlining the scheme was distributed across the province, suggesting the reason for voluntary rationing as "people who live in private homes shall line up with those who eat their food in public eating places." The *Bulletin* reported proudly that the campaign had been a great success with most of the province willingly taking up the voluntary restrictions, and that similar schemes were now being planned in the other provinces.⁴⁸³

The success of volunteer efforts in food conservation, while extensive, was made possible only by the cooperation of Canada's press – particularly, women writers. Female newspaper and magazine editors prioritized the topic of food conservation, and Crerar would later commend them for converting food issues into a steady delivery of "live, interesting reading matter."⁴⁸⁴ Numerous publications created regular columns and

⁴⁸³ "Voluntary Home Rations Adopted. New Brunswick Leads Provincial Plan," *Canada Food Bulletin*, 19, (October 1918): 4.

⁴⁸⁴ Crerar, *Report of the Canada Food Board*, p64.

editorials devoted to the subject of food conservation. Ethel M. Chapman, the editor of the *Maclean's* women's section, wrote in October, 1917:

It is...the housekeeper's year. For the first time, the women of Canada are being asked to register as members of the army at home, and the appeal is very direct and simple. The men who are fighting need wheat, beef, and bacon. It will avail nothing for Canada to produce these, unless, in considerable quantities they are released for export to the army. It has been estimated that we must reduce our normal consumption of these foods by at least twenty-five percent, and this is a phase of the nation's food conservation which will depend largely on women in the homes.⁴⁸⁵

Chapman's appeal contains a number of interesting themes. Perhaps most notably, she imbues the work of food conservation with a level of importance unprecedented by any previous voluntary efforts in the war, noting that "for the first time" women are being charged with an important task. While the thrift campaign had raised money and encouraged moral habits in the name of war, food conservation offered a tangible and measurable means of contribution.

Chapman wrote frequently on the issue of food conservation, stressing its importance to each and every woman:

The call to save food, we cannot answer by deputy; it confronts us personally three times a day, and it takes courage to set out the plainer and what seems to our pampered families and guests almost meagre, fare, especially if we have the money to buy the things we considered necessary in more prodigal times. Still, the woman who cares is doing it.⁴⁸⁶

Chapman did not shy from condemning those who shied from their culinary wartime duties.

Other female writers were equally quick to condemn, building on the emotional appeals of

⁴⁸⁵ Ethel M. Chapman, "The Sanity of the Food Campaign," *Maclean's*, (October 1917): 92.

⁴⁸⁶ Ethel M. Chapman, "Creed of a Working Woman," *Maclean's* (April 1918): 111.

the food controller as a way to gain cooperation by means of guilt. Chas. C. Nixon, the female editor of *Everywoman's World*, appealed to her readers:

Imagine the boys coming home from the front and saying, 'We were hungry out there in the trenches, we could not stand it and we had to retreat and let the Germans get us, because the food we expected from Canada did not come.' And by this statement we would be surprised and shocked because we had a good harvest and we would reply, 'Why that is strange, we had a splendid harvest in 1917,' and the boys would reply, 'Yes, but you ate it all yourselves...'⁴⁸⁷

Nixon presented a creed to be repeated by all women when in doubt: "I believe in the Allied cause. I believe...I may 'Serve Gloriously' the same cause that our men are serving...I believe in the Conservation of Food, the Gospel of the Clean Plate, the Starvation of the garbage Can, the Total Abolition of Waste..."⁴⁸⁸ These scenarios as aimed to invoke shame in the readers who shirked their national duty. Reinforced by her 'creed', Nixon's articles transformed food conservation into a daily, almost religious experience.

Once readers were convinced of the need to participate, they were often faced with the challenge of adopting traditional menus to fit the appeals of wartime food conservation. To help women ease the burden of using less-familiar substitutes, women writers presented suggested wartime menus taking all of the food controller's exhortations into consideration.⁴⁸⁹ Other female contributors wrote helpful hints to identify and cook cheaper cuts of meat, to keep grocery bills at an affordable level, and how to can garden produce in

⁴⁸⁷ Chas. C. Nixon, "Every Woman A Food Controller," *Everywoman's World*, 8, 3 (September 1917): 3.

⁴⁸⁸ Nixon, "Planning Meals Ahead," *Everywoman's World*, 8, 6 (December 1917): 16.

⁴⁸⁹ For example, see Chapman, "Keeping Christmas with a Conscience," *Maclean's*, (December 1917): 47-49.

preparation for winter.⁴⁹⁰ Similar tips and tricks could be found in every major publication that boasted a women's page, section, or column, although some varied in form.

The female editors of *Globe's* new "Homemaker's Page" (introduced during the war), in addition to helpful hints and recipes included cute phrases and poems to help remind women of their wartime duty to save food. One particularly colourful poem submitted to the page by A.C. Wood of St. Mary's, Ontario, expressed solidarity with "Hanner" and the food conservation movement:

"Savin' Food With Hanner"

Maw's signed the conservation card,
It's hung up in our winder --
Paw says he'd put it in the stove
An' burn it to a cinder;
But maw says there it's goin' to stay,
It's sacred as our banner,
An' all us kids must 'do our bit'
An' help save food with Hanner.

Our dog's so thin he's got to lean
Agin the fence to bark,
Our cat has joined the midnight crew
An' hunts while it is dark.
Our cow is on skimp rations put,
Her skin would shock a tanner;
The whole caboodle on our lot
Are savin' food with Hanner.

Maw served us grub the other day--
She called it squeak and bubble.
The way paw glared an' fussed about,
It looked like there'd be trouble;
But maw just pointed to the card,
Then in her kindest manner

⁴⁹⁰ See Kate Kearney, "How I Keep My Expenses Down," *Maclean's* (Sept 1917), 92, and Elizabeth Atwood, "Cooking the Cheaper Cuts," *Maclean's* (Sept 1917), 95. This advice became increasingly important as the Canada Food Board increased restrictions on the sale and purchase of canned goods throughout 1918.

Said: 'It's up to each one of us
To help Save food with Hanner.'

Maw's out to lick old Kaiser Bill,
You bet your hat that's true;
An' when she gets an idear,
Well, maw will see it through.
She's kind an' good, but if she could
She'd hit Bill with a hammer--
She can't, an' so with all her brood
She's savin' food with Hanner.⁴⁹¹

In addition to making reference to the food pledge card campaign, this and other light-hearted poems highlighted the extent to which food conservation measures affected everyone in the family – even the pets and livestock! Perhaps most interestingly, the poem above paints a portrait in which scarcity and its visible effects on the family's animals became a badge of honour, and symbolic of one's commitment to the war effort. Furthermore, it emphasizes the commitment of the family's matriarch to the war effort, but firmly relegates her position at home.

By creating forums for encouragement, advice, and burden-sharing in the realm of food conservation, editors of women's pages facilitated and sustained the formation of collaborative print communities. While urban women could easily band together in person to engage in an array of conservation activities, rural women were often forced to look to women's pages for collaboration and solace on these issues. Irene Parlby, President of the United Farm Women of Alberta (UFWA) and later one of the Famous Five who secured the legal status of women as "persons" in Canada, saw the conservation campaign as an opportunity to improve the lives of rural women. She urged prairie women to "take up the

⁴⁹¹ [Poem] A.C. Wood, "Savin' Food With Hanner," *Globe*, (18 October 1917): 4.

subject not only in the home and in the club, but carry it into your little rural school. The educational value of this work will be of benefit to many of us, and improve many a home on the prairie.”⁴⁹² Like many other newspaper women of the time, Parlby encouraged and fostered the growth of these print communities as she urged women to come together and take advantage of each other’s knowledge and experience.

Through these collaborative forums, women also encouraged one other to elevate the basic principles of food conservation. While a housekeeper must follow the suggestions of the food controller to her utmost, to do this alone was inadequate. Rather, she must do so without sacrificing the overall appeal of her offerings: “Not to waste – either the materials for meals, or the time, in ‘fussing them up’ – that is the First of the National Service Commandments. It is an equally patriotic duty...to cook and serve meals so that they are pleasing to the eye and the palate.”⁴⁹³ A housewife was to “feed John so skillfully according to food control regulations that he will never know the difference.”⁴⁹⁴ Such was the high order for the Canadian woman: to engage in food thrift and make use of often costly substitutes, yet do so in a way that disguised all her patriotic work.

Public Reception

As Hanna embarked on the inaugural voyage of Canadian food control in 1917, he sought a subtle marriage between the British and American examples, without relying too heavily on either. British food control had been marked by public discontent from its very

⁴⁹² Irene Parlby, “Food Conservation on the Farm,” *Grain Growers’ Guide*, (30 January 1918): 9.

⁴⁹³ “How I Keep My Expenses Down,” *Maclean’s*, (September 1917): 94.

⁴⁹⁴ Chapman, “The Sanity of the Food Campaign,” *Maclean’s*, (October 1917): 94.

beginning, while Hoover's tenure as Food Administrator had been marked by public adoration.⁴⁹⁵ But when it came to public opinion and acceptance in Canada, Hanna's experience would mirror the increasingly poor reputation of the British Food Controller. The public exhortations for food control that had sprung from coast-to-coast were little satisfied by the early actions of the food controller. The restrictions on food exports and public eating places, while helpful, fell far short of the fixed-prices longed for by the Canadian public.

The early months of Hanna's reign saw little in the way of concrete action to reduce food prices. While the NCWC and its members sought to aid the controller's efforts as much as possible, even they could not refrain from criticism in the pages of *Woman's Century*. Disappointed by his lack of concrete action, an editorial argued: "...it would seem highly desirable that the Food Controller should use autocratic power in some matters, that he should dictate rather than appeal."⁴⁹⁶ And despite his extensive propaganda and educational campaigns, the food controller seemed to have failed in even that arena, as another contributor accused:

The Food Controller has not supported the women with all the reinforcements that they had a right to expect. There has been no general publicity campaign of sufficient magnitude to lighten their very difficult and delicate job to any appreciable effect...[E]xcept for posters and some rather meagre literature, those serving in the Conservation Campaign have not

⁴⁹⁵ Stephen Ponder, "Popular Propaganda: The Food Administration in World War I," *Journalism and Mass Communication Quarterly*, 72, 3 (Autumn 1995): 540. Hoover gained such a positive reputation as Food Administrator during the war, that he was promoted heavily as a presidential candidate in 1920.

⁴⁹⁶ Editorial, *Woman's Century*, 5, 2 (August 1917): 7.

been very efficiently armed. The ammunition that might have been expected from the office of the Food Controller has not been supplied.⁴⁹⁷

All-in-all, the food controller's initial efforts had been disappointing.

The office's apparently large expenditures on national propaganda schemes to encourage voluntary conservation not only missed the mark, but were offensive to many. The government's "How to Live in Wartime" pamphlet, issued in the fall of 1917, contained numerous items from the Food Controller on how to properly engage in food conservation. Many readers adopted the advice contained within as their wartime mantra; however, those Canadians who had found this literature wanting within the context of the thrift campaign, also resented what they viewed as unnecessary advice and wasteful government expenditure when it came to food conservation. "Suburbanite" from Perth County wrote to the *Farmer's Advocate* deeming the wartime pamphlet "such trash to waste the people's money on."⁴⁹⁸ "Suburbanite" went on to argue that instead of sending useless pamphlets to farmers, where no waste was occurring, the food controller's efforts should instead be focussed on places like Toronto where luxury was abundant. The disparity highlighted by this writer reveals Hanna's (and the larger government's) detachment from the reality experienced by most Canadians. Rural Canadians had long been used to subsistence lifestyles, or at the very least, were used to going long periods without regular access to centers of commerce. As such, a legacy of "thrift" and "conservation" had long been instilled and practiced in these homes, as any other behaviour simply would not do.⁴⁹⁹

⁴⁹⁷ Kathleen K. Bowker, "Active National Service For Women," *Woman's Century*, 5, 4 (October 1917): 18.

⁴⁹⁸ Letter-to-the-Editor, 'Suburbanite', "War-Time Living," *Farmer's Advocate*, LII, 1306, (4 October 1917): 1550.

⁴⁹⁹ See Susan Strasser, *Waste and Want: A Social History of Trash*, (New York: Metropolitan Books, 1999): 27.

For these Canadians to receive conservation “advice” from an out-of-touch government was understandably both useless and insulting. The writer of this letter also singled out Queen’s Park as a centre of luxury, and stated, “to be candid, we expect the ‘makers of laws’ to also be ‘obeyers of laws.’”⁵⁰⁰ The accusation of hypocrisy on behalf of lawmakers was one that became prevalent as the war continued. How could lawmakers encourage conservation and thrift when they were seen (or understood) to be doing the exact opposite? Accusations against the food controller himself became both intense and frequent, such that he was forced to defend himself in the pages of his very own *Canadian Food Bulletin*. On 17 November 1917, the *Bulletin* published the following disclaimer:

...An untrue statement has been methodically fostered to the effect that Mr. Hanna, while advising conservation, himself has indulged in meals costing \$4 and upwards. Of a similar character are the false reports of extravagance in the home of the Food Controller. Stories of excessive salaries to persons on the Food Controller’s staff have been used for the same general purpose of undermining popular confidence in the Food Administration...Many citizens of unquestioned loyalty have served the purposes of such propaganda unwittingly by repeating grossly untrue rumours. It cannot be emphasized too strongly that reports of this kind are of real assistance to the enemy, because they retard the organization and unification of the people...⁵⁰¹

In this way, the food controller attempted to re-cast rumours of his hypocrisy and mismanagement as nothing short of wartime treason. Alas, his public decrying of such stories did little to dampen their tenacity. Less than one month later he was forced to once again refute rumours of his extravagance in the pages of the *Bulletin* once again, while also contradicting allegations of further extravagance in his office.⁵⁰² Hanna went so far as to

⁵⁰⁰ Ibid.

⁵⁰¹ “The German Menace in Canada,” *Canadian Food Bulletin*, 4, (17 November 1917): 1.

⁵⁰² “Story is Entirely Untrue,” *Canadian Food Bulletin*, 6, (14 December 1917): 14; and, “No Costly Furnishings,” *Canadian Food Bulletin*, 6 (14 December 1917): 10.

provide an itemized list of office furnishings and their sources as hand-me-downs from other branches of government so as to argue against his purported “extravagant purchasing” of office furnishings for his new Bureau of Licenses. And while the controller continued to defend himself and his office, his policies also came under heavy fire.

In the summer of 1917, many questioned why they were being asked to use bread substitutes when it was said that over 500 million pounds of grain had been consumed for alcohol production since the beginning of the war.⁵⁰³ The issue of alcohol was an important one for many women, who argued that “beer contains no food value, but it is not forbidden... We wish to see fair play in this matter. Be consistent about conservation and we are willing to do our share in bringing this war to a successful issue.”⁵⁰⁴ Not only was this viewed as a misallocation of resources, but it was evidence of uneven expectations for men and women. Alcohol, viewed by many as a masculine vice, was not being curtailed to an adequate extent; instead, women were being asked to make further sacrifices so that alcohol production and consumption may continue. Other food “vices” included candies and ice-creams, which also became a focus of contempt:

[W]e see no curtailment of the display of all kinds of expensive candies, and the syrupy mixtures that one can get over a dish of ice cream are multiplying rather than diminishing. In the rural sections it is hard for us to understand how it is possible for one firm alone to open eleven new candy stores in Toronto since the war started...if there is such need of conserving sugar.⁵⁰⁵

⁵⁰³ “Casting Vote on Food, in Hands of Women; To Feed British Sisters,” *Globe*, (25 July 1917): 6.

⁵⁰⁴ “The Home Forum,” *Globe*, (8 November 1917): 10.

⁵⁰⁵ “The Sugar Problem,” *Globe*, (31 August 1918): 6.

Observing the frivolous use of grain for alcohol and sugar for sweets, many women questioned whether food conservation was truly a “national” project.

Men too often seemed exempt from official appeals of the food conservation campaign. One female writer appealed to the audience of the *Globe*:

I have been quite impressed by the favour the men editors show in advising us how to practice economy in providing the family menus. It is so easy to give advice...When I read these effusions on the editorial pages of the daily papers I cannot help wondering how much these men have done themselves to put into practice their preachments. They mostly belong to clubs, and is the report true that the clubmen still fare sumptuously every day on spring lamb, veal, strawberries and tomatoes? Suppose...that you might lead a movement to cut down club and hotel menus. You might begin by publishing the daily diet of our lords and masters at the different clubs.⁵⁰⁶

Another woman pointed out the money being wasted by men who travelled across the country educating Canadian women on the merits of food thrift – in her view, surely a man could teach nothing of food economy to a good housewife who should have mastered the skill. She argued that “[n]o loyal Canadian woman will refuse to do all in her power to help win the war, but we do feel like rebelling when housewives are asked to do all the conserving.”⁵⁰⁷ The burden of food conservation was most assuredly not equally gendered.

One of the simultaneously great successes and blunders of Hanna’s time as Food Controller was the food pledge card scheme mentioned earlier in this chapter. The controversial program saw over 1.1 million pledge cards distributed across the country, enlisting the voluntary cooperation of households in saving food.⁵⁰⁸ Distribution was facilitated by the cooperation of various women’s organizations who volunteered to take

⁵⁰⁶ One Who is Trying, Letter-to-the-Editor, “Men Fare Sumptuously and Preach Thrift?” *Globe*, (5 June 1917): 8.

⁵⁰⁷ “The Home Forum,” *Globe*, (8 November 1917): 10.

⁵⁰⁸ Hanna, *Report of the Food Controller*, p20.

the cards door-to-door. Alas, the cards were not accepted with the universal enthusiasm for which Hanna had hoped. Rather, the cards became for many a symbol of everything wrong with the administration of food control. The value of the pledge cards themselves lay wholly in their performative quality and their contribution to the collective social policing and guilt-provoking which encouraged public adoption of food control measures. But in a material sense, the pledge cards were a costly endeavour that accomplished little actual conservation in themselves. Many women were quick to point out this contradiction. In an open letter to Hanna, Mrs. L.E. Allen of Toronto railed the food controller for the hypocrisy of the cards: “You ask women to especially to conserve food, to sign food pledge cards, and yet you leave undone a great thing you surely can do – prohibit the use of foodstuffs in liquor-making...”⁵⁰⁹ Similarly, the Executive Committee of the NCWC, passed a resolution refusing to adopt the food pledges until the Government took action towards controlling or regulating all cold storage plants in Canada.⁵¹⁰ While these women supported the pledge cards, they did not feel they were the most pressing issue on the food conservation agenda.

Another criticism of the food cards lay in their apparent emphasis of inequality. One contributor to *Woman's Century* agreed that the cards did not “do enough – the universal opinion being [they] did not tend towards ‘sacrifice’ for the middle and upper classes.”⁵¹¹

⁵⁰⁹ Mrs. L. E. Allen, “Some Things Gone Wrong on Food Control: An Open Letter to Mr. Hanna Voicing Sentiments of Women in Canada,” *Everywoman's World*, 8, 4 (October 1917): 19.

⁵¹⁰ Meeting of the Executive Committee in Peterborough, November 18-29, 1917,” National Council of Women of Canada, MG28, I25, Volume 110, File 3, “Finances: Correspondence 1917-1918,” p204, Library and Archives Canada.

⁵¹¹ Bessie McLean Reynolds, “Half Hours in the Book World,” *Woman's Century* 5, 4 (October 1917): 7.

Other women attacked the very existence of the pledge cards as a symbol for lack of patriotism. Irene Parlby argued:

If the women of Canada were thoroughly impressed with the necessity for the conservation of food than it seems to me their patriotism should make the signing of the pledge cards unnecessary. These cards are merely an item in the organization of the campaign for the conservation of food and although to a great many it is no more necessary to sign pledges to abstain from eating more than it is to sign a pledge to abstain from drinking more.⁵¹²

Mrs. Arthur Murphy further argued that “pledges are for uncertain people and weaklings.”⁵¹³ Others, while not wholeheartedly supporting the pledge scheme, were able to look beyond their face-value. A representative from the Winnipeg Local Council of Women suggested that “the imperative duty of every woman in Canada is to see that in her household no scrap of food is wasted and that every possible substitute for beef is used. If signing a pledge to support the food controller makes it easier for any woman to do this, she will do well to sign the pledge.”⁵¹⁴ Quite apart from Hanna’s intent, the pledge card scheme invoked divisiveness.

Following Hanna’s resignation, the Food Board fared little better in the court of public opinion. Although it boasted an expanded administration and regulatory controls, it was powerless to remedy many of the problems viewed as most urgent by the public. Many of the prominent criticisms during Hanna’s tenure continued to plague the Food Board. Indeed, prices continued to rise, and many viewed the added cost of the expanded food board at best as only one item on an increasingly long list of misallocation of resources, and at worst as a wartime “evil.” A public meeting of the Consumer Protection Association

⁵¹² “Regarding Food Pledges,” *Grain Growers’ Guide*, (21 November 1917): 10.

⁵¹³ *Ibid.*

⁵¹⁴ *Ibid.*

held in Winnipeg in June 1918 produced a resolution opposing the very existence of the board. Attendees accused the Board of “foolish” and “futile” measures, and of spending over \$200,000 in the first six months of its existence – an amount they believed not warranted by its efforts. They argued that there had been no food shortage of any kind in Canada, and rather the primary problem that remained unsolved was that of high prices: “The lot of the soldiers has been made much harder by the fact that food control has not meant price control. The Food Board let matters slide along and the people suffer.”⁵¹⁵ The complaints were given credence by the presence and endorsement of an ex-serviceman, Lieutenant-Colonel Gordon, who claimed the group was there to “rectify an evil” through the elimination of the current Board.⁵¹⁶ The Association presented, as the only possible remedy to the situation, a plan incorporating representatives of women, labour, and other consumers on a new Board, as well as national conscription of resources to help bring down prices.⁵¹⁷ The concepts presented at this meeting were a concentrated list of ideas that had been long suggested by various publics, across the nation.

In an attempt to reduce public criticism of the Food Board, Canada’s Chief Press Censor intervened and forbid any papers from reporting on the meeting or the contents of the resolution passed.⁵¹⁸ The western representative of the Board, J.D. McGregor, further recommended that the government make an attempt to “get at” these people, and suggested

⁵¹⁵ Report, “Mr. Skinner’s Meeting,” June 26, 1918 in “Chief Press Censor, 1915-1920,” LAC, RG 6, E, Volume 621, File 349, Reel T-102: 49.

⁵¹⁶ Ibid.

⁵¹⁷ Ibid.

⁵¹⁸ Letter, To H.B. Thomson, From J.D. McGregor, June 27, 1918 in “Chief Press Censor, 1915-1920,” LAC, RG 6, E, Volume 621, File 349, Reel T-102: 48.

that “a little scare be thrown into them.”⁵¹⁹ However, this heavy-handed approach by the Food Board and the Chief Censor to suppress what many considered to be valid criticism did not sit well with the press. Winnipeg’s *Evening Bulletin* went ahead and printed the resolution despite the Censor’s warning.⁵²⁰ While the Food Board attempted to silence and reprimand those who sought an improved system of regulation, they were also quick to target rumour-mongers.

In the summer of 1918 a rumour circulated that the western representative of the Food Board, J.D. McGregor, had been “hogging” sugar by the carload to store in his barns. Hoping to make an example of the individual responsible, the Food Board, in cooperation with the *Manitoba Free Press*, tracked down the person who had first put the rumour to paper in a letter-to-the-editor. The writer was prosecuted and sent to trial for defamatory libel, after which he wrote a formal apology to McGregor, claiming that he had merely written down what he heard as “unsubstantial gossip.” And while this should have been the end of the matter, the Food Board vowed to continue searching for the person who initiated the “grotesque lie”.⁵²¹ The entire drama was laid out in an August edition of the *Food Bulletin* for the public to see simply what kind of consequences existed for careless idle gossip.

While the Food Board exhausted resources to track down the sources of unflattering rumours, they struggled to find and reprimand those Canadians who ignored their patriotic

⁵¹⁹ Ibid.

⁵²⁰ Letter, To Editor of *Evening Bulletin*, From Chief Press Censor, July 4, 1918 in “Chief Press Censor, 1915-1920,” LAC, RG 6, E, Volume 621, File 349, Reel T-102: 50.

⁵²¹ “Helping the Enemy. Man Who Spread Grotesque Lie Makes Ample Disavowal and Apology,” *Canadian Food Bulletin*, 18, (24 August 1918): 18.

duty and broke regulations altogether. Enforcement of food control regulations had been an issue for Hanna, and later Thomson, since 1917. The office simply lacked the resources to create and rely on its own policing system. Thus, enforcement of food orders had relied heavily on the cooperation of local authorities, who already had full assignments; furthermore, they were not paid for this new work. As the public sentiment of inequality in food control measures continued to gain traction across the country, the food board was forced to acknowledge that the existing model was inadequate. In the spring of 1918, Thomson established a special section of the Food Board to be responsible for enforcement; this would not supplant local enforcement, but would rather supplement their efforts. Thomson believed that local enforcement had been neither prompt enough nor drastic enough to prevent infractions. The Board appointed a sizable staff of inspectors to patrol public-eating places, cold storage facilities, wholesale and retail businesses, and anywhere else that food was stored in bulk. If any infractions were found, they would be reported to local authorities who would undertake the enforcement. New penalties were implemented: on conviction, penalties of up to \$1,000 could be imposed, or imprisonment of up to three months, or both. To further encourage the cooperation of local enforcement, fines were made payable to the local authority and not the Food Board.⁵²² And yet, while enforcement measures were increased, it remained impossible to manage the issue on a nation-wide scale, particularly in the eyes of the public who continued to cry out against profiteers and hoarders.

Conclusion

⁵²² T.A. Crerar, *Report of the Canada Food Board, 1918*, 19.

It is impossible to know to what extent the food conservation campaign contributed to the war effort in material means. Food control as a whole succeeded in drastically increasing the export of foodstuffs over the course of the war, increasing the value from \$482.6 million worth of foodstuffs over 1916-1917, to \$710.6 million worth of foodstuffs over 1917-1918 – an increase of over 47%. However, this may have largely been the result of increased production campaigns, also encouraged by the Food Controller. In its entirety, Canadian food control marked one of the first interventions of its kind by the federal government. Never before had the economy or people's private lives been subject to such regulation or interest by public officials. By 1918, the administration supporting food control efforts was extensive. And yet, were it not for the many women across Canada who took up the banner of food control, it would have been a far less memorable aspect of the war effort. The immense volunteer efforts supporting food conservation reflected the enthusiasm that marked home front volunteerism as a whole during wartime; however, food conservation was markedly different in the sheer number of people it affected, both at home and abroad. Although food conservation became a national project, drawing women together in public and on paper, it also did much to drive Canadians apart, as it highlighted the inequality lurking in the shadows of wartime sacrifice. The next chapter looks at profiteering, hoarding, luxury, and other consumer deviances which contradicted the dominant narrative of thrift, conservation, and sacrifice in wartime Canada.

Chapter 5

“The bacillus of extravagance and microbe of wilful waste”: Luxury, Hoarding, and Profiteering in Wartime

As thrift, saving, and conservation rhetoric intensified throughout the war it contributed to an ideological apparatus in which certain behaviours and consumer actions, normally frowned upon in peacetime, became politicized and viewed as absolutely unconscionable in wartime. The rules of socially acceptable behaviour encouraged the moral imperative of wartime saving, and an equally vehement backlash against luxury emerged as the concurrent narrative and partner to the thrift movement. In wartime, the pursuit of luxury was deemed far worse than simply not being thrifty. Refusing to engage in practices of thrift represented passiveness and indicated a certain indifference towards wartime values. The pursuit of luxury represented an active choice, deliberately thwarting the very essence of wartime patriotism and by extension, the thrift movement. This public valuation of the patriotic resulted in an increase of societal anxiety as it became apparent that numerous Canadians did little to curb their indulgence in luxury and “unnecessary” material goods in wartime. As Canadians began to realize that the war would last longer and demand greater sacrifice than anyone had initially predicted, discussions over the place of luxury in wartime (and eventually post-war) Canada heightened. Were there not Canadian men overseas sacrificing their lives, and was the spirit of wartime not rooted in self-deprivation for the greater good? How did the apparently widespread material indulgence become reconciled with these overarching sentiments that were driving the war effort? As these questions were pondered, attitudes towards the high rate of wartime consumption were framed in both an economic and increasingly moral context. Luxury

was seen to threaten the moral integrity of the war effort and undermine the noble sacrifice of men overseas.

While society sought to negotiate the place of excess in wartime, the designations of “luxury” and “necessity” became themselves sources of controversy. Such concepts existed in a perpetual space of redefinition as the constantly changing conditions of war forced the reclassification of various commodities and lifestyles from one category to the other, and sometimes back again. As the human quotient of Canada’s war sacrifice increased, particularly with the announcement of conscription in 1917, many wondered why the bank accounts of Canada’s wealthy were left “untouched” by the calls of compulsory service. Certainly, miserliness had no place alongside the selflessness of patriotism. Just as it had renewed emphases on the moral capital of thrift, the war served as a catalyst to renew with equal vigour emphases on the moral bankruptcy of greed, luxury, and vice.

This chapter examines the luxury problem as it took shape in wartime Canada, concentrating on its four central issues: the pursuit of luxury in wartime, hoarding, profiteering, and calls for conscription of wealth. I argue that the potency of these issues reflected the impact of the war and corresponding material shortages on consumer attitudes, allowing an emphasis on democratic consumption to emerge. The widespread condemnation of luxury was further reflective of class dissension on the home front, and popular attitudes towards what many perceived as an unequal burden of sacrifice. Such sentiments indicated a growing discontent with the capitalist hierarchies inherent to modern consumerism, and will be discussed with in the context of a shifting consumer economy. Luxury and wealth became wartime symbols of treason, and indications that a person’s

loyalties lay with profits rather than soldiers. While troops fought for democracy overseas, luxury spending on the home front threatened to undermine the very sanctity of war sacrifices.

Historical Construction of Luxury

In early 1915, John E. McIntosh of Glengarry County, Ontario, wrote to the *Farmers' Advocate* lamenting the unfortunate influence of what he deemed to be an extended period of commercial prosperity amongst the “civilized portions of the world,” citing the weakened “spiritual fibre” and the increasing “moral...and physical debility” of humankind.⁵²³

When man gets more of the world's goods than he needs, when to struggle for existence is no longer necessary, then he immediately begins to plan for his pleasure and for a life of ease...Luxury and degeneration go hand in hand, and this degeneration will continue until some drastic remedy is applied. Such a remedy I believe war to be.⁵²⁴

In particular, he pointed to the human penchant for luxury that had increased in the decades leading up to the war, coinciding with the increasing availability and selection of consumer goods. McIntosh, a frequent contributor to the *Farmers' Advocate* both under his own pen-name and the beloved pseudonym “Sandy Fraser” grew to be one of the most popular personalities of rural Ontario, eventually contributing over 900 columns to the magazine, as well as numerous contributions to other papers in the province.⁵²⁵ McIntosh's depictions of rural life struck a chord with many readers, and his association of luxury with degeneration

⁵²³ Ibid.

⁵²⁴ Letter-to-the-Editor, J.E. McIntosh, “War a Cleanser,” *Farmers' Advocate*, L, 1169 (18 February 1915): 241.

⁵²⁵ Royce MacGillivray, “What is Remembered and What is Forgotten in the History of Glengarry.” Last modified October, 2012. Accessed 18 July 2014. <www.glengarrycounty.com/remhisglen.html>

reflected a bitter belief held by many, particularly in the first months of war. In November of 1914, the *Globe* argued that the “so-called commercial depression” leading into the war, was “due largely to a lack of thrift.”⁵²⁶ There were even those who believed that western nations obsessed with luxury and material gain had been responsible for bringing about the onset of war; in December of 1914 the *Farmers’ Advocate* had described the European conflict as a “worthy deliverance” from the materialism of the major world powers.⁵²⁷ For many, the climate of war provided the perfect opportunity to resituate and reprioritize the place of luxury and materialism within society.

Criticism of luxury in wartime, particularly its classification as morally degenerate, was by no means a new trend. Denunciations of self-indulgence and vice had persisted for centuries, but opposition to this notion gained significant traction in the “luxury debates” of the eighteenth-century. In the literary world, Bernard Mandeville published his *Fable of the Bees* in 1714, appearing to sanction private vice and luxury as he believed they promoted the “publick benefits” of trade and national wealth.⁵²⁸ But even this acceptance still contained a moral valuation upon vice and luxury – that it was the necessary evil lurking beneath a thriving economy. In the late eighteenth century, other political economists, culminating in the work of Adam Smith in 1776, made attempts to normalize luxury by emphasizing its relative context and disconnecting consumption from moral valuation.⁵²⁹ In

⁵²⁶ Norman Lambert, “Can Real Economy be True Patriotism,” *Globe* (28 November 1914): 13.

⁵²⁷ “A Worthy Deliverance,” *Farmers’ Advocate*, XLIX, 1162 (31 December 1914): 2238.

⁵²⁸ Bernard Mandeville, *The Fable of the Bees Or Private Vices Publick Benefits*, (New York: Capricorn Books, 1962).

⁵²⁹ See Adam Smith, *Inquiry into the nature and causes of the wealth of nations*, edited by P.J. O’Rourke, (New York: Atlantic Monthly Press, 2007); as well as, M.J.D.

his *Inquiry into the nature and causes of the wealth of nations*, Smith stressed the potential for increased consumer choice and further economic development.⁵³⁰ While accepting the important economic function of “public vice”, Smith also emphasized the man of frugality as a “public benefactor.”⁵³¹ Scholars largely accepted this perspective, with some variations. That said, Smith and his counterparts continued to distinguish between what they viewed as ‘productive’ and ‘unproductive’ labour – those goods that promoted positive manufacture, and those more frivolous goods which did not.⁵³² Eighteenth-century moralists drew no such distinction, and continued to emphasize what they viewed as the moral bankruptcy of luxury. Underpinning the discussion from all perspectives were ongoing attempts to distinguish between necessities and luxuries, needs and wants, and to determine the place of each within a functioning economy and moral hierarchy. While capitalism gained an increasingly unsavoury reputation in the nineteenth century, this British

Roberts, “The concept of luxury in British political economy: Adam Smith to Alfred Marshall,” *History of the Human Sciences*, 11, 1 (1998): 24. Smith’s work built on earlier contributions to the luxury debates by David Hume, one of the earliest writers to make a strong case against the view of luxury as morally corrupt. In his 1752 essay, “Of Refinement in the Arts,” Hume agreed with Mandeville’s assertion that luxury was beneficial to economic society, but denied that luxury was intrinsically based upon vice. Hume instead referred to luxury as arising from a sort of awakening of desire and elevation of taste within an industrious commercial society. This insinuates a purely economic definition of luxury, separate from the moralized definition that had dominated public discourse to this point. See Andrew S. Cunningham, “David Hume’s Account of Luxury,” *Journal of the History of Economic Thought*, 27, 3 (September 2005): 232-235; and Anthony Brewer, “Luxury and Economic Development: David Hume and Adam Smith,” *Scottish Journal of Political Economy*, 45, 1 (February 1998): 81-83; and Jan de Vries, *The Industrious Revolution: Consumer Behaviour and the Household Economy, 1650 to the Present*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008): 58-70.

⁵³⁰ Davide Fiaschi and Rodolfo Signorino, “Consumption patterns, development and growth: Adam Smith, David Ricardo and Thomas Robert Malthus,” *The European Journal of the History of Economic Thought*, 10, 1 (Spring 2003): 11.

⁵³¹ Cited in de Vries, 70.

⁵³² Matthew Hilton, “The Legacy of luxury: moralities of consumption since the 19th century,” *Journal of Consumer Culture*, 4, 1 (2004): 103.

intellectual tradition continued to heavily influence Canadian thought leading into the First World War.⁵³³

Scholars largely agree that twentieth-century consumption was “luxury” consumption, although that term is variable and not easily defined across different contexts.⁵³⁴ Despite this relativity, luxury in any form has consistently been measured by two factors: quantity or the excessive consumption of anything; and quality, or the pleasure inducing value of any object or activity.⁵³⁵ The quantitative aspect of luxury suggests that anything has the potential to become a luxury, in the appropriate numerical context.⁵³⁶ Qualitative luxury further denotes a certain sensuousness or indulgence that one experiences beyond more basic comforts. Thus, luxury is inherent in the notion that both the excess and pleasure-inducing qualities are classified as “wants” and fall beyond the classification of “needs”.⁵³⁷ Luxury becomes variable at the threshold of necessity. This threshold is dependent upon a number of factors, but most notably class and region.⁵³⁸ A prairie farmer may have viewed electrification as a luxury in 1914; yet, an urban

⁵³³ Donica Belisle notes that English-Canadian authors of the early twentieth century portrayed consumerism as “an acceptable but treacherous path toward human fulfillment.” See “Virtue and Vice: Consumer Culture in English Canadian Fiction Before 1940,” *International Journal of Canadian Studies*, 43 (2011): 165.

⁵³⁴ Colin Campbell, *The Romantic Ethic and the Spirit of Modern Consumerism*, p59

⁵³⁵ Campbell, p59. Campbell expands on those ideas put forward by Werner Sombart in *Luxury and Capitalism*, (Michigan: University of Michigan: 1967): 59.

⁵³⁶ Christopher Berry, *Idea of Luxury: A Conceptual and Historical Investigation*, (New York: Cambridge University Pres, 1994): 6.

⁵³⁷ Sombart, p59.

⁵³⁸ De Vries, pp.44-45. De Vries distinguishes between what he calls the “old luxury” of the upper classes, and the “new luxury” of the middle classes. Old luxury denotes a hegemonic cultural message emphasizing status and indulgence, whereas new luxury emphasizes heterogeneity and the importance of taste. This can be summarized in the dichotomy between display and comfort.

Torontonian may have viewed the same service as a necessity. Moreover, the concept of luxury is historically constructed. That same prairie farmer fifty years later would likely then view electrification as a necessity. The dynamic and relative nature of “luxury” makes its contention in wartime even more revealing.

Luxury in Wartime

The social upheaval of the First World War served as a catalyst to further problematize the fickle concept of luxury. In the context of war, both quantitative and qualitative luxury became further entrenched in the realm of the taboo. A scarcity of resources – either actual material shortage or reduced accessibility due to inflation – made excess accumulation or hoarding activities a threat to the well-being of the larger community; likewise, the over-arching tones of sacrifice and patriotism driving the war effort made pleasure-seeking behaviour more than distasteful.

Within weeks following the declaration of war, several newspapers reported a pronounced backlash against visible wealth. On August 12, 1914, the *Montreal Star* posted a contribution from H.G. Wells who argued that the British “rank-and-file” could not get enough to eat because of the “automobile-driving villadom” who had “grabbed” all the food.⁵³⁹ He observed that “‘Villadom’ [had] been swarming to the shops, buying up the food of the common people and carrying it off in the family car, adorned, of course, with fluttering little Union jacks.”⁵⁴⁰ Wells raised concerns that people of “economic advantage”

⁵³⁹ H.G. Wells, “Looking Ahead – Hands of the People’s Food,” *Montreal Star* (12 August 1914): 10. This piece was written specifically for the *Montreal Star* and the *London Daily News*.

⁵⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

were using those advantages and making things more difficult for the average consumer by inciting mass panic and hoarding. Such hostility towards motorists was not limited to overseas; on September 18, 1914, a letter to the *Winnipeg Free Press* suggested that a tax be placed on automobiles to aid the war effort, for the author argued, “surely our swell friends would like to do a bit more for the cause than we common ‘foot-sloggers.’”⁵⁴¹ At this point, less than one percent of Canadians owned one of these relatively new vehicles. Novelties like the automobile were viewed as a symbol of affluence and an indication that the owner was well-to-do. This writer also took aim at the notion that the wealthy were not contributing equally by means of manpower, adding that “a little judicious walking occasionally would not come amiss, so that when a future call for men comes they would be in better training.”⁵⁴² With the war barely a month old, a perceived class divide was becoming more pronounced.

In addition to displays of wealth, the advent of the war did not curb consumer indulgence on a larger scale, nor did these behaviours abate over its duration. Even a cursory examination of consumer spending during the war suggests that, for many, luxury spending did not go out of style, despite the extensive popular and government thrift campaigns. Between 1915 and 1918, spending on consumer imports increased by 111.34%.⁵⁴³ While this could be considered a result of high wartime prices, the sheer number of imports – especially those which might be considered non-necessities, also grew. Those symbols of wealth condemned at the onset of war. For example, the number

⁵⁴¹ ‘Irish,’ Letter-to-the-Editor, “Motorists and the War,” *Winnipeg Free Press* (18 September 1914): 11.

⁵⁴² *Ibid.*

⁵⁴³ *Canada Year Book, 1919*: pp.326-361.

of automobiles registered in Canada grew from 65, 598 in 1914, to 341,316 in 1919 – a five-fold increase.⁵⁴⁴ Other notable imports seeing a volume increase during this time include silks (80.2%), cotton manufactures including velvet and coloured prints (80.0%), perfumes (12.6%), precious stones (5.6%), desiccated cocoa (130%), and coffee (8.6%).⁵⁴⁵ These increases must be considered in light of the fact that purchasing power during the war was essentially halved by the increased cost of living. It would seem that the introduction of high wartime wages following an extended period of pre-war depression led many Canadian consumers to disregard the calls for thrift and spend as they wished.

John Appleton, the editor of *Maclean's* "Business Outlook", warned in early 1915 that while the outbreak of war might encourage some people to initially save money, once wartime wages increased, people would "spend as freely as ever they did."⁵⁴⁶ Similar accusations were levied in an editorial of the *Globe*, which claimed that wartime thrift in Canada was "a plant of tender growth and shrinking modesty...The moment money becomes easier, the saloon, the race track, the picture show, the ice cream parlor, and the hundred other purveyors of luxuries will get their share as in the reckless past."⁵⁴⁷ In this example, the use of the word "reckless" insinuates wartime as corrective and a departure from recklessness. By May of 1916, Appleton saw his prediction come true. He observed that retailers were taking a higher number of orders for all sorts of goods and "buyers are

⁵⁴⁴ *Canada Year Book, 1919*: p438.

⁵⁴⁵ *Canada Year Book, 1919*: pp.326-361. Other increases such as typewriters (72.6%), adding machines (32.5%), and sewing machines (6.8%) are easily explained as necessary tools by the rapidly expanding bureaucracy and voluntary work during the war.

⁵⁴⁶ John Appleton, "The Business Outlook," *Maclean's*, 28, 6 (May 1915): 97.

⁵⁴⁷ Editorial, "Has Thrift Taken Root?" *Globe* (16 September 1915): 4.

not only ready to pay but they want high quality.”⁵⁴⁸ A series of letters published in the *Globe* that same month referred to the sale of over 5000 pairs of luxury boots in Toronto and lamented that the labour to produce such luxuries was not spent otherwise.⁵⁴⁹ This attitude was reiterated in an editorial appearing in the paper that summer which bemoaned the visibly thriving materialism among Canadian consumers, especially as the second War Loan had been announced by the Minister of Finance and was quickly approaching.⁵⁵⁰ Such condemnations of wartime luxury bear resemblance to the arguments for productive and unproductive spending made in the eighteenth century.

As the war continued, however, such spending did not appear to abate. One observer in the *Farmer's Advocate* noted of the situation in 1917:

Despite all the talk of economy and thrift, despite the many warnings that the world faces famine and that saving is necessary, who can remember when luxurious living was so common as at the present time? There is more evidence in Canada of fat returns and much wealth than there is of any cutting down...Stand on the corner of the busiest streets in our leading cities and watch, for a few minutes, the great, the near great, those who think they are great, and the imitators of the great, go by. Note the dress and the swagger; note the limousines, coupes, sixes and 'just cars' pass...Oh yes, this is an age of luxury, and yet well-earned luxury is nothing more than any honest, law-abiding citizen is entitled to. However, if famine is just around the corner, it might be well to take thought as to the morrow – save, serve, and cut out waste.⁵⁵¹

In the early months of the war, when many believed the conflict would end by Christmas, “business as usual” in the realm of luxury spending seemed a far less hazardous venture; but, as the writer above notes – the early months of 1917 were filled with talk of famine and

⁵⁴⁸ Appleton, “The Business Outlook,” *Maclean's*, 29, 7 (May 1916): 106.

⁵⁴⁹ ‘Patriotic Trade’, Letter-to-the-Editor, “Extravagance and Perverted Industry,” *Globe* (27 May 1916): 10.

⁵⁵⁰ Editorial, “The Necessity for Thrift,” *Globe* (18 July 1916): 4.

⁵⁵¹ “Luxury,” *Farmer's Advocate*, LII, 1296 (26 July 1917): 1193.

food shortages, making such conspicuous and lavish spending both unwise and in poor taste.⁵⁵²

The belief that unrestricted consumer spending under the guise of “business as usual” would bolster the wartime economy was widespread, as evidenced by the popularity of the Made in Canada campaigns at the outset of the war.⁵⁵³ However, many soon realized that “business as usual” meant diverting resources to continue producing unnecessary goods, when those resources would be better used towards war manufacturing. Thus, the notion of “unproductive spending” became a focus of criticism against those Canadians who argued that luxury consumption had a positive effect on employment; in August of 1915, the British parliament declared such extravagances a “national danger,” and an editorial in the *Globe* deemed those that defended such spending delusional.⁵⁵⁴ Appleton considered proponents of luxury spending as “parasites” and argued that such spenders were espousing “selfish rather than the country’s interests.”⁵⁵⁵ Taking a less confrontational approach, the *Grain Growers’ Guide* reasoned that while farmers were carrying on essential war work, “large numbers of men and women are being employed in the provision of luxuries and vanities which are totally unnecessary.”⁵⁵⁶ They further suggested that these workers were being prevented from being diverted to “some useful occupation” in support of the war.⁵⁵⁷ Some members of the Church sought to reform public spending, like the Bishop of Caledonia in Prince Rupert, British Columbia; he claimed that “extravagance in dress, in

⁵⁵² See Chapter 4 regarding the food situation.

⁵⁵³ See Chapter 1.

⁵⁵⁴ Editorial, “Conserve Material Strength,” *Globe* (4 August 1915): 4.

⁵⁵⁵ Appleton, “The Business Outlook,” *Maclean’s*, 29, 3 (January 1916): 97.

⁵⁵⁶ “Men for the Army,” *Grain Growers’ Guide*, (16 February 1916): 5.

⁵⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

amusements, and in luxuries, abounds,” and appealed to the public via a national newspaper not to accept the fallacy that circulation of money was the same as production of wealth.⁵⁵⁸ These arguments and others like them were rooted in an economic argument over how best to utilize national resources to win the war.

The National Character

The apparently widespread extravagance, beyond promoting unproductive labour, revealed some alarming elements of the Canadian character. Given that much of Canada’s home front war effort was exercised within a voluntary framework, the importance of personal choice became increasingly politicized – as has already been discussed. The fact that some Canadians would *choose* not to participate or do their utmost to further the war effort, was not only perplexing to those “doing their bit,” but also offensive, particularly when there were so many volunteers laying down their lives overseas. In the summer of 1915, Reginald McKenna, Chancellor of the Exchequer in Great Britain, told the empire that “extravagance is a crime and that economy, parsimony even, becomes the highest of national virtues,” in wartime.⁵⁵⁹ Likewise, Jacob Gould Schurman, a moral philosopher and President of Cornell University, told North Americans that the “time has arrived when every man and woman who spend on themselves more than is absolutely necessary should be tabooed as robbers of the public treasury. The spendthrift of today is a traitor.”⁵⁶⁰ In this way, the judgement against spendthrifts was taken from the moral-religious context of the

⁵⁵⁸ F.H. Du Vernet, Letter-to-the-Editor, “The Urgent Need of Economy,” *Globe* (30 March 1916): 4.

⁵⁵⁹ “Nation’s Duty to Economise a Vital Necessity,” *Montreal Star* (17 July 1915): 9.

⁵⁶⁰ Jacob Gould Schurman cited in “The Spendthrift is a Traitor,” *Winnipeg Free Press* (4 June 1918): 9.

eighteenth century and placed within the political context of wartime. In May of 1916, a Professor Murray told a gathering of the National Council of Women that those who had lived extravagant or selfish lives were now seen to contain “grave faults based on profound disloyalty.”⁵⁶¹ He continued, arguing that the war “has stripped selfishness of its amusing or grotesque disguise and revealed it as a form of treason.”⁵⁶² It’s clear from these examples that wartime extravagance was in the same class as some of the worst crimes against the nation.

Beyond treason, the choice to be extravagant in wartime highlighted yet another unpleasing character trait –selfishness. An editorial in the *Montreal Star* claimed lavish behaviour as evidence of “an individualistic community...possessed with a mad desire to spend [money].”⁵⁶³ Oscar Douglas Skelton, at this time a young political economist, lamented the challenges of what he called a system of “regulated individualism” whereby private consumption reigned supreme and challenged the success of the war effort.⁵⁶⁴ Such individualism was alarming in the face of a global conflict, the success of which depended on the selflessness of so many. It threatened not only the war effort, but the wellbeing of more patriotic citizens as well. Such expressions reveal the longstanding tension between the individualism inherent in modern consumerism and the social cohesion demanded by wartime patriotism.⁵⁶⁵ In July of 1916, M. Alberta Deards wrote in *Woman’s Century*,

⁵⁶¹ Gilbert Murray cited in “A New Quality in Life,” *Woman’s Century*, 3, 11 (May 1916): 10.

⁵⁶² *Ibid.*

⁵⁶³ Editorial, “How to Get ‘War Thrift,’” *Montreal Star* (3 March 1917): 10.

⁵⁶⁴ O.D. Skelton, “Canadian Federal Finance – II,” *Bulletin of the Departments of History and Political and Economic Science in Queen’s University, Kingston, Ontario, Canada*, 29 (October 1918): 10.

⁵⁶⁵ This longstanding tension has been recognized and explored by several historians. See Wilfred M. McClay, *The Masterless: Self & Society in Modern America*,

warning storekeepers that thrifty women could be considered far more reliable than women of extravagance:

...the self-denying woman will not plunge thoughtlessly into debt, as her extravagant sister is [inclined] to do. The storekeeper may sell her smaller quantities, but he may be sure she will pay for the cloth she is going to make into garments for war sufferers, while he is not so sure of getting his money from the society lady who wants the latest creations from New York.⁵⁶⁶

Thus, the extravagant woman was a threat to all of society.

The notion that women were largely to blame for wartime extravagance was a common one which reinforces a prevalent idea of woman as superficial consumer, preoccupied with frippery.⁵⁶⁷ Francis Marion Beynon, noted journalist and feminist, observed that “the tendency to be penny wise and pound foolish is particularly a feminine trait, probably resulting from women’s lack of experience in handling large sums of money.”⁵⁶⁸ With so many breadwinners fighting overseas, more women were taking on the new responsibility of managing entire household incomes; Beynon noted that in the past, many women had been used to managing only spending allowances dispensed by their husbands. In a speech to the Women’s Canadian Club by Mr.

(Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 1994); and, Thomas Bender, *Community and social change in America* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1978).

⁵⁶⁶ M. Alberta Deards, “A War Suggestion for Women,” *Woman’s Century*, 4, 1 (July 1916): 16.

⁵⁶⁷ This perception of women is particularly evident in the tactics used by rising Department stores in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. For a discussion of this phenomena in Britain see Erika D. Rappaport, “‘A New Era of Shopping,’: The Promotion of Women’s Pleasure in London’s West End, 1909-1914,” p30-48, in Jennifer Scanlon (Editor), *The Gender and Consumer Culture Reader*, (New York: New York University Press, 2000). For a Canadian example see Donica Belisle, “Negotiating paternalism: Women and Canada’s Largest Department Stores, 1890-1960,” *Journal of Women’s History*, 19, 1 (2007): 58-81.

⁵⁶⁸ Francis Marion Beynon, “Wasteful Saving,” *Grain Growers’ Guide* (24 November 1915): 10.

Hamilton Fyfe, a British war correspondent, he commended the magnificent war work conducted by women everywhere, but also noted that women could not have their “fine feathers and luxuries” and at the same time end the world war – something they would have to learn.⁵⁶⁹ Jean Blewett, another noted journalist and author, shared a letter from a Toronto businessman, observing the “scores” of girls who “waste their time in idleness:”

You’ll see them everywhere. They don’t hide their silliness under a bushel. This season, as those of 1914, 1915, 1916, and 1917, sees extravagance running riot. Look at the furs. Look at the frocks. More convincing still, look at the fortunes high-class customers and importers are piling up. As a business man who knows what he’s talking about, I flatly contradict...that war has taught our girls the real meaning of economy. At the best it has taught them only to earn money – money making being a fashionable fad – that they may have all the more to deck themselves out with.⁵⁷⁰

Blewett refuted the observation, arguing that the war had surely taught Canadian women something of economy. Yet, the fact remained that by the First World War, shopping had been established as a “feminine” activity; thus, as the luxury problem continued, it was labelled by many to be inherent to women. In their study on budgetary earmarking, Stephen P. Walker and Garry D. Carnegie found that female extravagance in wartime Australia was perceived as problematic, largely because it threatened male-generated wealth and domestic tranquility in the household.⁵⁷¹ In the Canadian context, the same woman was perceived as a threat to national tranquility and male-generated wealth in wartime. The inherent

⁵⁶⁹ “Fine Feathers and Luxuries,” *Globe* (16 October 1917): 8.

⁵⁷⁰ Jean Blewett, “Our War-Time Girls,” *Globe* (31 October 1918): 11.

⁵⁷¹ Stephen P. Walker and Garry D. Carnegie, “Budgetary earmarking and the control of the extravagant woman in Australia, 1850-1920,” *Critical Perspectives on Accounting*, 18 (2007): 241.

effeminacy of luxury-spending was also menacing, given the high levels of social influence achieved by women during the war.

National Welfare

Perhaps the most threatening aspect of extravagant behaviour was its inevitable threat to national wellbeing. This threat lurked behind a number of shadows. First, extravagance appeared to many citizens as a very real threat to the material war effort. Samuel Smiles, the architect of nineteenth-century thrift and inspiration of wartime economy campaigns, had long insisted that individual savings were the backbone of national wealth. Building on these well-known words of the popular moralist, Prime Minister Borden asserted that “upon each individual there is direct responsibility; and the sum of individual conception of duty means the character of the nation.”⁵⁷² This principle was adopted by many who criticized wartime materialism. One writer lamented that “the story of the decadent nations is always the same. When the simple life was abandoned an era of luxury set in and extravagance drained the nation’s resources.”⁵⁷³ In this vein, the Minister of Finance encouraged Canadians to maintain a surplus of resources in the national balance between production and consumption, suggesting that every material indulgence lessened this balance.⁵⁷⁴ Likewise, the Food Controller went so far as to claim that extravagance in the realm of foodstuffs meant “prolonging the war [and] increased suffering.”⁵⁷⁵ The notion

⁵⁷² Robert L. Borden cited in “Speech at Quebec City on December 6, 1916,” in *Canada At War: Speeches delivered by Rt. Hon. Sir Robert Laird Borden* (December, 1916 – May, 1917): 11.

⁵⁷³ “An Age of Luxury,” *Globe* (12 September 1916): 6.

⁵⁷⁴ “Thrift, Economy, Luxury, Waste,” *Globe* (17 January 1917): 6.

⁵⁷⁵ “Think It Over!” *Canadian Food Bulletin*, 16 (1 June 1918): 20.

that extravagance threatened to deplete material resources and exacerbate shortages and high prices was one repeated often by public officials.

Given the numerous official warnings against extravagance, some writers attempted to reason with the public, arguing that the very essence of “doing without” in wartime meant giving up such luxuries as:

...unnecessary automobile rides (with the expenditure of gasoline, much needed at the front), new furnishings, unnecessary clothes, unnecessary and expensive dainties at the table, candy, cigars, and tobacco in every form, etc. All these things may, and should be done without during this war-time. By doing without them we liberate just so many *necessary* things for the front. If factories are not making luxuries for us their time will be put upon real necessities.⁵⁷⁶

As the key to food control had been educating the public on substitutes and war recipes, many believed the key to tackling extravagance was to simply explain the difference between luxuries and necessities. Another writer admitted, “some of us are beginning to see that there is something wrong at this time, if not at all times, in our spending money on diamonds and expensive foods; that in doing this we are lessening the national efficiency, increasing the cost of living, and adding to future taxation...”⁵⁷⁷ In fact, those suffering the most from high wartime prices blamed widespread materialism for their troubles. In the summer of 1918, a period when war prices were at their worst, the *Farmer’s Advocate* blamed the depreciation of Canadian currency on the propensity of Canadians during wartime to spend like “drunken sailors, importing luxuries of all kinds and burning up exportable wealth at home...Now the accounts are against us. We have called the tune, and

⁵⁷⁶ “Economy in War-Time,” *Farmer’s Advocate*, LII, 1301 (30 August 1917): 1353.

⁵⁷⁷ W.F. Clarke, MD., Letter-to-the-Editor, “Thrift, Economy, Luxury,” *Globe* (17 January 1917): 6.

we must pay the piper.”⁵⁷⁸ The suspicion that Canadians would, at some point, have to pay for their extravagance was a daunting one, for no one knew when or how payment would come due.

Sir George Foster, Minister of Trade and Commerce, suggested in early 1917 that if the public were to consume seventy-five percent less in luxury, and twenty-five percent less of necessities, the high cost-of-living as a result of the war would be essentially eliminated.⁵⁷⁹ Moreover, the money and labour spent on these luxuries could be diverted to more meaningful causes. Perhaps most poignantly, the *Globe* printed a list of comparative values, contrasting luxuries with the equivalent value in war materials:

10s saved, say on feasting, equals eighty cartridges.
 Bottle of champagne equals 100 cartridges.
 Box of cigars equals 400 cartridges.
 Lady’s new hat equals four steel helmets.
 New dress equals four service rifles.
 Diamond tiara equals one field gun.
 Motor car equals airplane.
 Piano equals 100 shells.
 Lap dog equals twenty shells.⁵⁸⁰

Such comparisons sought to form a tangible connection between luxury-spending and its impact on the war effort.

In addition to worsening wartime economic conditions, extravagance was also perceived to threaten the material future of Canada in the post-war world. As early as December of 1914, Norman Lambert, Canadian journalist, future Senator, and writer for the

⁵⁷⁸ “War-Time Financing,” *Farmer’s Advocate*, LIII, 1341 (6 June 1918): 990.

⁵⁷⁹ “Restrictions in Canada May Come in a Short Time,” *Montreal Star* (26 February 1917): 11.

⁵⁸⁰ “A Chance for Thrift,” *Globe* (1 January 1917): 6.

Globe, maintained that thrift “was not a quality to be emphasized only in war time.”⁵⁸¹ He reiterated that “thrif... rather than patriotic expenditures on articles which might be left unpurchased, would seem to be the wisest, as well as the most expeditious practice to be followed in order that the depression under which Canada is now labouring be finally overcome.”⁵⁸² Dermot McEvoy of Huron County, Ontario, urged his peers to see the war as transformative, and not “an obstacle to our return to such comforts, and indulgences as we were accustomed to consider the best that life afforded before the war. Someday the war will be ended, shall we be ready, or will our lesson be only half learned?”⁵⁸³ When discussing reconstruction, the women’s editors of *Maclean’s* hoped that the spirit of wartime thrift had cemented itself with the Canadian people, arguing:

...The spending of money is one of the surest tests of patriotism. Standards of living may be endangered and depressed by wrong spending. The service of money in war is not more powerful than in peace. We may rob the country of strength and happiness through waste and luxury.⁵⁸⁴

Such sentiments reflect the uncertainty and sense of the ominous that suffused speculation over the inevitable post-war period.

Beyond embodying a threat to the material war effort and the future of the economy, many perceived wartime luxury as a menace to Canada’s moral integrity and ability to fight a just war. Canada’s war effort took a heavy human toll, killing over 60,000 men and wounding over 170,000. Thus, it was important that such an immense sacrifice be morally

⁵⁸¹ Norman Lambert, “Can Real Economy be True Patriotism?” *Globe* (28 November 1914): 13.

⁵⁸² *Ibid.*

⁵⁸³ Letter-to-the-Editor, Dermot McEvoy, “Peace With Honor,” *Farmer’s Advocate*, LIII, 1351 (15 August 1918): 1328.

⁵⁸⁴ “A Woman’s Reconstruction Programme,” *Maclean’s*, 32, 2 (February 1919): 76.

justified by the people at home. The perceived rampant luxury on the home front eroded this moral high ground and threatened to undermine the sanctity of the human sacrifice. “A Canadian Woman” wrote to the *Globe* in December 1915, questioning Canadians’ commitment to the wartime values of self-denial: “Have you ever thought how much we might add to the comfort of our soldiers and the poor of our land if we would give up unnecessary adornment, such as flowers and feathers, etc., during these troubled times?”⁵⁸⁵ She continued, pointing out that “our soldiers have none of these luxuries.”⁵⁸⁶ Her self-identifying moniker – “Canadian Woman” – reveals how her perception of national identity was imbued with the values of self-sacrifice and frugality which she advocated. The *Globe* made an even sharper juxtaposition between the conditions of the Western front and Canada in late 1917 when an editorial stated:

Does Toronto bear any of the external marks of war that meet the eye continually in the towns and cities of Europe? Do the endless procession of motor cars, the well-dressed crowds, the numerous candy stores, and other signs of industries that minister to the luxurious habits of the populace, remind us that Canada is in this war to the last dollar and the last man? There is something radically wrong in the outlook of the people, something wanting in the moral fibre that is essential to victory, if these outward and visible signs of wealth and ease and indifference reflect the inner soul of a nation that has sent four hundred thousand fighting men into the jaws of death to defend its imperilled liberties and honour.⁵⁸⁷

Thus, the perceived dearth of moral fibre of Canada was such that it put the ultimate goal of the war – victory – into question.

⁵⁸⁵ “A Canadian Woman,” Letter-to-the-Editor, “Economy and Self-Denial,” *Globe* (3 December 1915): 6.

⁵⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

⁵⁸⁷ Editorial, “On to Victory,” *Globe* (23 November 1917): 6.

Attempting to add further perspective, the *Montreal Star* contrasted fancy and complicated civilian clothes, with the simple, plain soldiers' clothes. An editorial argued "that there are not enough luxuries to go around. If, therefore, any class of men are to enjoy them, it ought to be the Army."⁵⁸⁸ Such messages sought to remind Canadians of the horrific war conditions being faced by soldiers overseas. In the government's *How to Live in Wartime* pamphlet, Stephen Leacock contributed a warning that such luxuries may foster ill-will in returning soldiers:

Thousands, tens of thousands, millions of our men, women and children are engaged in silly and idle services or in production that is for mere luxuries and comforts and that helps nothing in the conduct of the war...Such people, though they work fourteen hours a day, are but mere drones in the hive as far as the war is concerned. Every crippled soldier that comes home and looks upon our so-called busy streets feels this by instinct, with something, perhaps, like hatred in his heart...⁵⁸⁹

Thus, Canadians were reminded to not give reason for resentment among returning soldiers, who had no such luxuries and comforts during the war.

Women's writers in particular dwelled on this issue and made multiple appeals to the public conscience. In January of 1917, Louise Morris wrote in *Woman's Century* of what she referred to as "the germ 'Extravagances.'"⁵⁹⁰ Morris criticized the "...spending, spending, spending; expensive theatre seats, taxi-cabs, restaurants" and what she viewed as "a mad vortex of riotous living" that was taking place in wartime.⁵⁹¹ Further attacking what she perceived as "the bacillus of extravagance and microbe of wilful waste, Morris

⁵⁸⁸ Editorial, "Plain Living," *Montreal Star* (18 April 1918): 10.

⁵⁸⁹ Stephen Leacock, "What Are You Doing to Win the War," in *How to Live in Wartime* (Ottawa: National Service Board, 1917): 9.

⁵⁹⁰ Louise Morris, "Extravagances and the War," *Woman's Century*, 4, 7 (January 1917): 4.

⁵⁹¹ *Ibid.*

charged that “with our newspapers filled with accounts of brave men’s sufferings and deprivations, not one of us who has a spark of manhood or womanhood in them can sit still and snugly enjoy the comforts of a luxurious existence, knowing what our fellow beings are going through.”⁵⁹² Thus, for the first time ever, appeals of empathy for the plight of others were made powerful within the context of wartime – particularly when viewed as empathy for ones loved ones overseas. One year later, in January of 1918, E. Blakely wrote a contribution to the magazine on “Luxury and Womanhood” in which the foreword read: “A Canadian boy wrote home to ‘mother.’ The letter was accompanied by a souvenir and an explanation that, from this nunnery some sisters were taken, their hands and breasts cut off, their bodies thrown into a well and it was seen that fire was thrown after. Such is our foe. Can we indulge in luxury?”⁵⁹³ Blakely continued her use of horrific imagery, stating later in the article: “We lounge in magnificently upholstered motor cars! Our men lie writhing in unutterable agony for hours at an advance dressing station!”⁵⁹⁴ Her most poignant challenge to Canadian women comes towards the end, when she states:

We have sent our soldiers to uphold the nation’s creed. They are fighting through mud and water, going back and back again to the front line until, through sheer exhaustion, they sink to death in ooze. The Teuton has crucified them, but time and again Christ has sent angels to guard them. Will we be worthy companions of those brave lads when they return if we think of luxury at all?⁵⁹⁵

⁵⁹² Ibid.

⁵⁹³ E. Blakely, “Luxury and Womanhood,” *Woman’s Century*, 6, 1 (January 1918): 15.

⁵⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁹⁵ Ibid, p20.

Such challenges to public morality reflect the growing concern that, when the war was finally over, there should be no doubt that Canadians had been worthy of the tremendous sacrifice.

Hoarding

While much discussion centred around those who continued to live luxuriously despite the war effort's focus on sacrifice and self-deprivation, another deviant consumer behaviour also came under scrutiny. Hoarding, particularly when it came to foodstuffs, both crossed the threshold to constitute quantitative luxury, and simultaneously harmed fellow citizens by removing scarce supplies from the market place. Such behaviour violated the very spirit of democratic sacrifice that the gospel of thrift encouraged; for, the essence of hoarding was competition, and ensuring that the hoarder was one step ahead of his fellow citizens. The Food Controller spoke strongly against such behaviour, particularly when it came to sugar – a foodstuff in short supply during the war, but valued and desired by many. In November of 1917, Hanna stressed that there was sufficient sugar in Canada for everyone's needs – if everyone engaged in fair consumption. Rather, he found that many consumers had purchased more than was sufficient for their immediate requirements, and as a result, many consumers were left unable to secure as much as they needed. "Hoarding is both unpatriotic and unwise," he warned.⁵⁹⁶ Despite such warnings, hoarding continued to be a problem for the duration of the war. In February of 1918, the Food Controller again admonished the public, claiming that "drastic measures" against hoarders were being considered by the Food Controller: "Warning has been issued that householders and others

⁵⁹⁶ "Do Not Hoard Sugar," *Canadian Food Bulletin*, 4 (17 November 1917): 9.

may find themselves in an unenviable predicament if spoiled flour or other deteriorated food is found on their premises.”⁵⁹⁷ Again, the Food Controller emphasized that hoarding was not necessary – as long as everyone consumed fairly. However, the idyllic system of equal and fair consumption seemed far out of reach for many in wartime.

Many believed that the high cost-of-living was artificially created not just by the war, but by the hoarding of food – particularly by companies. Former Prime Minister Wilfrid Laurier stated such as fact on numerous occasions, criticizing the Canada Food Board for doing little to combat such unpatriotic corporate behaviour.⁵⁹⁸ Particular concern arose over the use of cold-storage facilities. On the positive side, the *Farmer’s Advocate* referred to these facilities as one of Canada’s “greatest boons”, allowing for the preservation of food and subsequent reduction in waste;⁵⁹⁹ yet, there were many who feared such facilities were being used to hold foodstuffs back from the market, in an attempt to drive up consumer prices. These criticisms were accompanied by repeated calls for government oversight of cold-storage facilities.⁶⁰⁰ In response, the Canada Food Board passed several orders over the spring and summer of 1918 instituting licensing requirements for cold storage facilities, and maximums on the amount of food such a facility could hold. The Canada Food Board, seeking to also tackle hoarding on a smaller scale, inaugurated an anti-hoarding drive in April of 1918, aimed at preventing the waste

⁵⁹⁷ “Food Hoarders Warned. Action Now Under Consideration May Cause Their Exposure,” *Canadian Food Bulletin*, 10 (9 February 1918): 9.

⁵⁹⁸ “Food Control Under Fire,” *Globe* (28 March 1918): 5.

⁵⁹⁹ “Sound Sense on the Food Question,” *Farmer’s Advocate*, LI, 1261 (23 November 1916): 1918.

⁶⁰⁰ See Editorial, “Food in Cold Storage,” *Vancouver Daily Province* (24 September 1917): 6; as well as John Ransford, Letter-to-the-Editor, “Voice of the People: Cold Storage v. Food Control,” *Globe* (8 June 1918): 6.

of flour and other food products and to free-up the largest possible amount of food for support to the Allied war effort.⁶⁰¹ The drive appealed to all classes of society who had in their possession larger quantities of any foodstuff than was required for current needs; merchants were asked to accept returns of such foodstuffs at the purchase price, as long as there had been no deterioration. Anyone who met these requirements but failed to participate in the drive was “liable to heavy fine or imprisonment under the anti-waste and hoarding order.”⁶⁰²

Much like the enforcement of more general food control measures, informal surveillance and reporting networks were an important means to combat wartime hoarders. Participation in such endeavours became common as public abhorrence of hoarders was widespread. In October of 1917, a mass meeting at Verdun City Hall declared vehemently that they had no sympathy for food hoarders. Mayor Leclair presided over the meeting, and claimed that “the man who took advantage of the war in this way,” he said, “was a worse enemy to his country than the Germans.”⁶⁰³ In a similar vein, the Winnipeg Free Press claimed that hoarders belonged to “the noble army of grabbers, who are not only willing to let some one else do their fighting for them, but are willing to take every advantage of their country while men are away.”⁶⁰⁴ Thus, in the summer of 1918, over 300 local Women’s Institutes in Manitoba banded together to investigate and report cases of hoarding and waste to the Canada Food Board.⁶⁰⁵ The Food Board encouraged such

⁶⁰¹ “Anti-Hoarding to Avoid Waste,” *Globe* (18 April 1918): 3.

⁶⁰² *Ibid.*

⁶⁰³ “Food Profiteers Roundly Scored,” *Montreal Star* (3 October 1917): 4.

⁶⁰⁴ “Food Conservation,” *Winnipeg Free Press* (4 May 1918): 10.

⁶⁰⁵ “Women’s Work in Manitoba,” *Canadian Food Bulletin*, 16 (1 June 1918): 22.

behaviour, as they relied heavily on cooperation of citizens and municipal authorities to enforce food control measures. Even the Prime Minister received a letter informing on a suspected hoarder in Moose Jaw.⁶⁰⁶ Hoarding quickly became a community project, for it was perceived as one of the most immoral activities one could engage in during wartime.

While there was very little opposition to such campaigns in general, there were some who believed that people engaging in practical wartime thrift were being wrongfully targeted as hoarders, when in fact they were simply doing their patriotic duty. One woman wrote to the woman's page of the *Globe* in May 1918, addressing the Canada Food Board publicly. She argued that many good housewives had thought ahead and bought flour and sugar in advance so that they may not have to fall short in the future; she believed it unfair that the Canada Food Board should take foodstuffs from practical, prepared housewives to give to those who, she believed, were unprepared. She continued:

You must remember that thrift is like everything else; it is born and bred in us. It is not a case of hoarding, it is a case of thrift. Instead of having their larder filled with good, wholesome provisions, they will have bakers' bread and factory-made jam...Is it any wonder their families are not the good sturdy healthy boys and girls that we find in the homes of the homemade stuff. I do not think it is a just law at all. The woman who has been trained in the old-fashioned way is not putting that flour and sugar there for nought. She bakes her own bread and preserves her own fruit.⁶⁰⁷

Such criticisms of the calls against hoarding are revealing; not only do expressions like the one above reveal a certain distrust of modern manufactured goods, but they also reveal the opposition to modernity that underpinned the wartime thrift movement. In this case, the

⁶⁰⁶ Letter to Robert Borden from James Walden, (16 May 1917), RLB 560 – RLB 579, MG26, H 1c, Volume 186, Reel C-4385, p102347-102349, Library and Archives Canada.

⁶⁰⁷ "Housewife," Letter-to-the-Editor (Woman's Page), "Flour Thrift Versus Hoarding," *Globe* (9 May 1918): 9.

author clearly valued “traditional” modes of homemaking over more modern conveniences. They also reveal the contradictory nature of anti-hoarding calls; encouragements towards careful planning, thrift and economy may have inadvertently instilled the potential for hoarding habits, but then directly argued against such behaviour. For Canadians looking to do their patriotic duty, the way forward was not always clear.

Profiteering

Even worse than hoarding, an activity which sought to accumulate excess goods for oneself, was profiteering, or an activity which sought to make money by taking advantage of others, either through forced market deprivation or artificially inflated prices. No consumer activity incurred more public wrath during the First World War in Canada than profiteering. Some believed profiteers to be so conniving, that they suggested official war menus be given in code, to ensure profiteers would not “run up the prices” of necessary components.⁶⁰⁸ Reasonable profits from munitions and other war manufacturing were to be expected and were largely found acceptable by the public; however, those profits deemed excessive or furthering the “luxury” of their earners were deemed unpatriotic and immoral. In an article on this issue, the *Farmer’s Advocate* suggested that “every man must get a living and should be allowed a reasonable profit on his undertaking, but to take advantage of the war to pile up riches out of all proportion to future needs of the individual

⁶⁰⁸ Kathleen Desmond, Letter-to-the-Editor, “A Woman on Food Control,” *Globe* (14 August 1917): 4.

is to say the least not showing the spirit of patriotism expected at this time.”⁶⁰⁹ The profiteer was certainly an example of the latter.

In the summer of 1915, the Minister of Finance took aim at profiteering, arguing:

They have not even sacrificed any of their leisure to take part in the work of the various patriotic associations which are caring for the dependents of the men in the trenches or providing comforts for the soldiers themselves. Some are willing and ask how they can help, but the great mass are absolutely lethargic, and look upon the war as a spectacle upon which they can gaze unmoved as those having nothing at stake.⁶¹⁰

White viewed wartime speculators as indifferent to the war effort – passive onlookers who chose not to participate. The Canadian public, however, painted them with a brush far worse. One Reverend A.N. Marshall preached: “We repudiate the fellowship of him who would grow rich on the blood of our men who are dying for their country to-day; who fatten on the sorrows of our time.”⁶¹¹ For speculators were not just passive onlookers, indifferent to the war effort: they actively took from those soldiers and their families who made the ultimate wartime sacrifice. One wealthy Canadian even condemned his own kind, admitting to the *Globe* that he had received two dividend cheques in the previous week “which were so excessive...that they brought me self-reproach. I felt that I had no moral right to be reaping inordinate profits during this war and because of this war.”⁶¹² Of all luxury-spending and wealth-seeking behaviours, profiteering perhaps posed the greatest threat to the moral righteousness of the war effort.

⁶⁰⁹ “Controlling War Profits,” *Farmers’ Advocate*, L, 1196 (26 August 1915): 1343.

⁶¹⁰ Thomas White cited in “Mr. White’s Plea for Sacrifice,” *Globe* (6 August 1915): 4.

⁶¹¹ Rev. A. N. Marshall cited in “Have No Friendship with War Profiteer,” *Globe* (30 April 1917): 3.

⁶¹² Editorial, “Canadian War Taxes,” *Globe* (12 March 1917): 6.

Excessive profits, largely seen to be at the expense of the general public, were so common that the *Globe* went so far as to declare Canada's involvement in two wars:

She is fighting crowned autocracy and military despotism in Europe, [and] at home she is compelled to fight against the autocratic power and tyranny of the Big Interests... To the consecrated tyranny of Kaiserism is added the legalized oppression of the profiteer. It must be a fight to the finish between Democracy and its enemies at home and abroad.⁶¹³

The prevalence of profiteering served as a stark reminder of home front inequalities undermining the war effort. Not all sacrifices were equal, and not all Canadians were making sacrifices. In this vein, the *Grain Growers' Guide* deemed profiteers as "the worst enemies of Canada and the Empire," pointing at "those who are taking advantage of present conditions and are selfishly seeking to fill their own pockets regardless of the ruin they are bringing upon others or the stagnation in industry which they are causing."⁶¹⁴

The issue of profiteering also drove a wedge between rural and urban Canadians, as many people in the country saw the issue as yet another inequality, and a problem based uniquely in the cities of the country. Profiteering and the pursuit of inappropriate wealth was seen by many as a plight of the modern urbanite. The *Farmers' Advocate* asked:

And who gets away with war profits? Have you heard of real farmers being implicated in million-dollar war contract scandals? Not yet. It seems from a study of the situation that some department of the government, if it is necessary to exhort farmers to put forth a greater effort for patriotic reasons, might well address a communication in book form to the business men and urban people generally... Why not show them why and how they should eliminate waste, why they should work longer hours in their own interest and in the interests of their country, [and] why they should make nothing more than a reasonable profit on work...⁶¹⁵

⁶¹³ Editorial, "Canada's Two Wars," *Globe* (8 October 1917): 6.

⁶¹⁴ "Canada's Enemies," *Grain Growers' Guide* (7 October 1914): 5.

⁶¹⁵ "Where Another 'War Book' Might Do Good," *Farmer's Advocate*, LI, 1239 (22 June 1916): 1065.

Meanwhile, urbanites did not hesitate to point the finger of profiteering at rural farmers who they believed were experiencing a certain level of “sinful prosperity.”⁶¹⁶ Peter McArthur, a writer, farmer, and frequent contributor to the *Globe*, *Home Magazine*, and the *Farmer’s Advocate*, attempted to bridge the two worlds, explaining that purchases of new machinery were largely to compensate for the national manpower shortage.⁶¹⁷ Along these same lines, the Organization of Resources Committee in Ontario introduced as one of its aims, the promotion of a sympathetic spirit between urban consumers and rural producers – an endeavour accepted warmly by the *Farmer’s Advocate*.⁶¹⁸

The Case of Joseph Flavelle

As distrust of suspected profiteers festered, the case of Joseph Flavelle and the William Davies Company served only to fan the flames of public outrage. Prior to the war, Flavelle gained notoriety as an influential businessman; he held simultaneous posts as the President of the British Empire’s largest pork packer, the William Davies Company of Toronto, and also as chairman of the Bank of Commerce, the National Trust Company and Simpson’s Ltd.⁶¹⁹ In November of 1915, Flavelle was appointed chairman of the newly

⁶¹⁶ Peter McArthur, “Automobiles and Wheat,” *Globe* (7 August 1918): 4.

⁶¹⁷ *Ibid.*

⁶¹⁸ “Developing a Sympathetic Spirit,” *Farmer’s Advocate*, LII, 1290 (14 June 1917): 969.

⁶¹⁹ Michael Bliss, *A Canadian Millionaire: The Life and Business Times of Sir Joseph Flavelle, Bart. 1858-1939* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992): 53. Wartime criticism against Flavelle and his colleagues has also been noted in Cheryl S. McWatters and Peter Foreman, “Reaction to World War I constraints to normal trade: the meat-packing industry in Canada and Australia,” *Accounting History*, 10, 2 (2005): 75-77.

created Imperial Munitions Board – an attempt to alleviate the Shell Crisis of 1915.⁶²⁰ Despite his esteemed resumé, Flavelle’s reputation came under major attack following a startling revelation by W. F. O’Connor, the Cost-of-Living Commissioner, in July of 1917. In September of 1917, as part of his mandate, O’Connor was appointed to investigate the businesses and profits of William Davies Co., Ltd., and Matthews-Blackwell, Ltd., another Canadian meat-packing company. Following a review and investigation into the high wartime prices, O’Connor found that profits made by the two companies during the war were “exceptionally high”. O’Connor attributed this to an expansion in the volume of business as well as an increase in the profit earned on sales. The increased volume of business, in turn, could largely be attributed to increased exports to the British War Office.⁶²¹ While O’Connor noted that the high price of hog products for consumers could also be attributed to the high price of live hogs (for which the meat-packers were not responsible), he also noted that both meat-packing businesses operated with an eye for increased profits and at no time made any efforts to work together to reduce the price of live hogs in Canada.⁶²² O’Connor’s report noted that the increased profits ran into the millions of dollars on one article in particular – bacon. O’Connor claimed that in 1916 alone, the William Davies Company had earned a return of over eighty percent on its capital. Flavelle’s dividend payment alone had been almost \$400,000. Considering how

⁶²⁰ The Shell Crisis of 1915 was a shortage of artillery shells on the front lines. The shortage was widely publicized in the press and led to government creation of a national munitions policy – both in Britain and Canada. The Imperial Munitions Board was responsible for managing contracts on behalf of the British government for war manufacturing in Canada.

⁶²¹ *Report of the Commissioners Appointed to Investigate the Businesses of William Davies Co., Ltd. And Matthews-Blackwell Ltd.*, (Ottawa: J. de Labroquerie Taché, 1917): 27.

⁶²² *Ibid.*

many families were struggling with the high cost of living, such earnings sounded outrageous. The Canadian Press ran the story, and it was front page news across the country. Flavelle, caught by surprise, wrote to the Prime Minister calling the charges “grotesquely untruthful both in the mass and in detail,” and demanding an immediate inquiry into the charges.⁶²³ Flavelle denounced O’Connor’s accounting, suggesting he had a “dangerous inability to co-ordinate figures.”⁶²⁴ After much insistence from Flavelle and his supporters, Borden agreed to hold an inquiry and in September of 1917, a Government Inquiry was appointed to review the accounting of the William Davies Company. Regardless of the veracity of O’Connor’s claims, the damage to public opinion had already been done.

Newspapers across the country, already popular outlets for public uproar over wartime luxury, prejudged Flavelle before the facts could be verified, and found him guilty on all counts. While O’Connor had pointed to two firms in his report, criticism centred on the William Davies Company largely because Flavelle had, on several occasions, spoken out forcefully against wartime profiteering.⁶²⁵ The *Winnipeg Free Press* editorialized the issue, pointing to the “illicit profits” and “shameful conditions brought to light.”⁶²⁶ They charged the government with immediately protection to the public against the “nefarious schemes of heartless profiteers.”⁶²⁷ The *Vancouver Daily Province* asserted that there was

⁶²³ Flavelle, cited in Bliss, p337.

⁶²⁴ Flavelle, cited in J. Castell Hopkins, *The Canadian Annual Review of Public Affairs. 1917*, (Toronto: The Canadian Annual Review, Ltd., 1918): 448.

⁶²⁵ Castell Hopkins, *The Canadian Annual Review of Public Affairs. 1917*, p447.

⁶²⁶ Editorial, “Profits and Food Prices,” *Winnipeg Free Press* (14 July 1917): 15.

⁶²⁷ *Ibid.*

no possible justification for such profits in wartime.⁶²⁸ Most harsh was *Saturday Night*, which demanded Flavelle's immediate resignation from the Imperial Munitions Board.⁶²⁹ Other papers reserved judgement until O'Connor's figures were verified, but all commented that if the numbers were correct, a grave injustice had been committed against the Canadian people. For many people, the charges against Flavelle were simply evidence of what they had suspected all along – that profiteers were taking advantage of everyday Canadians. Colloquially, Flavelle soon became known as “His Lardship” and the “Baron of Bacon.”⁶³⁰ J.C. waters, president of the Trades and Labour Congress, called Flavelle “a great big hypocrite,” echoing the sentiments of Canadian consumers, who spontaneously boycotted William Davies retail stores en masse. Wholesale customers even requested that William Davies deliveries be made in unmarked trucks, so as not to incur public wrath.⁶³¹

In the days following O'Connor's initial report, the William Davies Company issued a full page advertisement to the Canadian press. The advertisement claimed that the alleged profits of five cents per pound were untrue, and that profits were closer to two-thirds of one cent per pound. The company blamed the Commissioner's poor reporting requirements claiming that his methods were flawed; the term “cold storage” was inaccurate, and was interpreted differently by each reporting firm, and there was no way to report various charges affecting profit.⁶³² The company also took issue with the Canadian

⁶²⁸ “He Can Not Justify These Millions Made in Bacon,” *Vancouver Daily Province* (13 July 1917): 2.

⁶²⁹ Bliss, p344.

⁶³⁰ Desmond Morton, *Fight or Pay: Soldiers' Families in the Great War* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2004): 184.

⁶³¹ Bliss, p342.

⁶³² As it turned out, there had been places to report these charges – on the reverse side of the sheet. See Bliss, p348.

press and inaccurate reporting that provoked “public unrest.” A closing statement asserted that no more attention would be paid to “speculative and haphazard statements made either by newspapers or civil servants,” and that no further statements would be made pending an official investigation.⁶³³ The investigation in question concluded in November of 1917, ruling that prices had not been driven up by profiteering. Rather, price increases had been due to a number of reasonable factors: firstly, aggressive competition for hogs in wartime had increased the price; and secondly, consumer taste during the war had shifted to choicer cuts of meat. Neither O’Connor nor the William Davies Company had calculated profit accurately, and the real number was closer to an average of the two estimations, sitting around 3%.⁶³⁴ While Flavelle saw the report as a vindication, the public was less convinced; His Lardship’s wartime legacy would, in the mind of the public, be that of a profiteer.⁶³⁵

Conscription of Wealth

Public outrage against profiteering was further exacerbated by the Prime Minister’s announcement in May 1917, that conscription was to be introduced that August. While much of the public was happy to accept conscription – if it was necessary – they believed that a conscription of manpower should be accompanied by what was known rhetorically as “conscription of wealth.”⁶³⁶ The concept had been popular since the beginning of the

⁶³³ William Davies Company, Ltd., Advertisement, *Globe* (17 July 1917): 5.

⁶³⁴ Bliss, p356.

⁶³⁵ Bliss, p362.

⁶³⁶ See David Tough, “‘The rich...should give to such an extent that it will hurt’: ‘Conscription of Wealth’ and Political Modernism in the Parliamentary Debate on the 1917 Income War Tax,” *The Canadian Historical Review*, 93, 3 (September 2012): 386. Tough suggests that the term “conscription of wealth” was able to gain public traction,

war and was born of public resentment over the perceived inequality in wartime sacrifices, particularly in the face of high wartime profits by many manufacturers.

The first substantial calls for conscription of wealth came in the fall of 1916, following the Borden's program of national registration. Meant as a compromise to delay conscription, the program alarmed many people who questioned by why businessmen were still reaping profits, while even more Canadians were being asked to sacrifice their lives. The *Winnipeg Free Press* editorialized on the issue, discussing programs of taxation implemented in Great Britain that constituted conscription of wealth on a grand scale. Meanwhile, they argued, in Canada the rich pay taxes, but are not obligated to contribute to patriotic efforts; yes, some wealthy men had purchased bonds but these were investments with guaranteed interest. When it came down to it, the rich men of Canada were forced "to make no sacrifice and run no risk."⁶³⁷ When compared to soldiers who had given their lives, "the contrast is too great. It shocks the conscience."⁶³⁸

Early in the war, White introduced several indirect taxes aimed at increasing national revenue; these were largely targeted at transportation and some luxury goods, but were typically very small. In 1915, newly taxed items included one percent on all note circulation in banks, five cents on railway and steamboat tickets with ten-cent taxes on

largely because it was general, and represented a "spectrum of meanings," making it "politically promiscuous."

⁶³⁷ Editorial, "Conscription of Wealth," *Winnipeg Free Press* (24 March 1917): 17.

⁶³⁸ *Ibid.*

sleeping births, two-cent taxes on stamps, and five-cent taxes on wine and champagne. The Minister hoped to raise at least \$8,000,000 by these means.⁶³⁹

In 1916, the Finance Minister introduced the Business War Profits Tax, retroactively taxing war profits of 1915. He suggested to the House of Commons: “It has appeared to the Government that persons, firms, and corporations whose profits have been such might well be called upon to contribute a share to the carrying on of the war...”⁶⁴⁰ It was seen by many as a paltry measure, weight far more heavily on soldiers’ dependents than on wealthy manufacturers. At twenty-five percent charged on profits only in excess of a fixed rate, it did not constitute “real taxation” of wealth and property. Even Borden expressed privately that the measure contained “more political bark than fiscal bite,” noting that the measure was meant to placate growing criticism against excess profits and instances of war profiteering.⁶⁴¹ Once again, the *Winnipeg Free Press* echoed popular frustration with the unequally shared burden of war, and argued that “the balance must be redressed. Justice and fair play demand that the sacrifices of the wealthy shall be as real as are those of the less well-to-do classes, from among whom the majority of Canadian soldiers have gone, and will go, forth to fight the nation’s battle.”⁶⁴² In April of 1917, the Minister of Finance announced an increase in the Business War Profits Tax, raising

⁶³⁹ Castell-Hopkins, *The Canadian Annual Review of Public Affairs, 1915*, (Toronto: The Annual Review Publishing Company Limited, 1916): 199. After facing criticism from the Liberal critic, A.K. Maclean, White reduced the taxes on wine and transportation only slightly, by one-cent, and placed some items on an exemption list.

⁶⁴⁰ *Ibid*, pp.355-356.

⁶⁴¹ Robert Craig Brown, *Robert Laird Borden: A Biography, Volume II: 1914-1937* (Toronto: Macmillan of Canada, 1975): 49.

⁶⁴² Editorial, “Is Canada Conscripting Wealth?” *Winnipeg Free Press* (25 May 1917): 11.

taxation on excess profits to fifty percent, much to the dismay of the manufacturers.⁶⁴³ He was criticized heavily by the financial press on the grounds that the tax was not equitable; moreover, it discriminated against only a small portion of the population.⁶⁴⁴

With debates over conscription growing more heated as August quickly approached, the government sought to placate the public's calls for conscription of wealth. They attempted to quell public unrest by introducing the *Income War Tax Act* that summer. It was eventually passed on August 17. This measure was the Dominion's first income tax and its second direct tax, following the Business War Profits Tax of 1916. The tax was small, and called for four percent on all income exceeding \$1,500 with an additional two percent on all income exceeding \$6,000, and continued scaling for greater income amounts. The paltry tax did little to quiet the calls for conscription of wealth – particularly when it became known that even the Prime Minister would only be required to pay eighty dollars under the new tax measures.⁶⁴⁵ Moreover, Government bonds were exempt from the new tax, meaning that wealth could be invested for a fixed return, with no sacrifice of capital to the war effort. The tax was called “ludicrously inadequate” and served, once again, to only heighten perceptions of wartime inequality.⁶⁴⁶ In December of that year, only months after the tax was implemented, Stephen Leacock addressed a crowd in Chatham, Ontario, where he exclaimed: “I want to see legislation that will strip us of our luxuries and make us realize that we are really at war. When we are made to realize this we can look the men in the face

⁶⁴³ Hopkins, *The Canadian Annual Review of Public Affairs. 1918*, p295.

⁶⁴⁴ *Ibid*, p296.

⁶⁴⁵ Morton and Granatstein, *Marching to Armageddon* (Lester & Orpen Dennys, 1989): 85.

⁶⁴⁶ Editorial, “A Call to Save,” *Globe* (12 September 1917): 6.

who are drafted, and they will realize that we at home are doing our part in the struggle.”⁶⁴⁷

In the public’s eyes, the government had simply done very little to address the plague of wartime extravagance.

A New Future

As wartime extravagance persisted, some Canadians began to question their very relationship with the world of goods around them. In one of his columns, Peter McArthur lamented at how commercialized life had become when he argued “the ready-made things are altogether too plentiful and we are being tempted by them altogether too much.”⁶⁴⁸ Similarly, a letter to the *Globe* reflected on an upbringing which taught her “that goods were good things and that the more of them we had the more comfortable and happy we were.”⁶⁴⁹ In light of the increased cost-of-living, this particular writer wondered how she might continue this sort of life, in light of the war.⁶⁵⁰ Such comments reflect the seemingly abrupt arrival of the First World War and its gospel of thrift to the new twentieth-century consumer. The period leading into the war had seen drastic expansion in consumer choice and access to consumer goods through the rise of department stores and mail-order catalogues. And, while some people were reluctant to give up their mantles of modern consumerism, others, like McArthur, found the changes quite alarming – particularly when he saw how difficult they were to surrender in the name of the war. *Maclean’s* commented

⁶⁴⁷ Stephen Leacock, cited in “Strip Canada of Luxurious Ease,” *Globe* (14 December 1917): 3.

⁶⁴⁸ Peter McArthur, “Commercialism,” *Farmer’s Advocate*, LII, 1269 (18 January 1917); 83.

⁶⁴⁹ ‘Only a Woman,’ Letter-to-the-Editor, “The High Cost of Living and Woman Suffrage,” *Globe* (2 October 1916): 6.

⁶⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

on this “amazing spectacle” in war time – “the growth of esthetic demand in the face of a world menace, with the Hun hammering at the gates of civilization.”⁶⁵¹ McArthur went so far as to say that the only way to escape the “modern method of living” that “presses...from every side” was to “start over from the beginning – but that would be revolution.”⁶⁵²

While the experience of wartime consumerism had been in many ways a traumatizing revelation for McArthur and the like, others saw the war as something far more opportunistic. Rather than reduce people’s reliance on commodities and “luxury,” Christobel Pankhurst of the National Council of Women sought to expand this. Eight months following the war’s end, she argued the most important action to take was to increase, not decrease, the production of commodities so as to bring “within reach of the masses of the people the comforts, refinements, and luxuries that have hitherto been the monopoly of the few.”⁶⁵³ Thus, whereas wartime unrest had focussed on bringing the wealthy few down to the level of the many, Ms. Pankhurst believed postwar reconstruction should center on bringing the many to the level of the wealthy few. It is true, Ms. Pankhurst’s voice was lost in a sea of people who called for quite the opposite; yet, her sentiment is an important reminder that “equality” can come in many forms.

Conclusion

Throughout Canada’s war, the issues of luxury, profits, and the accumulation of wealth combined to form a maelstrom of public unrest. At the root of it all, however, was

⁶⁵¹ John Appleton, “The Business Outlook,” *Maclean’s*, 31, 9 (July 1918): 6.

⁶⁵² Peter McArthur, “Luxury”, *Farmer’s Advocate*, LII, 1296 (26 July 1917): 1193.

⁶⁵³ Christabel Pankhurst, “Industrial Salvation,” *Woman’s Century*, 7, 6 (June 1919): 46.

a popular dissatisfaction with clear class divisions within the war effort. War thrift and sacrifice, meant to be a national project towards victory, were undermined by inequality; the burden was weighing most heavily on those with the least. The moral superiority of war sacrifice was further weakened by what appeared to many as an uninterrupted lust for goods and profits. Moreover, such tensions revealed an increasing discomfort with their “new world of goods” and what it meant, particularly when it intersected with a period of prescribed scarcity.

Conclusion

By the end of the war, Canadians on the home front had undertaken a national project of unprecedented scope. Supported by an expanded bureaucracy and regulatory system, Canadians successfully loaned over \$2 billion to the war effort and were one of the largest suppliers of food to the Allied effort (second only to the United States of America). Under a system of voluntary consumer, thrift, and food conservation campaigns, the Government encouraged Canadians to participate in the patriotic efforts en masse. Canadians were continually told that only through organized individual and collective sacrifice could the Allies achieve victory. Because this participation was demanded on a voluntary basis, individual and collective choices became politicized in the public forum like never before. An examination of these choices reveals that attempts to create a spirit of patriotic community grounded in sacrifice and self-denial were consistently undermined by several persistent contradictions that challenged the ethos of wartime community; these included continued expressions of individualism as well as the allure and perceived hedonism inherent in modern consumption.

From the outset of the war, government policies were perceived to favour the wealthy and business-owning minority while failing to protect the struggling agricultural and working class majority. Borden's refusal to offer what could be perceived as any meaningful relief to those Canadians suffering at the hand of the financial crisis or prolonged economic depression served to highlight the apparent inequalities that would persist during the war. This thesis reveals the public's acute perception of this inequality and its prevalence for the duration of the war effort. It served as a cornerstone of the pro-

buying consumer campaigns of the early war years which sought to elicit patriotic displays from the public while continuing to earn profits for Canadian businesses. The thrift and food control campaigns were also criticized, as White's borrowing scheme seemed to limit its benefits to the wealthy, while those same individuals seemed often to be exempt from the restrictions of Hanna's food control. Finally, throughout the war, there continued to be the visible presence of those who sought to reap personal benefits from the crisis, via profiteering, hoarding, or continued consumer spending. It became clear that not all Canadians were engaging in the sacrifice demanded by the war effort, nor was the burden of war being carried by all Canadians on an equal basis. Thus, this perceived inequality gave rise to a widespread outcry against wartime profiteering, accumulation, luxury and wealth, as it became clear that such individualism had no place alongside the selflessness demanded by wartime patriotism.

At the root of this inequality, were those Canadians who refused to amend their behaviour in light of the war and who faced no consequences for doing so. While the early months of war had seen calls for continued consumption and Business as Usual, such patriotic consumerism quickly became divisive and fraught with contradictions --- how could consumer purchasing be rationalized within the new morality of wartime that was grounded in sacrifice? This thesis reveals the ongoing tensions between the individualism inherent in modern capitalism and the communalism demanded by wartime patriotism. As wartime scarcity became a reality and it became clear the war would persist for some time, this pro-consumer mentality was no longer appropriate; it was quickly replaced by increasing calls for wartime thrift and economy. Nevertheless, it appeared that many Canadians refused to adopt the shift from a spending to saving ethos. While patriotic

members of the war effort sought to restrict their spending and consumption, it seemed as though an equal number of civilians carried on with their pre-war extravagance unchecked. This was viewed as an affront to the patriotic spirit required to achieve victory, as individualism threatened to undermine wartime nationalism. To elicit further participation, patriotic members of the war effort were deputized – by the government and their patriotic peers – to engage in public surveillance of their fellow Canadians. Through means of public shaming and personal denunciations, those who veered from the patriotic path of appropriately patriotic wartime choices, were publicly chastised for undermining a future Allied victory. Thus, to avoid such public censure, the government and other patriotic supporters both overtly and subliminally encouraged individuals to partake in performative acts of patriotism, lest they be accused of shirking their duty.

The path to engaging in performative patriotism, however, was not always clear. Government direction in wartime was often contradictory and many on the home front struggled to determine the appropriate and patriotic way forward. Citizens continually petitioned the government to provide further clarity and education on thrift, conservation, and its ways and means. However, a continued lack of direction from the government in the early stages left many Canadian consumers at a loss as to how to fulfill their patriotic duty – despite their eager desire to do so. In this way, White, Hanna, and other federal officials effectually alienated a portion of the patriotic public by simply failing to provide timely and effective direction. Instead, leadership in the ways of wartime patriotism was provided by Canada's organized women, who did not hesitate to step into the gap left by pre-occupied politicians. The NCWC, IODE, and others took up the mantle of wartime thrift and saving and coordinated massive campaigns aimed at educating and encouraging

the public. For the first time in the Dominion's history, the government, supported by a vast network of wartime volunteers, launched a national project of social engineering aimed at instilling Canadians with a proper sense of thrift. This effort was taken up by many service organizations and social reformers with enthusiasm, as they viewed the war as an opportunity to correct the behaviour of a generation they deemed as thriftless and prone to extravagancy – victims of modern consumerism.

The First World War serves as a unique lens through which to view an array of social tensions that pre-existed the war, but were amplified by the temporary state of crisis. While the market became subordinate to the government owing to the need for increased federal management of resources in wartime, the widespread spirit of self-sacrifice, federal officials and patriotic proponents struggled to rein in the overwhelming desire of Canadian consumers to participate in the market unfettered by the moral restraints of wartime. Patriotic rhetoric infused with notions of citizenship, voluntarism, community, and sacrifice, was not enough to assuage the effects of modern capitalism. Its emphasis on opportunity, accumulation, and individualism persisted throughout the war in the face of an immense organized movement aimed at thwarting its influence. In this way, the war was a jarring experience for Canadians as they were confronted with a national moral predicament that, they discovered, could not be solved under even the most moral-inducing circumstances – the crisis of a world war that threatened their loved ones and livelihood.

Appendix A: Sources

The historian who wishes to reveal the inner thoughts and attitudes of individuals on a subject in any given period is faced with the disappointing reality that such sources, in many cases, do not exist. As such, this study uses a variety of sources to examine wartime spending and saving campaigns and to reveal the evolving public environment that sustained and informed the ideas underpinning these wartime activities. In doing so, this study aims to reveal the wartime context in which ideas about spending, saving, thrift, and sacrifice were contested, deconstructed and reconstructed in the public sphere, and to what extent different parties participated in this process.

The government's role in the thrift and conservation campaigns is perhaps the easiest to ascertain, as it was well-recorded through a variety of means. The Department of Finance – the body behind the 'official' calls for wartime saving – endorsed several efforts to encourage a program of national thrift. These are well-documented in the archival collection of the Department of Finance. These archival sources are supplemented by a variety of wartime publications. The surviving documents of the Offices of the Food and Fuel Controllers, under the auspices of the Department of Agriculture, offer meticulous records of the country's food and fuel supplies throughout the war. These real numbers offer a point of reference when considering much of the rhetoric behind the calls for food and fuel conservation. The controllers launched a comprehensive series of advertising and propaganda campaigns to encourage conservation and a reduction of waste in each of their respective realms. These were followed by comprehensive end-of-war reports on the activities of each office in 1918, and 1919. These official sources, both from the

Department of Finance and the Department of Agriculture, provide insight into both the real and constructed needs for wartime thrift and conservation.

These federal department sources are supplemented by the archives of Prime Minister Sir Robert Borden and Minister of Finance Sir Thomas White. Borden's correspondence and professional papers offer insight into the government's position on a variety of issues; moreover, throughout the war both Borden and White received many letters from those who appealed to the politicians for assistance or who sought to offer them advice on the administration of the war effort. Additionally, White wrote several postwar retrospectives on his administration of wartime finances allowing for further insight into elements that may have informed his decision-making of the time.⁶⁵⁴ These letters are in turn supplemented by the personal letters of Canadian families, collected by *The Canadian Letters and Images Project*; within these letters, various individuals discussed the issue of material scarcity when writing to loved ones. Personal letters, written either to the Prime Minister or to other family members, allow a snapshot into the experiences and attitudes of individual Canadians on the home front.

The archival records of the National Council of Women of Canada (NCWC), an umbrella body for numerous smaller women's organizations, and the Imperial Order Daughters of the Empire (IODE), an organization within the NCWC that reached a peak of 50,000 members during the war, are rich in detail regarding their wartime activities, including work in the realm of consumer, thrift, and conservation campaigns. Additionally,

⁶⁵⁴ Thomas White, *The Story of Canada's War Finance*, (Montreal: 1921); and, Thomas White, "The War Finance of Canada," *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 107, Social and Economic Conditions in the Dominion of Canada, (May 1932).

the official publications of each organization – *Woman's Century* and *Echoes* respectively – are most informative, and useful in both tracing activities of each group and the underlying views which shaped their attitudes and actions in wartime. The minutes kept by each organization reveal the decision-making process and the different opinions that shaped much of their efforts.

Newspapers

Newspapers of any era, but particularly the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, are often a contentious source base for any historian. Associated with an excess of partisan and hyperbolic reporting in an effort to gain readership, newspapers of this era can easily be dismissed as unreliable. However, this study views the wartime newspaper as a revelatory source which was, in many ways, experiencing a period of transition.

The turn of the century saw newspapers engage in a gradual shift from an emphasis on informing the reader to an increasing emphasis on profitability.⁶⁵⁵ This is evidenced in the increasing amount of space on each page devoted to advertisers, who quickly became the main source of income for newspapers; as a result, advertisers occupied positions of increasing power in the newspaper world.⁶⁵⁶ Another strategy to increase readership is evident in the trend towards sensationalism that appeared in the late nineteenth and early

⁶⁵⁵Minko Sotiron, *From Politics to Profit: The Commercialization of Canadian Daily Newspapers, 1890-1920*, (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1997): 15. Sotiron argues that by 1921, this process was complete, and Canadian newspapers had been successfully transformed into businesses.

⁶⁵⁶Douglas Fetherling, *The Rise of the Canadian Newspaper*, (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1990): 77. Advertisers began to purchase full-page ads in 1905 – Henry Morgan was the first. When they disagreed with something the newspaper said, as Henry Morgan did with the *Montreal Star* in 1900 and Timothy Eaton did with the *Toronto Star* in 1921, companies would remove their advertisements for an extended period of time, creating a substantial loss of income for that newspaper.

twentieth century. As Jeffrey Keshen has noted in his work on propaganda, this tendency towards sensationalism was more than evident in the Canadian press of the First World War.⁶⁵⁷ As a result of the new emphasis on profitability, combined with wartime shortages in paper, approximately forty Canadian daily newspapers ceased publication during the war due to bankruptcy or merger-acquisitions.⁶⁵⁸ Thus, Canadian readership was becoming more concentrated in the hands of larger, more successful newspapers.

During this same period, there was also a gradual shift away from partisanship and towards independence, although Historian Minko Sotiron has suggested that this brand of ‘independence’ could be defined more as a financial independence – largely thanks to increased advertising revenues – rather than a lack of political affiliation.⁶⁵⁹ Additionally, as Sotiron has suggested, the wartime Union government blurred party lines and the fervour of total war meant that many newspapers abstained from overtly partisan conflict during this time.⁶⁶⁰ In practice, this means that while wartime newspapers were not explicitly partisan, they were of an independent nature so as to allow publication of opinions which criticized the wartime government.

Despite the potential weaknesses of wartime newspapers, they remain a valuable source for an investigation of the public environment surrounding notions of wartime spending and saving. In this case, I use them to ascertain the social environment in which ideas and notions of thrift, saving, and spending were formulated. A survey of readership between 1911 and 1921 revealed that readership was relatively steady, and on average,

⁶⁵⁷ Jeffrey Keshen, *Propaganda and Censorship during Canada's Great War*, (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 1996).

⁶⁵⁸ Fetherling, p102.

⁶⁵⁹ Sotiron, p108.

⁶⁶⁰ *Ibid*, pp.118-119.

families in major cities such as Ottawa and Montreal consumed, on average, more than 2 newspapers per household.⁶⁶¹

A select number of newspapers and magazines used for this study were reviewed in their entirety. These were selected based partly on circulation numbers and partly on their 'independent' status. Attempts were made to include an element of regional and political representation. When necessary, greater subscription numbers trumped other factors when selecting regional representation. To determine this, *McKim's Canadian Newspaper Directory (1919)*⁶⁶² was used. This volume was published yearly and distributed to businesses or potential advertisers and included data on every periodical in Canada such as circulation numbers, partisanship, and frequency of publication. This dissertation relies upon the 1919 volume as it includes data collected in 1918, the last year of the war. : from Ontario, *The Globe* (c. 83,579; Liberal) and *Evening Telegram* (c. 85,829; Independent); from Quebec, *The Montreal Star* (c. 112,331, Independent); from the Maritimes, *The Nova Scotian* (c. 13,444; Liberal), and *The Evening Mail* (c. 15,102; Independent-Conservative); from the Prairies, the *Winnipeg Free Press* (c.79,411; Liberal); and from British Columbia, the *Vancouver Province* (c. 51,879; Independent) which the publishers of *McKim's* described as embracing every part of the province. Magazines and other periodicals for review were selected using the same process. These include *Maclean's* (c. 70,000); *Western Home Journal* (c. 28,250); *Grain Growers' Guide* (39,494); *Farmer's Advocate* (c. 33,603); as well as *Woman's Century* (c. 6,250) and

⁶⁶¹ Sotiron, p24.

⁶⁶² *The Canadian Newspaper Directory. Twelfth Edition.* Montreal: A. McKim, Limited, 1919.

Echoes (c. not available) which were published by the two largest women's service organizations, the National Council of Women of Canada and the Imperial Order of Daughters of Empire. A further selection of newspapers and magazines were reviewed for select periods during the war. These included: *The Monetary Times*, *Canadian Magazine*, *Industrial Canada*, and the *Canadian Food Bulletin*.

Approach:

Each publication was reviewed with a focus on headlines, editorials, letters-to-the-editors and women's pages (where they existed). These were both the most apparent, and the most 'interactive' sections of each periodical; thus, they can be seen as the most useful for an analysis of the public forum. As each publication was reviewed, bibliographic information of relevant items was entered into a table that was unique to each publication. Each item was then coded with keywords to reflect key topics in this thesis, with many items assigned multiple keywords to reflect the multi-faceted content. As new key issues emerged during the course of research, some publications were re-reviewed to ensure that relevant items had not been previously overlooked in earlier research.

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Department of Finance fonds

Victory Loan Campaign Commission

Imperial Order of the Daughters of Empire fonds

National Council of Women Fonds

Robert Borden Fonds

Sessional Papers of the Parliament of the Dominion of Canada

Sir Thomas White Fonds

Archival Collections – Digital

Canadian Letters and Images Project [www.canadianletters.ca]

Memorable Manitobans [www.mhs.mb.ca]

War and Popular Culture Project [www.wartimecanada.ca]

Magazines

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Echoes

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