Chapter 7

“The Home Front”
Impact of WWII on Canada
Catalyst

• Catalyst: individuals or events that bring about change
• World War II was a catalyst for change in Canada
Economic Change

- At beginning of war Canada was in a depression
- 12-13% unemployment rate
• WWII changed this situation – led to economic boom
• This was because it created a demand for raw materials, weapons, and supplies.
• By 1942, Canada had become a major source of arms and supplies for the Allies
• Also caused closer economic connections between Canada and US as they coordinated their war production to ensure goods were being produced quickly.
Social Change

- Role of women in the workforce and military increased greatly.
- So many women volunteered for the military that women’s branches were created.
• In the workforce, women filled jobs left open by the men, as well as wartime production work.
• By 1944 over 1,000,000 women were working.
• Daycare was provided so mothers could work.
• Women in workforce and military were paid less for the same work.
• Nevertheless, women gained self-confidence and a sense of accomplishment for their wartime work.
Rationing

• Gov’t controlled the distribution of products that were thought to be in short supply.

• For example, food (because a lot of it was being sent to troops in Europe)
• Gov’t controlled how much coffee, tea, and sugar people could buy a week.

• Gas, rubber, and certain metals were also rationed for the war effort.
• Production of consumer goods decreased during war – replaced by production of weapons and supplies
• Ex: hard to find a watch or fountain pen in the store.

Pre-War Lighting factory

During the war – factory converted to airplane parts
• People bought victory bonds to help support the war effort.
• After the war, they would cash the bonds in, getting lots of spending money.
• Helped bring about a post-war economic boom.
Political Change

Social Policies

• 1940: PM King introduced unemployment insurance because Canada had full employment and a good economy.
• 1945: “Baby bonus”, or family allowance, was introduced
Conscription

- In 1940 PM King introduced conscription ONLY for home defence – soldiers not sent to fight in Europe.
- In 1944, because of huge casualties, King ordered 16,000 of the home defence soldiers to Europe – only 2,400 saw battle.
NL Confederation

- Partly a result of WWII
- In 1934, as a result of high debt, NL gave up self-gov’t—allowed Britain to appoint a commission to govern in exchange for financial help
• WWII boosted NFLD economy – therefore did not need financial assistance.
• With a recovered economy, the people of NFLD had to decide what to do.
• 52.3% of NFLD voted to join Canada
• (47.7% voted for responsible gov’t)

• March 31, 1949, NFLD joined Canada.
Internment Camps

• Canada has long history of anti-Asian discrimination
• Following the attack on Pearl Harbour in 1941, Canada decided to intern (hold people against their will) Japanese Canadians.
• Camps set up in interior of BC – Japanese Canadians rounded up and businesses were shut down
• Men separated from families.
• Property sold by gov’t.
• Internment Camp also set up in Minto, New Brunswick.
• Held German and Italian prisoners of war (POWs), as well as other Canadians believed to be security threats.
Jewish Refugees

• Canada also had long history of discrimination against Jews.
• Jews were not welcome in some communities, could not enter some professions, and were not welcome in army.
• In 1930s, Jews fleeing the Nazis were often denied refuge by Canada.
• From 1931-39, Canada accepted less than 4000 Jews.
• Some Jews that were accepted were interned in the Minto camp.
Black Canadians

- Black Canadian war volunteers faced same prejudices as in WWI.
- Many were turned down for war duty at beginning of war.
• As volunteers were needed, army began accepting Black Canadians.
• Navy and air force discriminated against African Canadians well into the 1950s.
• In 1950s, gov’t prohibited this discrimination

Gerry Bell – one of the only black Canadian pilots in WWII
• After war, many Black Canadians were less willing to accept discrimination, because they had fought for their country.
• This influenced the civil rights movement (Ch. 10)
First Nations

- Over 3000 Status First Nations people, including 70 women, volunteered to fight in WWII.
- This does not include the Non-Status First Nations, Inuit, and Metis who also enlisted.
• First Nations fought in the army – not welcome in Navy and Air Force
• At the same time, many of these people could not vote unless they gave up their First Nations status (Metis could always vote)
It was not until 1960 that Canada extended federal suffrage to all First Nations.
Chinese Canadians

- Did not have right to vote
- At beginning of war were not welcome to join military
• Army eventually formed special unit of Chinese Canadians to fight in Asia.
• In 1947, Canada granted Chinese-Canadians the right to vote.