Comrades and Citizens:
*Great War Veterans in Toronto, 1915-1919*

by

Nathan Smith

A thesis submitted in conformity with the requirements
for the degree of Ph.D.
Graduate Department of History
University of Toronto

Copyright by Nathan Smith 2012
Abstract

Comrades and Citizens: Great War Veterans in Toronto, 1915-1919

Nathan Smith, Ph.D. 2012

Department of History, University of Toronto

This is a history of returned soldiers of the Great War in Toronto covering the period from when they began returning home in 1915 through to the end of demobilization in late 1919. Based largely in newspaper research, the focus is the discourse of returned men, as they were frequently called, and the role they played in Toronto and in Canada more broadly. The dissertation examines veterans' attitudes, the opinions they expressed, the goals they collectively pursued, the actions they took and their significance as actors and symbols in the public sphere. The study shows that during and immediately after the war returned soldiers played a prominent role in public debate over conscription and wartime politics, the status of non-British immigrants in Canada, the Red Scare and re-establishment policy. In exploring these topics the study elaborates on the identities veterans collectively adopted and constructed for themselves as comrades and citizens.

Class, definitions of masculinity, British-Canadian ethno-nationality and experience as soldiers all affected formulations of veteran citizenship and comradeship. Returned soldiers' representations of their citizenship resonated powerfully in Canadian society. The experiences and symbolism of returned soldiers generated interest in civilian society that granted them easy access to the public sphere and encouraged pro-war politicians to use returnees to promote the war effort. Veterans took advantage of their access to the press and public stages to broadcast
their own views and claim that their service gave them special rights to intervene in public affairs.

Comradeship was vitally important to returned soldiers and set them apart from civilians, but it was neither a simple nor stable category. Veterans' debates and the history of veterans' associations testify to the fact that collective service in the war did not erase civilian identities and create a stable platform for united collective activism after the war. Furthermore, comradeship sometimes existed uneasily with the rights and responsibilities of citizenship. Parliamentary methods were fundamental to veterans' activism, but their politics were also performative, often pursued and proclaimed at street level, and a minority of veterans threatened and engaged in violence they claimed was justified.
Acknowledgements

Research and writing is lonely work, but impossible to do alone. I received help from colleagues, friends and family. I am grateful to a host of people who offered themselves as models to emulate, created needed distractions, and gave their support and encouragement, especially Horst Herget, always a great friend. Institutions were important too. I am thankful for funding from a University of Toronto Scholarship, from Department of History awards and grants, and from an Ontario Graduate Scholarship. Funding from the Canadian Historical Association and International Society for First World War Studies also permitted me to attend conferences in 2007 and 2009 that were enormously useful to me. And Carol Ali was an invaluable resource throughout the Ph.D. process and will be missed.

A various stages, Tom Mitchell, Glenn Wright, Chris Sharpe, Mark McGowan, and James Pitsula generously shared their wisdom with me in their responses to my questions and by discussing aspects of my research. Noula Mina and Nic Clarke gave me important research tips, as did Karen Teeple of the City of Toronto Archives. Craig Heron read two chapters and provided much needed constructive criticism, while the comments and questions of other members of the Labour Studies group to which I presented material also raised issues and perspectives I needed to think about. Steve Penfold read the whole draft and suggested many ways it could be improved. Jonathan Vance provided invaluable comments at the end of the process as my External Examiner. The questions posed by the other members of my committee, including Rick Halpern, were similarly thought provoking and forward looking. My thanks to you all; your input made the final product better and increased my interest in the project.

Several friends read drafts of parts of the dissertation, offering solutions to writing problems, valuable analytical insights and challenging me to think about new questions. Thank you: Dave Goutor, Jeff Bowersox, Amy Milne-Smith and Ruth Percy. My most productive period of writing came when I joined a dissertation writing group, made up of friends whose feedback and conversation was smart and enjoyable. So thank you: Ariel Beaujot, Denis McKim, Susana Miranda, Alison Norman and Cara Spittal.
My thesis supervisor, Ian Radforth always gave me good advice (that I did not always follow), and he's the one who came up with the idea of studying First World War veterans. I knew right away that it was a good topic and I am grateful to Ian for patiently waiting (and waiting) for me to explain why.

My family was intellectually engaged in and wonderfully supportive of my work from start to finish, particularly my mom, Virginia Clark, my dad, Wallis Smith, and Monika Turner. I owe the most to Candace Minifie, my wife and my hero. With gratitude and all my love, I dedicate this to her, and to Charlotte, my inspiration.
# Table of Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Abstract</td>
<td>ii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acknowledgements</td>
<td>iv</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abbreviations</td>
<td>vii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Returned Heroes</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Battle-bonded Comrades</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Patriotic Men</td>
<td>99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. British Citizens</td>
<td>144</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Association Members</td>
<td>185</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Resentful Veterans</td>
<td>217</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td>253</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sources</td>
<td>276</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Abbreviations

ANV – Army and Navy Veterans
AO – Archives of Ontario
CEF – Canadian Expeditionary Force
CTA – City of Toronto Archives
GAC – Grand Army of Canada
GAUV – Grand Army of United Veterans
GWVA – Great War Veterans' Association
LAC – Library and Archives of Canada
UVL – United Veterans League
Introduction

On a warm October day in Toronto during the Great War an infantry battalion training for service overseas marched down the city's main street. Their khaki-coloured uniforms and their kilts, for they were a Highland unit, were familiar sights to the people they passed. It was 1917 and soldiers in training had been parading through the streets of Toronto for more than three years. Heading southbound on Yonge Street, the soldiers were traveling downhill, but they covered a considerable distance that day and that earned them occasional rest stops. One was enjoyed 'under the trees of Eglinton,' before the men of the unit pushed themselves to their feet again, hefted their packs up onto their backs, formed their lines and, to the orders of their officers, resumed their march, stomping four abreast. Not long afterwards they arrived at the site of a soldiers' convalescent hospital, at the corner of Davisville and Yonge streets, where veterans of the war the infantry unit was training to fight were collected outside to enjoy the sunshine. The men of the battalion lifted their caps, cheered 'their wounded brothers' and when their commander called for a 'Tiger' he got a big roar for the men of the hospital. As for the returned soldiers outside the hospital, they were 'quiet for the most part.' A few jokes were made with 'the passing Kilties' but the veterans gave no resounding roar to honour and encourage the soldiers as they passed.

Onwards the new soldiers marched, descending towards downtown. In due course they put St Clair Avenue behind them, passed the Canadian Pacific Railway station near Summerhill Avenue and crossed Bloor Street. Not long afterwards they reached the intersection of Yonge and College streets where another convalescent hospital for wounded soldiers was located. The marching men had reached Shrapnel Corners, named after an intersection just outside the ruined city of Ypres on the Western Front. As they did at Davisville, many convalescents in their khaki uniforms, often sporting bandages and holding canes or crutches, loitered outside, filling the benches built for their convenience.

Here the battalion's commander ordered his men to stop for another ten-minute rest. Some of the recruits sat on the curb and, tired and hot, none of them said much. Gazing at them
from across the street, neither did 'the men at Shrapnel Corners,' who made 'no sign of recognition' and were even more quiet than their comrades to the north, at the Davisville hospital. When the battalion resumed its march, 'bandsmen and the first company or two passed the returned men in absolute silence. Then someone suddenly wakened up, and greetings almost as hearty as those received by the Davisville men wakened the echoes of the Corners.' With less enthusiasm, the soldiers in training repeated their performance at Davisville by shouting out their regard for the men who had come back from 'over there.' The veterans at Shrapnel Corners were less enthusiastic than their Davisville comrades and gave the marching men no reply at all.

This anecdote from the pages of Toronto's *Evening Telegram* suggests a number of realities about the nature of the Canadian home front during the Great War. The story clearly demonstrates that mobilizing for war and veteran re-establishment, and reconstruction in a broad sense, were not distinct phenomenon. They overlapped and acted on each other. The war convalescents may have had no enthusiasm for heartily cheering men training to go to war, but the parading men that day, and certainly the officers who directed them, clearly felt the need to recognize soldiers who had gone before them. How many of the soldiers in training felt that, at least in part, they were carrying on the fight on the veterans' behalf?

While suggesting the interaction of the efforts mounted to fight and to recover from that experience, the encounter also pointed to themes of difference and separation that emerged during the war. Why did the convalescents say so little to men destined to reinforce their comrades overseas? Did they see themselves in the faces and postures of the men marching? Were they imagining what would happen to these recruits when they entered the line? Perhaps some of the veterans said a prayer for them or wished them luck they knew was needed to make it out alive. Some of them may have been unable to muster enough hopefulness for such thoughts while others wondered what had taken the new soldiers so long to sign up. Whatever the case was, their muted reaction to the battalion symbolized the difficulty of bridging the gap that existed between veterans and non-veterans. Anything the veterans could have collectively said to encourage the recruits in that moment would no doubt have sounded like empty rhetoric to their own ears. And what advice could they have possibly shared as the men marched past?

---

1 16 October 1917, 7. Cited hereafter as *Telegram.*
Perhaps the jokes made with the men as they passed by Davisville contained advice in the only way it could be passed along in that context.

The story is also evidence of the important place returned soldiers occupied in the public sphere. In addition to their visibility on the street, the story's appearance in a section of the Telegram entitled 'Chat of "Shrapnel Corners,"' indicated veterans' informal ownership of a major intersection in Canada's second largest city. Containing news about and for veterans, the creation of this news section reflected the growing population of veterans in the city and society's increased interest in their views and welfare. The Telegram was not alone in making this move. The Telegram's rival and the other paper dedicated to city coverage, the Toronto Daily Star,² printed a variety of sections dedicated to veterans' news from 1917 through 1919 and each of Toronto's four other daily newspapers gave returned soldiers considerable attention. Since circulation increased during the war it is unlikely that these editorial decisions were misguided.³

If the story's existence is evidence of returned soldiers' importance at this moment then the representation of veterans in the story is suggestive of perceptions about them. The scant detail about how the veterans reacted to the passing column, what they said when they did speak and lack of speculation about why they said so little, elides their crucial role in the story. Though the battalion in training drives the action in the brief narrative, its motivation is a known quantity and taken for granted. Drama is created when the veterans are encountered but, significantly, their motivations remain mysterious. The effect is to make the veterans appear as a collective, as the battalion is represented, but distinctly different from the men marching to war and seemingly inscrutable. In these ways, this story expressed both the general interest in returned soldiers, as well as the uncertainty about them that existed in wartime Canada. Perhaps some who read between the lines of the column recognized a sense of anxiety about veterans.

The anecdote misrepresented the times, however, if it gave readers the impression that returned men were a largely mute group. Collectively speaking, Canada's Great War veterans were anything but quiet by 1917.

² Hereafter cited as Star.
From a few dozen late in 1915 the population of Great War veterans in Toronto probably grew to more than 50,000 in 1919. In wartime and postwar Toronto they were a major presence in the city's public sphere. They spoke out in newspaper interviews and letters to the editor, from stages at public meetings and in meetings with officials. They formed associations that formally represented their views, one of which published a national magazine. Arguably their greatest influence was felt at street-level. They collected in large numbers in the downtown core, passing the time and looking for distractions, they held mass meetings in and out of doors, they paraded to make their opinions known and their presence felt, they disrupted meetings others organized, they confronted and fought with opponents and they rioted. In all these ways, returned soldiers in Toronto and across the country made it clear that they did not want others speaking for them.

One returned soldier, a W.E. Surtees, gave his reason why at an election rally in east Toronto held a couple of weeks after the 'kilties' made their march down Yonge Street on that warm day in the fall of 1917. Taking place at the start of the federal election campaign that decided the fate of a conscription law, the rally attracted a crowd made up of civilian men and women, journalists and, above all, veterans. From the stage, Surtees told his audience that Canada's traditional parties did not care 'a hang for us.' That was why he was supporting, as they all knew, a fellow veteran running as an independent candidate in the riding. 'We have ideas of our own,' declared Surtees from the speaker's platform, and it was time, he argued, that veterans brought those ideas to Parliament.4

But what were veterans' ideas? And how did they express them? How did their views mesh with the fabric of the Canadian home front and immediate postwar period? Was veterans' discourse significant and did veterans' actions make a difference?

These are the broad questions that frame this history of returned soldiers of the Great War in Toronto covering the period from when they began returning home in 1915 through to the end of demobilization in late 1919. The focus is the discourse of returned men, as they were frequently called, and the role they played in Toronto and in Canada more broadly. The dissertation examines veterans' attitudes, the opinions they expressed, the goals they collectively pursued, the actions they took and their significance as actors and symbols in the public sphere. The study shows that during and immediately after the war returned soldiers

4 Telegram, 31 October 1917, 17
Introduction

played a prominent role in public debate and it elaborates on the identities veterans collectively adopted and constructed for themselves as comrades and citizens. Class, definitions of masculinity, British-Canadian ethno-nationality and experience as soldiers all affected formulations of veteran citizenship and comradeship. Claiming their service gave them special rights to intervene in public affairs, returned soldiers' representations of their citizenship resonated powerfully in Canadian society and provided a common ground to potentially unite English-Canadian opinion. Comradeship was vitally important to returned soldiers and set them apart from civilians, but it was neither a simple or stable category. Veterans' debates demonstrate that it was contested. Furthermore, the comradeship of Great War veterans sometimes existed uneasily with the rights and responsibilities of citizenship.

Great War Veterans and Toronto

The returned soldiers of Canada's First World War deserve historians' attention if only because they represented a substantial proportion of the population. Of the nearly eight million people in Canada roughly 620,000 men enlisted to fight in the Canadian Expeditionary Force (CEF) and thousands more in branches of the British military. \(^5\) Their leading role in a drama that shaped the world in so many ways, as well as the nature of their experiences, makes them vitally important for understanding this period and the war itself. Almost 350,000 members of the CEF were combatants (425,000 went overseas). Tim Cook's recent calculation that an astonishing seventy per cent of CEF combatants ended up as casualties testifies to the war's horrific toll in human suffering. Significant too, though, is the fact that large numbers of men in uniform did not serve on the frontlines. Of those who did, about 173,000 of them were

---

\(^5\) This total included nearly 2,000 nursing sisters: Morton, *When Your Number's Up*, 182. Qualifications for enlistment changed over time and were subject to interpretation, especially physical and health requirements: Nic Clarke, "'You will not be going to this war': the rejected volunteers of the First Contingent of the Canadian Expeditionary Force,' *First World War Studies* 1, 2 (October 2010), 161-183. Most Canadian units eventually fought as part of the Canadian Corps of about 100,000 troops, but were throughout the war integral parts of Britain's forces, supplied and supported by 'Imperials' and subject to the strategic decisions of the British High Command.
wounded and over 60,000 of them died in the war or from wounds shortly afterwards. By the end of demobilization in the fall of 1919 there were approximately 500,000 veterans of the Great War in Canada.

Second to Montreal as Canada's largest city, Toronto's population approached 400,000 in 1914 and grew to over half a million by the mid-1920s. By Canadian standards this made it a metropolis. The capital of the country's most populous province, Ontario, Toronto was a major centre for heavy and light industry, for financial services, for print media, literature and the arts, and it had a growing university with a medical school. Throughout the period in question the city was also increasingly important as the major political base for the federal Conservative and then Union government. It was also important militarily. Headquarters of Military District 2 were located in Toronto, as was Exhibition Camp, an Armouries and several regiments operated in and near the city. As the kilties' march described in the opening is evidence of, it was a site for a great deal of soldier training. These factors positioned the city to benefit from the wartime economic boom and adjust to postwar conditions while also subjecting Toronto to the transformative effects of being centrally involved in the war effort.

All of this helps to explain the large population of returned soldiers and the concentration of services for them in Toronto. In 1918 there were a half dozen hospitals for returned soldiers in the city, including the Dominion orthopedic hospital, situated in Toronto at least partly because the artificial limbs the government provided needy returnees were manufactured in the city. The city's General Hospital had beds for veterans and offered outpatient care, while on the campus of the University of Toronto, where officers trained during the war, returned soldiers could receive physical rehabilitation treatment. At a number of locations in the city returned men who qualified were provided vocational retraining and many

\[\text{References:}\]


7 The district stretched westward towards Hamilton, included the Niagara peninsula to the south, reached eastwards to Whitby and stretched northwards all the way to Hudson's Bay: Jean Pariseau and Serge Bernier, French Canadians and Bilingualism in the Canadian Armed Forces. Vol. I 1763-1969: the Fear of a Parallel Army (Ottawa: Directorate of History, Department of National Defence, 1988): 94.
voluntary and service organizations worked to provide veterans with comforts and entertainments. Job placement services were centralized in the provincial capital too, Ontario's Soldiers' Aid Commission being the first to begin this work. A municipal bureau was created later in the war and the federal government made its first foray into the area after the war. The federal Board of Pension Commissioners had a branch office in the city as did many other departments of government. Finally, the offices of the Toronto and Ontario branches of the country's largest association of veterans, the Great War Veterans' Association, were located in the city and performed 'adjustment work' which aimed to secure returned soldiers' entitlements on a case by case basis. To a lesser extent, other associations of veterans offered similar help.

The concentration of hospitals and other services for veterans and the large market for jobs attracted many returned soldiers to Toronto, making it a place that men went to who were not originally from the city. This pattern swelled the population of returnees in the city but the other reason so many returned soldiers were in Toronto was that so many residents of the city enlisted to fight. After the war public figures and newspapers put the total number of Toronto men who fought as high as 70,000. One common estimate in 1919 was that 55,000 enlisted in the city, nearly half of whom were wounded and 6,000 of them killed. Recruits who came from elsewhere could well be counted in these totals, but Torontonians clearly demonstrated a strong willingness to go to war. Ian Miller's analysis of the available recruitment data concludes that 45,000 men signed up to serve before the start of the compulsory draft in October 1917, and that another 30,000 volunteers were denied the opportunity because they

---

were not deemed fit. According to Miller, this meant that 86% of Toronto's 87,300 eligible men volunteered their services to the military by the time conscription was in force.\(^9\)

The majority of Canadian men who enlisted to serve were working class. The occupational breakdown of CEF recruits demonstrates that men from all walks of life enlisted but that the majority had working-class occupations.\(^10\) Given the nature of the local community a larger proportion of the men who enlisted from Toronto were likely middle class than the average in the CEF. Despite this the personality of the largest organization of returned soldiers, the Great War Veterans' Association (GWVA), and of veterans more generally, was in many respects working-class. The GWVA did not recognize the military rank of its members and the membership consistently called for an egalitarian approach to pensions rather than the system in place that paid out according to what Officers, Non-Commissioned Officers and Other Ranks earned in the service. The concerns returned men expressed about the rising cost of living, or competition in the labour market and a shortage of affordable housing, also reflected the class interests of the majority of this group. These interests were articulated by leaders of veterans' associations even though these leaders were often middle class and many (certainly not all) were former officers. This study seeks to illuminate the views of this majority while also demonstrating the significance of the class diversity of veterans as a social group.

This study's assessment of the significance of class for Canadian Great War veterans feeds a need to know more about the class identity of the CEF and veterans' involvement in class conflict at home. A dominant figure in the literature on Canada's Great War, Desmond Morton, stands almost alone in addressing the question of the class of Canada's First World War soldiers. In fact, few historians of class in Canada have given soldiers and veterans their undivided attention despite the longtime interest in the mass upsurges of industrial protest and working-class political action at the end of the First and Second World Wars. As David Silbey has said in his book on the working-class response to the Great War in Britain, the voluntary mobilization of masses of men in the first half of the war can hardly be fully explained without doing this history.\(^11\) In Canadian labour history returned soldiers are typically included because

---

\(^9\) Miller, *Our Glory and Our Grief*, 146

\(^10\) Morton, *Fight or Pay*, 245 (Table A4) and his, 'Appendix. A Statistical Profile of the CEF,' in his *When Your Number's Up*, 277-279

of a number of violent anti-radical acts during the labour revolt, but there is still much to learn about the roles veterans played in this period. As is made clear here, working-class protest, radicalism and perceptions of radicalism were important for the history of Toronto's Great War veterans. This study sheds light on the turmoil that characterized the end of the war and the positions returned soldiers took in debates about the Red Scare, reconstruction and their own re-establishment.

A major reason for the strong support for the war that men from different class backgrounds exhibited in Toronto was its British character. Toronto's elite was Anglo-Canadian and eighty-five per cent of its population traced their heritage to the British Isles. Unsurprisingly, the city was dominantly Protestant. More than eight of every ten residents identified as Anglicans, Presbyterians, Methodists or Baptists. About twelve per cent of the city's overall population was Catholic. Most of them were Irish in descent and they were Toronto's largest identified minority. As Mark McGowan has argued, Catholic distinctiveness in relation to the majority 'waned' during this period. The war was especially important for this process of integration since the participation of Toronto Catholics in the war effort

---


13 For census data on Toronto see Miller, *Our Glory and Our Grief*, Appendix A and B and Careless, *Toronto to 1918*, 200-3.
demonstrated their patriotism and fidelity to the same values as their Anglo-Protestant neighbours.\footnote{McGowan, \textit{The Waning of the Green: Catholics, the Irish, and Identity in Toronto, 1887-1922} (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1999), 250-284}

Integration was not the pattern for Toronto's other minorities. European immigrants and their descendents were decidedly marginalized by their low economic status and prevailing prejudices about them among Anglo-Canadians. Wartime exacerbated racism and whether they were from enemy countries or not, to greater or lesser degrees the relatively small numbers of Italians, Greeks, Dutch, Germans, Slavs from many countries, central European Jews, as well as Chinese, were all targeted as problems. Despite these realities men with a non-British immigrant background did enlist in the CEF.\footnote{There is no comprehensive research addressing this question, but two studies claim that non British immigrants enlisted at a higher rate than Canadian-born Anglo-Canadians (as well as French-Canadians): Jean Pariseau, "La Participation Des Canadien Français À L'Effort Des Deux Guerres Mondiales: Démarche De Ré-Interprétation." \textit{Canadian Defence Quarterly – Revue canadienne de défense} 13, no. 2 (1983): 43-48; C.A. Sharpe, "Enlistment in the Canadian Expeditionary Force 1914-1918: A Regional Analysis," \textit{Journal of Canadian Studies} 18, no. 4 (1983-4): especially n9 p28.}

The voices of returned soldiers with a European immigrant background rarely turn up in the public record for Toronto. Anti-foreigner attitudes must have discouraged them from speaking out or from identifying themselves ethnically. Perhaps as important, the potential pool of non-British immigrant soldiers was limited by the nature of enlistment policy. As one official in the offices of the headquarters of Military District 2 explained in 1914, 'only British subjects, by birth or naturalization, are eligible to join the Canadian Contingents.'\footnote{Assistant-Adjutant-General, Military District 2 to Catten, 29 October 1914, LAC, RG24, Vol. 4331, File 34-2-18} Naturalized citizens who did enlist, then, were likely fairly well-integrated into Canadian society or, possibly, hoped their service would help them become so. For these reasons they may have been less inclined to make their non-British heritage known.

Enlistment regulations changed in some respects over the course of the war, but despite the expressed desire of many non-naturalized immigrants to join the CEF the military stuck
with the fundamental policy of signing up citizens only.17 James Walker has shown that whiteness was also fundamental to the history of enlistment in the CEF. Though citizens in the legal sense, the attempts of black Canadians to join up were largely blocked until manpower shortages led to the creation of a segregated labour battalion. The racialized identities of others, such as Japanese-Canadians and Native-Canadians, created barriers to enlistment as well, though the fact that both these groups were not full citizens affected them too.18 Former soldiers who belonged to racialized minorities in Toronto appear even less frequently in the historical record than European immigrants who were often, but not always, racialized in the host society at this time.

The dominant British character of Toronto partly explains the support a majority of voters gave to the Conservative party federally and provincially. Nationally speaking, the party emphasized Canada's connection to Britain more than the Liberals, and the Tories' identification with a strong protective tariff that benefited industry and central Canadian business was another reason for its support in Toronto.19 Though a majority cast their ballots for Conservatives, Liberal support in the city was healthy. It crossed class lines and was broadcast by the Star and the more conservative Globe. Labourites and radicals enjoyed important support in Toronto as well. Canada's small Social Democratic Party relied on strong


support in Toronto and elected local unionist and politician James Simpson to the city's Board of Control in 1914.⁡

Though a small minority, socialists and labour militants spread their influence in the final years of the war as unions grew at unprecedented rates and workers demonstrated unusual solidarity. Labourites won some electoral success and, together with radicals, forced the traditional parties to respond to their challenges. As it was across North America, socialism in Toronto was typically identified with European immigrants who arrived in massive numbers in Canada between the beginning of the century and the start of the war. Though some of these European immigrants certainly were socialists, the generalization overlooked the significant number of British immigrants who were socialists, such as Social Democratic Party leader and Toronto resident Isaac Bainbridge. Figures such as Bainbridge and leftist labour leaders were increasingly influential as working-class leaders from the middle of the war through 1919.

Toronto's British character was reflected in its returned soldiers. Not only were many veterans British in the sense that they were English-Canadians, but a disproportionate number were British-born as well. This was true of the CEF more generally. While the British-born accounted for twelve per cent of Canada's population they made up nearly half of the CEF, and they were an even larger proportion of those who volunteered before the imposition of conscription in October 1917. Further testifying to the Britishness of Toronto's First World War veterans is abundant evidence from the press, communications records of the municipal government, correspondence with home front military officials and from records of the largest association of returned soldiers for this period. Toronto veterans regularly referred to their

---

²⁰ Naylor, 'Striking at the Ballot Box,' in Heron, ed., The Workers' Revolt in Canada, 1917-1925, 149


British identity when they spoke publicly, in interviews with reporters, in their own meetings and in official correspondence.

This does not mean they were anti-Canadian or not as yet really Canadian. They always thought of their country as Canada, they proudly called themselves Canadians at times and identified their goals as in the interests of their country. However, when they talked about the nature of that country and invoked values and traditions to which they were personally attached and which were meant to broadly appeal to their audience, they spoke in terms of Britishness. This was true of Canadian-born veterans as well as British-born ones and it was a basic tendency in English-Canadian discourse, not something exclusive to the men who fought the war. Many historians of English Canada, especially those studying the era of imperialism in the late nineteenth and early twentieth-century, demonstrate the prevalence of ideas encompassed in the contemporary phrase 'British civilization.' Carl Berger's well-known argument that imperialism was a form of Canadian nationalism helps make sense of this phenomenon, but there was more to it than this. As Berger himself stressed, and as shown in the work of many others, Canada's British colonial and cultural heritage and its continued imperial, economic and migratory connections to Britain provided a common basis for English-Canadian identity.23

Part of the challenge of understanding the significance of the Great War for Canada is to recognize that the experience of fighting the war both contributed to a more distinctly Canadian version of English-Canadian nationalism and reinforced its British identity. Historians such as Craig Brown have documented the ways that Canada's political responses to the war led to greater autonomy for the Canadian state within the empire and, as Jonathan Vance has shown, English-Canadians created a national myth about the war that contributed to a sense of national

experience and achievement that became central to English-Canadian nationalism. There can be no doubting these developments in the constitutional and cultural history of Canada, yet the literature on Canada's Great War offers little explanation for why Anglophone Canadians from all regions and classes invoked phrases such as 'British fair play' and 'British justice,' called themselves 'British citizens' or 'British subjects,' and called their country a 'British country.' Significantly, the very men who fought the war for Canada used this language of Britishness before the Canadian Corps captured Vimy Ridge and they did so afterwards, and they went on doing it after Prime Minister Borden signed his name to the Versailles treaty.

We do not need to choose whether to call them British (imperialists) or Canadian (nationalists) for doing this, any more than any of us need to choose between our regional, national, and ethnic identities. We are all of these things and much more. As Ramsay Cook has said, 'identities are not like hats' because, unlike hats, people tend to 'wear' many identities simultaneously. Cook borrowed that phrase from Linda Colley, whose book about the formation of British national identity emphasized the importance of war for the historical development of a Protestant, Anglo-Celtic, and in a limited or idealized way multicultural, British identity. The British identity articulated by Canadian veterans seems in keeping with the umbrella-like identity described by Colley. In adding to the literature on English-Canadian identity this study demonstrates that Great War veterans in Toronto saw no contradiction in defining themselves as British and Canadian. They would have had a problem with anyone claiming they were one or the other.

As elaborated on in the next section, Comrades and Citizens demonstrates that veterans interpreted their world and felt motivated by fundamental aspects of themselves, such as their British-Canadian identity, their masculinity and, for most of them, the place they occupied as wage earners in a market economy and, naturally, their identities as comrades at arms in the

---


25 Cook, 'Identities are Not Like Hats,' Canadian Historical Review 81, 2 (2000): 260-292

Introduction

great conflict overseas. Along with other works, some of which employ the term 'intersectionality,' it shows that identity is not a fixed or zero-sum category. Pluralizing and arguing for a definite order to identities, in which region is slotted underneath nation, for example, or ethnicity is superior to class and gender most fundamental of all, is not the answer either. Identity (in all its forms) is variable, relational and responsive to context; hierarchies there may be, but these too are dependent and changeable. This study articulates these realities in its examination of veterans' political activism and discourse; or, to put it another way, their actions and discourse as citizens.

Soldiers, Citizenship and the Great War

David Gerber has called disabled veterans 'neglected figures' in history writing and the literature about them 'fragmentary.' This is certainly the case for Canada, which Gerber incorporates into his survey of the field. Marc Humphries' and Serge Durflinger's recent

---


publications are among the few on Canada's war disabled, and their focus on victims of the First World War is characteristic for Canadianists, who have written more about Great War veterans than they have about the soldiers of other wars. 30 But veterans are an under-studied historical group generally speaking, and not only the disabled among them. Until Durflinger's book, the only book length study of Canadian veterans was Morton's and Wright's book about First World War veterans, *Winning the Second Battle*. 31 Studies of veterans also form a small part of the gargantuan literature on the First World War produced mainly by Europeanists, and given that war and politics are traditional subjects of history writing it is surprising that there is not a greater number of works focused on veterans. Stephen Ward's words to this effect in the 1975 comparative study of First World War veterans, *The War Generation*, need no revision today. 32


32 Stephen R. Ward, "Introduction," in *The War Generation: Veterans of the First World War*, ed. Stephen R. Ward (Washington, New York and London: Kennikat Press, 1975), 3. While a number of books on First World War veterans were published since *The War Generation* (and are cited in this introduction) veterans have not emerged as a major focus of scholarship in First World War studies. In arguably the most important collective work on the war, for example, they do not receive any special attention: Jay Winter and Jean-Louis Robert, eds., *Capital Cities*
Veterans are something of a slippery historical category. As explained in greater detail below, the term refers here to former soldiers, or at least to men whose active service experience is over. The unusual nature of the Western Front has encouraged a large number of studies of soldiers' experiences of trench warfare and of their interpretation of their experiences, but these do not generally examine their experiences as veterans or interpretations of post-service experience.\(^{33}\) Antoine Prost's study of French veterans is unusual for covering both worlds.\(^{34}\) Typically, historians follow Ward's approach to the history of Great War veterans: outline the emergence of veterans' association in wartime and explain their politics and the problem of re-establishment after the war.\(^{35}\) This is the basic outlook of the other contributors to his volume, as it is for Morton and Wright and others such as Robert Whalen, Deborah Cohen and Niall Barr.\(^{36}\) Veterans also appear in histories of the costs of war, something that

---


Australian authors have been especially adept at illuminating in studies dealing with the First World War.\(^{37}\) Examinations of the war's cultural meaning to contemporaries and the memory of the war also shed light on the history of veterans, including Vance's history of the memory of the war in Canada.\(^{38}\) As in the case of books on the topic of the costs of war, however, veterans are not an exclusive focus and their specific history is explored to a limited degree.

Veterans are more central to American historiography than they are to the literature on modern Europe or Canada, though First World War veterans are least important in this literature, reflecting the country's late mobilization in the conflict and the small number of casualties suffered in relative terms. Jennifer Keene's work is restoring the First World War and its soldiers to greater prominence and her approach shares something of Prost's interest in integrating the history of mobilization and demobilization.\(^{39}\) The work on American veterans also emphasizes the questions of citizenship, nationalism and the nature of veterans' participation in politics to a far greater extent than have works on veterans elsewhere.\(^{40}\)


These are not questions Canadian historians have explored and their studies of the period of the Great War offer examples of the fragmentary nature of their inclusion in the history of the war and its aftermath. Returned soldiers appeared in works from the 1970s and 1980s dealing with the problems of mobilization and the nature of wartime society and politics, such as John Herd Thompson's *The Harvests of War*. More recent studies of these topics in local settings by Ian Miller, Robert Rutherford and James Pitsula shed a little more light on the role veterans played on the home front. This is true of Benjamin Isitt's recent book as well, much of which is located in Victoria and which examines public debate over the decision to mobilize the Siberian Expeditionary Force. It is not the case, however, for the collection, *Canada and the First World War*, which otherwise includes fresh insight into the home front and wartime society. Despite being about the question of military service, the also recent, *Militia Myths*, by James Woods, adds little more to our understanding of the history or returned soldiers. Studies of masculinity also focus on the figure of the soldier rather than the returned

---


45 Wood, *Militia Myths*. 
soldier, who generally appear in this literature as heroes and especially entitled citizens.  

Fragments of the history of veterans are also captured in the literature on state welfare, which has shown that the state's positive interventions to support traditional gender roles chiefly targeted soldiers and mothers.

Morton and Wright provide evidence for this pattern in the provision of social welfare in *Winning the Second Battle*, which concentrates on the politics of veteran re-establishment from the middle of the First to the eve of the Second World War. Their book focuses on the disabled, mainly as pensioners, because this reflects the nature of the major veterans' associations (which welcomed able-bodied and disabled) and their claims on the state. It is not the result of a special analytical emphasis, as it is in Deborah Cohen's comparison of British and German disabled veterans. Morton's and Wright's emphasis echoes other studies of First World War veterans. Robert Whalen, for example, says more about disabled veterans in Germany because their activism was more conspicuous and they interacted with the state to a far larger extent as pensioners.

---

46 Graham Dawson's influential, *Soldier Heroes: British Adventure, Empire and the Imagining of Masculinities* (Routledge: London, New York, 1994) examines the figure of the soldier far more than the veteran, for example. Chris Dummitt's, *The Manly Modern: Masculinity in Postwar Canada* (University of British Columbia Press: Vancouver, 2007) includes veterans in a chapter on a group of mainly First World War veterans whose entitlement claims were investigated by a Royal Commission ("Chapter 2. Coming Home," 29-51).


49 Whalen, *Bitter Wounds*.
It is impossible to comprehend the history of veterans' associations, public activism and politics without examining veterans generally, as most works involving First World War veterans do. The disabled and able-bodied worked together in the veterans' movements during and after the war, the able-bodied made the needs of their injured and sick comrades their principal cause and disabled veterans were typically leaders in the largest veterans associations that welcomed able-bodied and disabled alike. Disability, or bodily harm and ailment, was also a general experience for soldiers. If seven of every ten combat veterans in the CEF, as Cook asserts, were casualties at some point then an enormous proportion of veterans were, in a sense, temporarily disabled. Some may not have been off their feet long, but everyone who went into the trenches, even those who somehow escaped the trip back to a dressing station, could easily imagine being permanently disabled by a shell blast, bullet, gas, or in some other way – most lived in permanent fear of these dangers for death and disablement were terrifying forces shaping their world. Lastly, disability was not necessarily a fixed condition. As Durflinger explains in his history of war-blinded Canadian veterans, some men's sight deteriorated progressively as a result of war service, rendering them blind decades after their war; in some rare cases, the reverse happened.\textsuperscript{50} So it could be for other injuries and ailments. After the initial phase of diagnosis was complete by about 1920, the general trend for Great War veterans in all belligerent nations was for widespread improvement in their overall health in the early 1920s, followed by sure and steady deterioration as more and more complained of being 'burnt out,' their 'nerves shot,' prematurely aged, and of other more specific health problems positively attributable in the eyes of pension officials to their service. Neither was disability a fixed status under pension laws or other relevant regulations. Veterans denied pensions for wounds or ailments upon discharge sometimes found that changed qualifying standards made them eligible years later, while the medical problems other men attributed to their service were never recognized by officials.

Whereas Morton, Wright and other historians of First World War veterans have focused on the national politics of re-establishment, the central interest here is the ways in which returned men represented themselves and how their contributions to wartime and postwar public debate help us understand who they were and the nature of Canadian society. These questions are at work in research by Lara Campbell on the discourse of Ontario veterans.

\textsuperscript{50} Durflinger, \textit{Veterans with a Vision.}, 70-1, 251-8
protesting their plight during the Great Depression. Her insights into the importance of Britishness, manliness and war service for veterans' arguments and conception of citizenship in the 1930s are supported by the findings of this study which sheds light on the origins of the discourse she examined and demonstrates how British identity informed notions of citizenship in English Canada, as well as being a fundamental part of English-Canadian nationalism. This study, therefore, makes a unique contribution to the literature on Canadian patriotism, nationalism and imperial identity by providing needed insight into the perceptions of 'ordinary' English-Canadians.

It also makes an important contribution to the study of the related theme of Britishness. The literature on British identity is amorphous, and includes a wide range of works that provide insight into this phenomenon without being primarily concerned with the theme. Daniel Gorman's *Imperial Citizenship*, for example, narrates the practical efforts of conservative elites to foster greater imperial unity and analyzes the political and ideological basis of their ideas of citizenship in the empire. The question of cultural identity or ethnicity is not central to the study and, as a result, Gorman provides evidence of the existence of Edwardian Britishness but does not analyze its nature or substantially explain its significance for the idea of imperial citizenship. Similarly, Jeffrey Grey's piece on "War and the British World in the Twentieth Century" examines the Dominion and imperial politics of war and not the common and/or contested substance of the British identity that played a role in this history. Confronting the

---


question of British identity requires that political and cultural (or ethnic) identity be examined in conjunction, as it has been by Colley and by Phillip Buckner and Ian Radforth.\textsuperscript{54} Toronto's veterans clearly combined the two, rooting their citizenship in a British historical identity and situating their nationalism in an imperial context. Their history as activists in the city's public sphere demonstrates the enthusiastic British-Canadian ethno-nationalism on display during the visits of Royals and other metropolitan dignitaries,\textsuperscript{55} as well as debate within English Canada about the meaning of this identity for citizenship and public policy.

As a study of veterans, \textit{Comrades and Citizens} broadens our limited knowledge of this group and the focus on Toronto balances the western perspective of much of the literature on the home front and early twentieth-century racism in which disgruntled, violent veterans appear.\textsuperscript{56} Perhaps most importantly, the rough behaviour and violence of veterans in wartime and postwar Canada is almost always described from the perspective of the general public, or the government, or socialists and militant industrial workers. It is time this behaviour was examined from the point of view of veterans, as Whitney Lackenbauer has begun to do for soldier violence in wartime Canada.\textsuperscript{57}


\textsuperscript{55} John Scott, "'Three Cheers for Earl Haig.' Canadian Veterans and the Visit of Field Marshal Sir Douglas Haig to Canada in the Summer of 1925," \textit{Canadian Military History} 5, no. 1 (1996).


Miller discusses veteran violence from an 'outside' perspective in his book on Toronto and the Great War and pushes aside serious consideration of the significance of the veteran-led riots of 1918 and the anti-foreigner attitudes that sparked them by casting them as regrettable explosions of anger caused by the pressure of total war. While accounting for this violence, as well as for gender differences, class antagonism and, to a limited extent, ethnic conflict, Miller is not swayed from interpreting the war as a consensus-forming experience, with, by implication, nation-building consequences. Especially because of the role war has historically played in nation-making (and breaking!) it would be seriously wrong-headed to dismiss this perspective or ignore nationality and nationalism. However, the category itself requires analysis and if historians seek to understand people in addition to states then national identity is most analytically useful when seen in conjunction with multiple forms of identity, as stated earlier.

One of the reasons why the First World War has received considerable attention from historians of Canada is the structural change in party politics that took place as a result of the 1917 conscription crisis and the industrial conflict and rural discontent the war exacerbated.58 This literature pays scarcely any attention, however, to the role veterans played in this history. They deserve notice, for as is made clear here, veterans engaged in electoral politics, were active in debate about public affairs, lobbied government and other bodies and organized public opinion campaigns. Their forms of political theatre were especially important for their interventions in the public sphere. The parades and mass meetings they organized were often impressive in their size and they always attracted a large audience. Finally, in Toronto their

---

riotous behaviour was partly motivated by an understanding of politics and their rights as citizens. In other words, their collective violence was not only political in the sense that lawlessness challenges established relations of power; it had political objectives too and many veterans saw these actions as legitimate because of the failure of politics.

Looking at the actions of veterans on Toronto's streets, in its parks as well as in its public halls, and even private businesses, contributes to an expanding literature about the evolving nature of Canada's public sphere and its popular politics. As a wide range of works have shown, public demonstrations of many different kinds were vital parts of a conversation that involved different and often overlapping groups.59 Engaging in an international literature about the nature of the public sphere and the imagining of communities,60 these works demonstrate that at least from the mid-nineteenth century onwards Canada's public sphere was not limited to legislative houses and the press. Based as it is in newspaper research and including crowd violence among its topics, this history of veterans in Toronto also broadens the

---


literature on the press, public opinion and crowds in Canada's past, revealing citizen participation and the role of public demonstration in political debate.61

Recognizing that veterans were actors in the public sphere is not only essential for understanding their own history, it is also vital for understanding the nature of wartime and

postwar discourse, for their presence on the home front changed the way that the cause was defined and the war effort debated. Failing to see veterans as public speakers, demonstrators and protesters risks reducing them simply to soldiers who fought the war for Canada and soldiers who became victims of that fight. While complicated enough as historical topics, seeing them only as soldiers obscures the fact that they remained citizens while in uniform and were always people with their own ideas, feelings and motivations. A number of factors make it especially important to recognize the civilian identity of Canada's Great War soldiers. The great majority of CEF soldiers were 'civilians in uniform,' a phrase historians have used to call attention to the fact that the armies of the First World War (or other mass armies) consisted of recent enlists whose identities as civilians remained strong despite military training and service in or out of the war zone. The conflict's military realities demanded mobilization on a scale that made it possible to see the CEF as the military parallel of Canadian civilian society. But it was only metaphorically parallel. The CEF was created and sustained by civilian society. The mostly voluntary nature of enlistment was evidence of grassroots participation in the creation of a nation at arms. It also remained under civilian oversight, whether from Ottawa or London, and was subject to some degree of public scrutiny through the press and public knowledge and interaction with the militia and the overseas forces. Pro-war patriotism and home front attitudes also created a culture in which soldiers personified the nation and whose perceived interests were made guiding concerns for ordinary civilians, social elites and elected officials. Finally, the exigencies of wartime politics and public opinion brought the rights of soldiers more closely in line with those of citizens than at any time in Canada's British past to that point. The Military Voters' Act of 1917 extended the federal vote to CEF soldiers who did

not normally enjoy this right, such as Aboriginal enlistees (who were unlikely to have been enfranchised). It took its cue from a law passed in British Columbia earlier in the war and was clear evidence of the notion that the men who donned khaki were "soldier citizens" and representative of the values and aspirations of the whole country. It meant a lot, too, that Canadian soldiers were mobilized to cast their ballots even while it was in action at the front; a (male) citizen's duty as martial and political could hardly have been more dramatically demonstrated.

In addition to referring to them as "civilians in uniform," many historians employ the term "citizen soldiers" for the rank and file of the armies of the First World War. For example, Jennifer Keene uses the term "citizen-soldiers" throughout her study of the experiences of American soldiers and their transformative affects on US society. She argues that regardless of their racial identity or background as recent immigrant or native-born, the majority of Doughboys interpreted their service in part as a form of civic duty, as well as an opportunity to perform national and masculine identities.63 Eleanor Hannah explores these realities in her study of National Guard enlistees and emphasizes the role masculinity played in fostering a common attitude about the desirability of military service and its correlation with citizenship and national identity.64 The findings of these historians suggest that martial service complimented and re-enforced civic identity, and for marginal groups, such as blacks and immigrants, service provided evidence of citizenship that prejudice and the law denied them. The draft the United States adopted in 1917 appears to have played a special role in bolstering such claims to citizenship, for according to Keene, it was seen as a "social contract" whose terms soldiers and veterans negotiated "during and after the war."65 The inter-related nature of citizenship, military service, national identity and masculinity are also born-out in an important collection that seeks to gender the political history of post-Enlightenment Europe and beyond.66

Concentrating on ideals summed-up in the phrase "the militia myth," Canadianists have noted these patterns too. Mark Moss's book on educating boys in Ontario in the decade leading

---

63 Keene, *Doughboys: The Great War and the Remaking of America*.
up to the war outlines ways in which many future CEF soldiers were taught the soldiering ideal.  

Mike O'Brien has explored the important class dimensions of manliness and militarism in Canadian civil society, while Marlene Epp's work provides a glimpse into the the way militarism and masculinity were shaped by ethno-cultural identity.  

James Wood's recent study of citizen soldier advocacy in early twentieth-century Canada shows not only the extent to which manliness and national military service were twinned, but sheds light on debate about the nature of citizenship.  

As did the proponents of military preparedness in the United States, Canadian citizen soldier advocates argued that militia service did not simply provide a ready body of soldiers motivated by the highest of ideals, it improved society by teaching individual men essential traits of good citizenship, especially discipline and selfless service for the greater community.  

Grounded in the discourse of veterans themselves, this study shows that Toronto's Great War veterans made connections between manliness, service as soldiers and service to the state, and illuminates these topics from the rarely examined perspective of former soldiers.  

It also demonstrates the resonance of concerns about the emasculating effects of modern life that historians have noted characterized discourse about masculinity at the time, and which partly gave rise to the militia and preparedness movements in Canada and the US, as well as the rapid expansion of the Boy Scouts organization throughout the English-speaking world.  

This study suggests both the power and limits of veterans' evocation of their masculinity.  Returned soldiers often cast themselves as warriors and as dutiful servants of their nation, and some  

---


argued that essential manly truths were learnt in combat that could never be encountered elsewhere. Veterans' discourse about service in the war usually supported the hierarchical representation of sacrifice that prevailed at the time. It also recognized that service in uniform imperiled their ability to fulfill their role as breadwinners, or as bachelors hoping to be heads of households some day.

The assumption that it was a man's duty to fight for his country, put forward so strenuously by veterans, weakened their claims for compensation for losses suffered as a result of performing this duty. Other studies of Canadian soldiers, masculinity and social welfare miss the interconnected nature of calls to arms and arguments for entitlements. A broad perspective on the discourse of Toronto veterans brings these connections to light, showing that their formulations of warrior masculinity tended to ignore class difference and represent men as an undifferentiated category. When claiming entitlements as veterans they admitted inequality was a problem by drawing attention to problems such as the plight of unemployed ex-servicemen and the system of awarding pensions that supported differences in military rank.

This study's exploration of these topics is organized in the following way. Chapter 1, 'Returned Heroes,' outlines the process of wartime and postwar repatriation. Its focus is on the ways that veterans were received by civil society and the state during the war, and analyzes how veterans represented themselves publicly early on. Chapter 2, 'Battle-bonded Comrades,' is about the emerging discourse of veterans and describes the expansion of the Great War Veterans Association in Toronto during the war. It explores the dynamic between returned soldiers and civil society in relation to this development and expands on veterans' forms of self-representation. Focusing on 1917, Chapter 3, 'Patriotic Men,' examines the ways veterans fought the war on the home front as recruiters, as enforcers of conscription and as supporters of a new win-the-war government. Central to their participation in the public sphere on the question of reinforcement was their claim to an unparalleled patriotic masculinity. Chapter 4, 'British Citizens,' looks at the anti-alien politics of veterans, focusing on events in 1918. The chapter explores the attitudes of veterans to supposed aliens in Toronto and Canadian society and the significance of this for their conception of their citizenship, their ethno-national identity, and their public role as veterans.

Chapter 5, 'Association Members,' outlines the wide variety of associations veterans created, explores debates about membership in the Great War Veterans' Association and the divisions that existed in general among returned men. The chapter shows that veterans debated
the very meaning of 'veteran' and struggled over the socio-political nature of the movement they felt they were establishing early on. Aspects of 1919, the tumultuous year of demobilization and of social and political strife, are described in Chapter 6, 'Resentful Veterans.' Here heroic constructions of returning soldiers are contrasted with their increasingly common image as troublemakers and the problem of reintegrating in civilian society is considered from their point of view. The chapter stresses the difficulty returning soldiers had in making their outlook, their state of mind and their hopes clear to Canadians and demonstrates the ways that class conflict and the Red Scare dominated debate about re-establishment and reconstruction.

Sources, Terms and Public Opinion
The evidence for the argument pursued in this dissertation comes mainly from Toronto's six daily newspapers, which provide the widest outlook on public debate and are the best sources for information about returned soldiers' public activities and arguments during this period. Other than files of the Dominion GWVA, contained in the Canadian Legion Fonds in the Library and Archives of Canada, little to nothing remains of the institutional records of the associations returned men founded during and immediately after the war in Toronto, including the local GWVA. Published and unpublished documents of municipal, provincial and federal governments provide important insight into the public role of veterans. No sources, however, compare in richness to the daily papers. This is even true of sources such as The Veteran, a magazine published by the GWVA, largest association of returned soldiers during this period. And it is true of the published memoirs and unpublished journals of veterans, since they deal chiefly with the experience of being a soldier rather than a returned soldier.

The Telegram, Star, Globe, Mail and Empire, News and World were, by the final two years of the war, littered with accounts of meetings returned soldiers held, with discussion of the objectives they debated and worked towards, and with commentary about society's responsibilities towards the men who had been 'over there.' Daily news about veterans expanded in 1919, the year of demobilization and of profound social and political unrest in Canada and throughout much of the world. Journalistic attention remained considerable in the following few years, though it definitely declined. During these years news about or involving veterans appeared in almost all sections of the dailies. Their actions and their issues were front page news at times (except in the Telegram, which opened with its advertising pages), they
appeared in columns on national news and sometimes international affairs as well, and the 'woman's page' occasionally carried news relating to veterans. Local news coverage gave returned soldiers the most attention, including in columns covering suburban communities. From about mid-1917 through 1920 the two papers dedicated to city coverage, the Star and the Telegram, regularly published specially titled sections of news about (and for) local veterans, each a few columns in size. Only the sports and business pages consistently omitted returned soldiers from their columns.

Newspapers, and serials in general, are rich historical sources for they offer the researcher a range of texts. In addition to editorials and news columns, the pages of the dailies contained photographs, illustrations, cartoons and humour, advertisements, and letters to the editor, all of which provide their own insights into the history of Great War veterans in Toronto. Help wanted ads sometimes asked for returned soldier applicants only and other items advertised the skills of a returnee looking for work. Photographs sometimes showed groups of returned soldiers enjoying an outing organized by a local organization, while other photographs and illustrations portrayed delegates at a veterans' association's convention. In addition to images of homecoming parades in 1919 were splashy advertisements showing troops marching home in their khaki to the warm welcomes of their families. 'After Your Welcome Home,' one ad announced, 'Come for Your "CIVIES" to G. Hawley Walker.' With the ten per cent discount the clothier offered, returned soldiers could make the clothing allowance they received upon discharge go further. In 1917 an advertisement for an automobile commended the single-person, rudimentary machine to veterans because it was inexpensive and could be used by invalids for transportation. These are all examples of the pervasiveness of returned soldiers in Toronto's daily papers and, naturally, in the life of the city.

72 Star, 1 October 1917, 6
73 Telegram, 2 August 1918, 8 and 20
74 Star, 7 February 1919, 4. With stores from coast to coast, Robinson's Clothes Shops claimed in June 1919 to be the first to offer discounts to returned soldiers: Star, 6 June 1919, 12.
75 Those interested were told to visit Eaton's fifth floor where a salesman would happily demonstrate the Smith Flyer. Star, 16 May 1917, Eaton's ad. My thanks to Steve Penfold for showing me this ad.
By the middle of the 1920s veterans had become predictable fixtures in stories about permanent hospital patients, of reunions of old comrades and in stories about commemorative events. The voices of individual veterans diminished considerably and officials of veterans' organizations increased their dominance as the spokespersons for the war's returned soldiers. This occurred despite the fact that associations of returned soldiers had shrunk dramatically from their membership peaks in 1919. Unless they were social clubs, and therefore almost entirely private organizations, from the outset the central interests of all veterans' associations was the welfare of sick and wounded returned men. During the war and through 1919, however, veterans organized enthusiastically to pursue a broader agenda too, claiming entitlements for able-bodied returnees and participating in debate over public affairs generally. This movement involved masses of men for a short time. It was a failure by the early 1920s. By the middle of that decade associations of former Great War soldiers still argued for the needs of able-bodied veterans, but they dealt mainly with their core concerns, which were pensions or other specific entitlements for deserving old soldiers. After years of talking about institutional unity, in 1926 most associations of Great War veterans had joined the Canadian Legion, making it the major veterans' association in Canada.

During and immediately after the war the terms 'returned soldier' and 'returned man' were frequently used, as well as the word 'veteran.' The term 'returned soldier' continued to be used in the 1920s, though the word 'veteran' began to be used more often and 'ex-servicemen' came into less frequent use. There was never any uncertainty about the meaning of these terms in the 1920s, but from 1915 through demobilization in 1919 the terms were more ambiguous. Was a man who was back on furlough in Canada in 1916 a returned soldier? Sometimes they were, according to the way the term was used, and sometimes men who had served overseas and returned to Canada to take up new appointments in the militia at home were also called returned men. Usually, though, the term referred to men who had returned to Canada and were discharged or would be discharged once their convalescence was over. Unless indicated otherwise, this is its meaning in these pages. During the war and postwar repatriation, then, returned soldiers might still be men in the service, wearing khaki and subject to military discipline as well as civil law. Other returned men were in civvies, free from the authority of superiors, military police and courts martial, governed only by civil law. But especially during the war many discharged veterans took their time shedding their uniforms.
Military authorities would generally have preferred that the regulations banning the wearing of the uniform by anyone not in the service were enforced, but civilian leaders relaxed the rules and allowed discharged men to wear their uniforms for some months after their discharge. And they rarely went out of their way to check how long a man kept his uniform on. This permissive approach partly recognized the poverty of many former soldiers. The allowances veterans eventually earned for new clothes often went to other costs. They already had clothes, why waste their cash on a new suit or winter coat? Permitting them to wear their uniforms was also a way of honouring the martial identity of returnees in the increasingly charged atmosphere of wartime Canada, in which women white-feathered supposed cowards and recruiters increasingly shamed and intruded on the lives of civilians. Wearing the uniform let strangers know just how committed you were to the war effort.

There was only one way a man could be more committed to the cause than to be a soldier who returned to Canada during the war. Wartime returnees were sent back to Canada for discharge because they were unfit for further active service. Some had been injured or become sick behind the lines, but most had been wounded in battle. Their comrades who died beside them were the only ones whose 'commitment' to the fight surpassed their own. Returned soldiers were either discharged right away or destined for discharge when their medical treatment was completed. Some actually recovered their strength and re-attested for service while others took up non-active service appointments in camps and recruitment depots. After the war healthy men came home to be discharged, a major difference in the nature of the population. Given the trend in recruitment the historical pattern in terms of returning generally saw older, more married and proportionally more British-born men return early in the war compared to later on. Newspapers and other sources scarcely ever commented on whether a given returned man or group of veterans were conscripts. Their status as draftees would have made a difference in terms of attitudes about them but it did not affect their legal entitlements as veterans.

The study's local focus is in part a strategy for viewing veterans' history from their own perspective. Research in daily newspapers provides a method of capturing veteran voices that do not speak anywhere else and for examining the participation of 'ordinary' veterans in the

---

On this topic see: LAC, RG24, Vol 4323, File 34-1-122, "Conduct and Dress of Returned Soldiers."
public sphere as much as possible. The approach echoes social history's interest in looking at
the past from the 'bottom up' and from the perspective of social groups, rather than institutions,
leaders or nation states. Interest in experience and meaning also shape works on the literature
on First World War veterans, as well as cultural histories based on the art, letters, and other
writing soldiers and veterans produced.\textsuperscript{77} No other study concentrates on a local setting or
seeks to comprehend veterans activism 'on the ground' to the extent done here, however. This
kind of approach is essential for reconstructing the experiences of returned men during and
after the war, their significance in the public sphere and their activism. While using the local
setting as a tool for getting at this history, \textit{Comrades and Citizens} situates Toronto within its
national context and assesses their importance as factors shaping the veterans' movement.

Stephen Ward's assertion that the national context is all important for the history of the
Great War veterans' movements and postwar re-establishment is born out in the literature on
this subject, especially in Cohen's comparative history of disabled British and German veterans,
but also in Fedorowich's study of soldier settlement in the British Empire after the war.\textsuperscript{78}
However, in framing their histories as national or comparative ones the category and
explanatory effect of the nation are taken for granted to an extent. While the authors in this
field are sensitive to class, Pencak's history of the American Legion is rare for its attention to

\textsuperscript{77} Bourke, \textit{Dismembering the Male: Men's Bodies, Britain and the Great War}, Paul Fussell, \textit{The
Great War and Modern Memory} (London: Oxford University Press, 1977), Sandra M. Gilbert,
in Culture and Society} 8, no. 3 (1983), Jessica Meyer, \textit{Men of War: Masculinity and the First
World War in Britain} (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2009), Michael Roper, "Maternal
Relations: Moral Manliness and Emotional Survival in Letters Home During the First World
and John Tosh Stefan Dudink (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2004),
Hal A. Skaarup, "Whiz Bangs and Whooly Bears. Walter Estabrooks and the Great War,
Compiled from His Diary and Letters," \textit{Canadian Military History} 4, no. 2 (1995), Brian
Douglas Tennyson, "A Cape Bretoner at War. Letters from the Front 1914-1919," \textit{Canadian
Military History} 11, no. 1 (2002), Bernd Ulrich and Benjamin Ziemann, eds., \textit{German Soldiers
in the Great War: Letters and Eyewitness Accounts} (Barnsley: Pen and Sword, 2010).

\textsuperscript{78} Ward, "The War Generation.,” 5, 7; Fedorowich, \textit{Unfit for Heroes}. 
regional difference. A local perspective sensitive to national context helps break down the national framework of veteran history while also providing a new way of approaching explanations of the importance of national structures for this history. By accounting for the home front this study of Toronto veterans also raises this as a potential point of comparison with veterans elsewhere. Little has been written about the history of wartime returnees, their significance for the home front and how this related to local and national experiences of the war. Focusing on veterans will certainly teach us more about the connections that existed between the home front and the Western Front and the production of knowledge about the war while it was still being fought.

The link between home front and war front is a major theme of Miller's book on wartime Toronto. Referring to extensive newspaper evidence, Miller argues that home front society was well-informed about the war and that Jeff Keshen exaggerated the effects of wartime censorship and propaganda in his study. Keshen may have granted the office of the Chief Censor too much influence and his claim that the return of veterans to Canada had little effect on Canadian public opinion until after the war is certainly contradicted by the research presented here. However, his study seems most important for the way it helps to explain the nature and formation of consensus about the war, or to put it more accurately, the nature and formation of mainstream opinion. The production of opinion and nature of debate in Toronto is not a topic Miller analyzes closely. His overarching theme is that the war was a consensus-building experience in which residents united in a cause they defined as just for moral and legal reasons. Accepting the truth of this generalization should not limit examinations of other realities and providing evidence of this broad opinion does not explain how it came about. Analyzing returned soldiers' discourse in home front Toronto helps us better understand why this broad agreement existed, while also demonstrating that even as residents committed themselves to total war they continued to debate how best to prosecute the war and its significance for home front society. Any study of the home front should contend with the

---


80 Keshen, Propaganda and Censorship in Canada's Great War (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 1996)
question of the formation of public opinion, not only because this was important for the history of the war effort, as Bray and Keshen have shown for Canada,\textsuperscript{81} but because the war sparked greater scholarly attention on this topic, Lippman's 1922 study, \textit{Public Opinion}, which introduced the term 'the manufacture of consent,' being a notable example.\textsuperscript{82}

This examination of Great War veterans in Toronto demonstrates that returned men played key roles in processes designed to generate greater war enthusiasm. Chapter 1 shows that their return to the city provided important moments in which civil society encountered the war, moments that were put to symbolic use. It also explains that returning heroes were not passive participants in the widening conversation about the war and debate about the war effort.


Chapter 1. 'Returned Heroes'

Early in January 1918 a group of 200 men arrived at a train station in Toronto. Dressed in the khaki military uniforms of the British Empire they were veterans of the war overseas and they were returning home. The fighting was over for these survivors of Ypres, Vimy, Messines 'and half a dozen other big battles' on the Western Front. They were late too; seven hours late, according to the reporter who attended their arrival and wrote the anonymous article about their return. Despite lateness, the 'civic reception committee was on hand' when they got there along with some families hoping to find their men. Soon after detraining an unspecified number of the returning men 'was tendered a hearty reception at the Central Y.M.C.A.' Most of the reunions the men made with family and friends took place here and the reporter mingled amongst various groups, asking the returnees where and how they had been wounded and noting the many different encounters between family and friends. In one such encounter a returned man would not give his family details about what had earned him his Military Medal. His sister declared it was for bravery. The returned soldier said it was for cleaning his buttons. In another scene a young girl ran into the arms of her veteran brother. Elsewhere a private with his arm in a sling met an old comrade invalided home before him. Another returned soldier's youngest siblings told him they did not recognize him.1

This moment of return was one of a countless number of similar events that occurred in Toronto between 1915, when Canadian soldiers began returning, through the Fall of 1919, when the Canadian Expeditionary Force was all but entirely demobilized. Stories of these moments proliferated in daily newspapers, ranging from long, detailed accounts to brief, fact-filled paragraphs, and they provide insight into the meaning of repatriation for civilian society and for returned soldiers. This chapter outlines the repatriation of Canada's soldiers during and after the war, showing how the process of returning changed over time. It focuses on the

---

1 Star, 9 January 1918, 5. As most returned soldiers did, they arrived at the North Toronto station of the Canadian Pacific Railway, located on Younge Street near today's Summerhill subway stop. The building is now a LCBO store, Ontario's retail liquor outlet.
reception of veterans in Toronto during the war, especially the official welcomes organized for them by authorities.²

As well as being occasions when veterans and their kin reunited and confronted the emotional complexity of returning from war, receptions were symbolic spaces used to interpret the meaning of the war and the significance of coming back. During the war the authorities who organized official receptions and the press that reported on these events played the major role in constructing returning soldiers as 'returned heroes,' which they were often called. However, receptions were also among the first opportunities returned soldiers had for speaking to a large public and they reveal key elements of the emerging veterans’ discourse. In addition to illuminating the nature of the wartime public sphere, attention to repatriating soldiers also adds to our understanding of the home front. Building on a literature dating back to the 1970s that focused on the political challenge of mobilizing society and on more recent works that consider to a greater extent the social and cultural history of the home front, this chapter explores more of the ways that the war front was connected to the home front.³ The initial arrival of returned soldiers home, and their increasing numbers in the city over the course of the war, enlarged the significance of the conflict overseas by heightening the relevance of the war effort and underscoring the need to integrate veterans into civilian life. Articles about receptions and the official welcomes organized for soldiers were fundamental ways in which these became common issues in public debate.

Repatriation

Canadian soldiers began returning from overseas as unfit for further service early in 1915. The stream of returnees grew from an inconsistent trickle to a strong and constant flow by mid-1917 and during this period services for returning veterans were developed, expanded and

² Chapter 6 examines receptions after the war.
³ Histories of the war at home that have stood the test of time include: John Herd Thompson, The Harvests of War, Brown and Cook, Canada, 1896-1921: A Nation Transformed; Barbara Wilson, ed., Ontario and the Great War. More recent are: Jeff Keshen, Propaganda and Censorship in Canada's Great War; Robert Rutherford, Hometown Horizons; Ian Miller, Our Glory and Our Grief.
systematized. The number of returning soldiers increased from about this point until demobilization, the biggest phase of repatriation, began early in 1919. Virtually all of the Canadian Expeditionary Force was home by the Fall of that year, and home front soldiers were already demobilized.

During the war, soldiers were sent back home for discharge because they were medically unfit for further service. Whether they came back during the war or were part of the demobilization of the CEF, soldiers' returns from overseas were prolonged processes marked by numerous stages. The wounded soldier had the longest trip to make, from the frontlines to aid posts, field hospitals, and base hospitals at Etaples and Boulogne. Medical care continued in England where secondary surgeries might be performed and convalescence and rehabilitation took place. Medical care begun in England and in France usually continued for wartime returnees at hospitals in Canada. Some returned soldiers were 'cot cases' and passed through these many stages of returning never having left a stretcher, operating table, or bed since being carried out of the battle zone by comrades. Some men needed months of convalescence and rehabilitation in Canada while others visited Canadian doctors for only a few weeks of outpatient care. These returned men were doubtlessly the lucky combat soldiers who had suffered a 'blighty,' a wound serious to send them to England for treatment and though resulting in a limp or weakened arm perhaps, not so debilitating that it prevented them from making their way into town to see a show, have tea, or visit a pub while they convalesced in England.

A wound of this sort was envied by frontline troops who, on average, were granted ten days of leave within a year of service.\(^4\) Soldiers might hope for an injury that would become their 'ticket home', but the more realistic wish was for a wound that warranted a stay in England to heal before returning to action. It was such a stay that soldiers singing 'Belloo, Boulogne, and Blighty' looked forward to. The Toronto Globe reported in 1915 that British troops leaving the line in ambulances sang this song with gusto, and that it was a favourite at concerts in camp. 'The title suggests the three stages in the career of a soldier at the front,' the Globe told its readers. "Belloo," in soldier's parlance, is "somewhere in France" – the first stage of the

\(^4\) This is Desmond Morton's estimate for enlisted men. Officers could expect four times this. See his: *When Your Number's Up: The Canadian Soldier in the First World War* (Random House of Canada: Toronto, 1993): 234.
wounded on the field of battle. "Boulogne" comes next as the hospital base, and "Blighty" stands for "the dear old homeland."  

Soldiers who returned to Canada earliest in the war were usually unfit because of sickness. The first contingent's camp on England's Salisbury Plain offered cold, wet, windy conditions to soldiers and many suffered tuberculosis and pneumonia as a result, Private Norman Case being an example. The twenty-year-old returned to Toronto in March 1915, amongst the very earliest of the city's returned soldiers, and was in care at St. Michael's Hospital when the press found him in July. Case explained that a twelve-hour, overnight picket duty in pouring winter rain was the cause of his illness. He could not make noon-time parade the next day and was diagnosed with pneumonia in the camp's hospital. He was able to do small duties after some weeks but an examination in March discovered tuberculosis. He landed in Halifax on the seventeenth of the month, and after spending a month at the Toronto home of the family who had taken him in as an eight-year-old orphan, he began to seek admittance for treatment. Private Burlin Morris also arrived back in Toronto a little later that March after succumbing to illness on Salisbury Plain.  

Other illnesses resulted from service and injuries were another reason for discharge. Private A. Parlette had his thigh crushed when a truck backed into his leg while he worked behind the lines in the Army Transport Corps. Private G.H. Chappel suffered appendicitis while in France. His return reminds us that though they were the majority of wartime returned soldiers, the sick and wounded were not the only men in uniform returning. Chappel complained that he came back to Canada in the company of "a number of undesirables under a guard of military police and escorted to Canada in like manner." Organizing the shipment of unfit soldiers home improved in time and such mixing of simply unfit soldiers with those the army considered troublemakers or incompetent, did not last.

5 Globe, 30 Oct., 1915: 6. The Globe almost certainly was including Canadians when it said 'British troops.' The word 'blighty,' it will be noticed, referred both to a wound and to England.  
7 Telegram, 1 April 1915, 19  
8 Star, 12 July 1915, 3  
9 Star, 10 July 1915, 13  
10 Morton and Wright, Winning the Second Battle, 6-7
Prisoners of war belonged to another category of returnees. Toronto resident Corporal Edward Edwards was among the 3,800 soldiers of the CEF who became prisoners of the enemy. In May 1915 his diminished regiment, Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry, was finally overrun and he and a handful of his comrades were captured.\footnote{Jonathan Vance has estimated that 300 of these soldiers died in captivity. See his, Objects of Concern, 26 and 254.} Fifteen months and two escape attempts later he started on his path back home as he and a friend slipped out the unlocked backdoor of a farmhouse where their prison work party was meant to have dinner. The two covered about 150 miles on foot to arrive in the Netherlands in September 1916 and within the month were turned over to the British Consul in Rotterdam. From there Edwards sailed to Newcastle and, to his dismay, learned that since the army had declared him dead a mass of red tape blocked his pay or any other benefits. The Canadian High Commissioner in London, Sir George Perley, intervened, asking Edwards's wife to send the War Office letters and postcards her husband had sent her from prison camp to prove that he had been a prisoner instead of missing and presumed dead.\footnote{Pearson, Escape of a Princess Pat, 207. Prisoners of war were permitted a limited amount of correspondence on officially regulated and censored stationary.} This won Edwards three months' leave and he arrived in Toronto in December 1916, walking from Union Station to his home in Rosedale to see his wife and three sons again for the first time in two and a half years.\footnote{See reproduced newspaper articles in Escape of a Princess Pat, 212-228.} Edwards was due to return to active service in the spring of 1917 but after his story was published in the Saturday Evening Post he accepted the discharge authorities offered him.\footnote{Pearson, Escape of a Princess Pat, 210.}

It is difficult to imagine a more perilous return from the front than that of Edwards, but the story of the return of Corporal Thomas Abrams is a challenger. Like Edwards, he too was a Princess Pats, and he too survived its terrible fate at Ypres in the Spring of 1915, as a reporter learned when Abrams arrived in the city in September of that year. He left the trenches with a gunshot wound and frostbitten feet, which took six weeks' treatment before he regained feeling in them. Two weeks after his discharge from hospital he was permitted to return to Toronto with his wife and child, who had gone to England to meet him in hospital. Their ship, the Hesperian, was torpedoed one night. As Abrams tried to get his wife and three-year-old
daughter into one of the life-boats, the ship tilted steeply as it sunk, throwing his family into the water. "I said to myself it was no good standing around with my folks in the water, even if I had one leg I could not use, so I dived overboard, and by the greatest of luck I caught the little girl's nightgown," said Edwards to a reporter. "I found my wife a minute later, just as she was being squeezed against the ship's side by a life-boat." Perhaps a half hour later they managed to get their daughter into a life-boat. After what seemed like hours he was on the point of drowning when another life-boat responded to his wife's shouts and rescued them. They then were told that the boat that had picked up their daughter had capsized. "That hurt me terribly, and I didn't know she was alive until I reached Queenstown and found she had been picked up for the second time." The article finished with the news that the Abrams lost what money they had and the clothing they bought in England on the Hesperian and were now 'in an unpleasant financial condition.'

The returns of Edwards and Abrams were dramatic, danger-filled examples of safe returns and unusual compared with the experiences of most wartime returnees. More typical was the experience of Private Donald Fraser as a casualty, who survived the shell-burst that caught him in August 1917, after more than two years of frontline service. He arrived in Calgary in June 1918 and received treatment there until being discharged in September 1918. The variety of ways this basic route home could be experienced is suggested by another of the early returned Princess Pats, Sergeant J. E. Oliver. He too traveled back from the front via aid stations, hospitals in France and England, and then by ship from Liverpool to Halifax and on to Toronto. Speaking to a reporter at his home, he explained that he remembered nothing from the time he was shot in the leg while attacking a trench until he woke a week later in a Boulogne hospital. This is considerably different from the awful memories other men, such as Fraser, had of being wounded, the emergency attention they or their comrades gave them on the spot, and their time in aid stations and hospitals.

15 Star, 23 September 1915, 3. Queenstown was near Cork, Ireland.
17 Star, 13 April 1915, 1, 14
As it was for the roughly 130,000\textsuperscript{18} men who returned during the war, the post-war route to Canada, especially if it began at the frontlines, was long and accomplished in stages. Unlike wartime, however, it was a path trodden by tens of thousands of able-bodied soldiers. There were, of course, tens of thousands of wounded soldiers that returned home in 1919, the year of demobilization. Deward Barnes returned to Toronto in February 1919, and until the Armistice his experiences as a casualty and convalescent were no different in general terms from those of wounded soldiers who returned prior to the Armistice. A month before the end of the war on the Western Front Barnes was shot through the thigh while looking for cover in the open fighting that concluded the war. 'I yelled and reeled a couple of times, then went down,' recounted Barnes in an unpublished mid-1920s journal that was a revision of his war diaries. 'I ditched all I had and drank all my water but had no cigarettes. I had no field dressing and was bleeding, my leg was numb. I dragged myself to a sunken road and got in. An Imperial man saw me and told me to come into in a square cut out alongside of the road with him.' There he stayed until two men sent by the Company Captain, besides whom he was running when hit, came and helped him to the Battalion Dressing Station a few kilometres away.\textsuperscript{19}

"There were dozens of men lying around outside, as it was not a deep dug-out, on stretchers. Some dead, some nearly so. The captain came up and told them to look after me as dozens were there before me." Here Barnes' wound was dressed and he was told that because shelling was preventing ambulances from reaching the station he might have to wait three days before being moved out. He took their advice and walked, "just slowly," about six kilometres before he caught a ride on a truck, failing earlier to find room on an ambulance taking wounded

\textsuperscript{18} Clifford H. Bowering, estimates that 'between 117,000 and 137,000 were discharged medically unfit as a result of service in the Great War.' See his, \textit{Service: The Story of the Canadian Legion, 1925-1960} (Canadian Legion: Montreal, 1960), 1.

\textsuperscript{19} Cane, \textit{It Made You Think of Home}, 266-8. As did many soldiers, Barnes kept a war journal despite regulations banning this practice. He transcribed the contents of these small booklets in 1926 adding notes in no organized way, presumably as he went. Barnes was a semi-skilled worker, not a writer by trade and did not write with publication in mind. See pages 13-18. 'Imperial man' referred to a soldier of the British Army. As a member of the CEF Barnes was a 'colonial.' Dominion units such as the CEF were fully integrated into the overall structure of the British forces in France and Flanders.
Imperial troops to hospital. The truck left him at a "field ambulance", or mobile hospital taking cases too serious for Dressing Stations. Here he remembered being inoculated, having his dressing changed, and seeing "two barrels of arms and legs." The next day he was unable to get up, labeled "Serious" and began his journey to England, going via Etaples, Calais, Dover, and arriving at a war hospital near Napsbury, Middlesex on 15 October. He stood-up again on the 17th and his progress was good. The bullet had missed nerves and bone and he escaped infection. When he could during the next few weeks he visited Napsbury and St. Albans, going to the YMCA, to shows, concerts and restaurants.²⁰

Barnes may have eventually recovered enough to return to active service, but the luck that had seen him through his 'many narrow escapes'²¹ held out, and instead he celebrated the Armistice in St. Albans where '[g]irls were lined across the street, kissing soldiers' and he and other comrades enjoyed a restaurant's free dinner. On the 13th Barnes was sent to the Military Convalescent Hospital at Woodcote Park, Epsom, where an examination determined him fit for discharge from hospital, which took place ten days later, but not yet fit for regular duties. A few days before Christmas he was granted leave and so he visited family in Bristol and a friend in Glasgow, reporting soon after the New Year to the camp in Witley. On 18 January he was categorized as fit for regular duties, and assigned to a reserve battalion at Kinmel Park camp in Wales near Liverpool. He arrived in Halifax a few weeks later, stayed only two hours before boarding a train for a rest camp near Quebec City and was finally back in Toronto by the middle of February.²²

As a convalescent at the time of the armistice, Barnes became part of one of the two streams in which the CEF was demobilized. In all there were over 250,000 men in the overseas Canadian forces at the end of the war. In England there were over 100,000, divided into hospital convalescents, reserves in various camps, newly arrived conscripts, staff officers and personnel, and men in service branches, such as medical or forestry units. Along with some personnel transferred from across the Channel, these soldiers were shipped home in demobilization drafts which were concentrated at the Kinmel Park camp that was Barnes' last stop overseas. While Barnes and tens of thousands of others waited in England for orders that

²⁰ Cane, It Made You Think of Home, 266-8.
²¹ Cane, It Made You Think of Home, 291
²² Cane, It Made You Think of Home, 269-273
would put them on a ship back home, most of the men on active service in the Canadian Corps at the front on 11 November continued to serve on the continent. There were over 100,000 soldiers in the Corps and they were demobilized separately.  

The four divisions of the Corps were stationed in Germany and Belgium during the winter of 1918-1919, kept intact during their repatriation and when they arrived at their places of origin in Canada they were given grand homecomings. The 3rd Battalion, whose original members were raised in Toronto, especially by the Toronto-based Queen's Own Rifles of Canada, was at rest behind the front it helped push back when the cease-fire was declared. It waited six months to get back home. Two days after the armistice it began marching to the Rhine to take up residence in Cologne in mid-December. A month later it was transferred to Belgium. Towards the end of March it was in Bramshott, England. It sailed from Liverpool in mid-April, arrived in Halifax on the twenty-first of that month, and was finally back in Toronto two days later where it paraded to the delight of the whole city.  

Homecoming parades were organized for the returning fighting units of the Corps across Canada during demobilization. The fact that a large proportion of postwar returnees were healthy and able-bodied allowed for these kinds of arrangements during 1919. The contrast between war and peace was also marked by an estimated 54,000 war-brides and children who were brought over from England at the government's expense during demobilization. Roughly 100,000 home front soldiers and trainees in Canada were demobilized after the armistice as well.

---


24 Barnard, *The Queen's Own Rifles of Canada*, 123

25 For examples see: *Saint John Globe*, 10 May 1919, 1; *Le Devoir* (Montréal), 19 Mai 1919, 3; *Ottawa Citizen*, 19 March 1919, 1; *The Winnipeg Evening Tribune*, 24 March 1919, 1; *The Calgary Daily Herald*, 2 June 1919, 1; *The Vancouver Sun*, 3 April 1919, 1; *The Vancouver Sun*, 26 April 1919, 1.

26 Nicholson, *CEF*, 533. About 22,000 CEF soldiers were permitted discharge in Britain too, roughly 15,000 after the armistice and 7,000 during the war, while nearly 25,000 Britons chose
While overseas soldiers remained in England, France, Belgium and Germany for months after the Armistice was signed, at least the fighting was over for these soldiers of the Western Front. Not so the Canadians near Archangel in northern Russia. On 11 November 1918 they were repulsing an attack by Soviet forces that lasted another four days. Canadians and other members, mainly British, of the anti-Soviet Allied intervention in the White Sea region of revolutionary Russia were fighting as late as Spring 1919. A total of approximately 600 Canadians served in the sector between June 1918 and September 1919, by which time they had been removed from the scene and demobilized with the CEF.\textsuperscript{27} Canadian forces also intervened in Siberia, where they were the Empire's chief representative in the attempt to give support to the anti-Soviet cause and recover material the western Allies gave Russia when it was still Germany's enemy. The Canadian Siberian Expeditionary Force was authorized in August 1918 and its first contingents sailed for Vladivostok in October. More troops were sent after the Armistice bringing the total to 4,000, virtually all of whom were demobilized between April and June 1919, having remained near Vladivostok without engaging an enemy.\textsuperscript{28}

As they had during the war, the bulk of postwar returnees landed in Halifax (though, naturally, not the Siberian force). Those with families to bring home sailed for Saint John. Quebec City and sometimes Montreal were added when warmer weather made them accessible, and during demobilization Portland, Maine was used as a port for hospitals ships carrying the most serious of the invalided and sick. To avoid delays in Canadian ports documentation and medical examinations that could be done prior to arrival were accomplished while garrisoned in Europe, in camp in England, or during trans-Atlantic sailings. There were more exams and forms on arrival, or in dispersal areas, but the preparation worked and these were completed to move to Canada: Nicholson, \textit{Canadian Expeditionary Force}, 532; Morton and Wright, \textit{Winning the Second Battle}, 112.

\textsuperscript{27} Nicholson, \textit{Canadian Expeditionary Force}, 510-517


47
quickly. The establishment in July 1918 of the Clearing Services as its own command within the Canadian military was one of the later wartime steps demonstrating administrative improvements in repatriation.29

The published material available to demobilizing soldiers is another example of this trend. Private Harold Graham, a farmer from Claremont, Ontario, carried amongst his things when he demobilized in Toronto a forty-eight-page booklet issued in London by the Canadian government in January 1919. Entitled, 'Canada and Her Soldiers,' it provided information and advice about discharge procedures and measures in place to assist in re-establishment, listing the government's initiatives on soldiers' behalf. It mentioned that voluntary organizations were at work for the returning soldier too, noting the efforts of the YMCA, and it also said since being formed in Canada, the GWVA was the country's largest representative of veterans' interests; it implied, in doing this, that it was also their best representative.30 In the latter part of the war, then, and in 1919 veterans began to be officially received home in advance of their actual arrival. This was not the case earlier in the war.

The 'vanguard of the returning army'

When soldiers began coming back to Canada during 1915 they passed through the clearing depot in Quebec City where they were either discharged (about a quarter of them) or deemed to require further hospitalization or examination. Whatever the determination, these early returnees were typically told to wait at home for mail containing news of back pay or pensions.31 In November 1915 reforms to the repatriation process sent groups of returnees who had been processed at the Quebec depot to the headquarters of their military district where arrangements for future care and eventual discharge would be made.32 Toronto was headquarters for Military District Two and therefore had many soldiers pass through it whose

29 Nicholson, Canadian Expeditionary Force, 533
30 CTA, Fonds 70, Series 340, Sub-Series 6, File 15 (Box 232876-14) 'Private Harold Graham. – [between 1916 and 1923]'
31 Morton and Wright, Winning the Second Battle, 20
32 Star, 15 November 1915, 1 and Telegram, 15 November 1915, 15.
homes were elsewhere in the district that stretched from the Niagara peninsula in the southwest, to Lake Scugog in the east and northwards into the Algoma and Nippissing areas. At their points of entry into the country, or locations in between them and home, returning soldiers could wait varying lengths of time in camps and depots before being shipped to demobilization centres elsewhere in the country.

Wherever they went when soldiers left the Atlantic ports most returned men experienced something like a series of receptions, with one at home, and other welcomes and re-acquaintances made as they met members of family, neighbours, friends, and work colleagues. These various receptions were unequally represented in Toronto papers.

Homecomings were occasionally attended by reporters but their most intimate aspects were not part of the articles that came from these encounters. An example was the column written by a reporter who waited among a crowd of friends and neighbours welcoming a returned soldier in October 1915 on the sidewalk outside his home. Eager for a story the journalist followed the rheumatic veteran of some of the earliest fighting involving Canadian troops into the front hall of his home. Here he collected stories of the front, heard the man's five-year-old son say that he was happy daddy was home and watched as a fifteen-month-old toddled about carrying a toy pistol. "That little fellow was only four months old when I left, and he wonders who the strange man is in the house," said the veteran, before adding, "I guess he will soon get used to me, however."33

Later in the war articles set in veterans' private homes were rare, but they did crop up. In December of 1917 the Pyburnes welcomed back Private J.B. Brown, a comrade of their son, who was still serving overseas, at their home in the Beaches area of the city. Brown had recently returned wounded and unfit for further service. One story he told was about the first time he boarded the street car after reaching Toronto again. To his amazement, the conductor was a comrade with whom he had fought at the Somme and, according to the journalist, the two 'were speechless with emotion, and could only ring each other's hand almost unendingly.'34

Workplace reunions were rarely, if ever, a part of daily news, though the context of the workplace was sometimes part of articles about receptions. In November 1916 a reporter observed the welcome given at the Labour Temple by about a dozen members of the local

33 *Telegram*, 8 October 1915, 24
34 *Star*, 4 December 1917, 16
carpenters' union to Sergeant James Ellis. Among the things Ellis told his union brothers was that Charlie Donovan, a former delegate of the union to the TLC who had enlisted, was dead.35

Churches were important places for promoting the war effort, commemorating the dead, and they also welcomed returned soldiers home. In October 1917 Private Cecil Annis was given a 'rousing welcome' at the Centennial Methodist Church in Highland Creek in Scarborough.36 The pastor of eastern Toronto's Calvary Baptist Church provided the lawn of his home for a garden party to honour returned soldiers in June 1917. A program of music was performed mainly by women and was organized by the church's Young People's Society, whose president was a Miss Slade.37

These examples of articles about recently returned men read as straightforward records of the chief aspects of the events. The events themselves and their appearance in the papers suggest the act of welcoming veterans home was important to Torontonians. Certainly they were important to newspaper editors, for they demonstrated the wide-ranging involvement of local residents in the war. During this first period of returning, stories about receiving returning soldiers helped make the war a collective experience and thereby encourage greater unity in support of the cause that virtually every mainstream press outlet in Canada supported.

Other articles offered more insight into both the views of veterans and what civilian society was interested in learning from them. They represent the encounter that took place, personally for some and indirectly for others, between civilian society and returned soldiers. Particularly when there were small numbers of veterans in Toronto in 1915, and in 1916 to a lesser extent, these articles were part of the way citizens indicated to veterans their interest in them while the veterans suggested what was important to them.

The reason a given soldier had come back was a natural question shaping most articles and connected to it were what the soldier had experienced at the front and what these experiences meant to him. Throughout the war many of the soldiers returning to Toronto were willing to give reporters a sense of what 'the war was like' by obliging them with stories of combat. These appeared as brief anecdotes, as longer stories describing multiple incidents of near death, and as attempts to sum up for a home front audience the nature of the front. One

35 Star 13 Nov. 1916: 9
36 Telegram, 16 October 1917, 20
37 Telegram, 26 June 1917, 10
soldier wounded at Vimy Ridge was asked what the battle had been like when he and a number of other veterans arrived in the city in October 1917. "If you had dreamed a bad dream, in which all the devils were around you at once, that would describe it," was the reply of former Lance-Corporal E.L. Vann Sicle. 38

There were other veterans of the front who were not willing to share their memories with reporters. The newspapers recorded their reticence too, though it is impossible to know what proportion of returning men replied as one Private returning in Vann Sicle's group did when asked about his war experiences. There was "'plenty that could be told,'" said this man, "'but I want to forget it.'"39 These examples and others that appeared during the war made it clear that whether returned men wanted to forget rather than talk about their war, the experience of fighting had deeply affected them. The desire to forget, after all, implied an attempt to deny or 'get over' an experience they clearly felt was difficult to keep from their memories.

Returned men whose voices were captured for public consumption, often gave their frontline experiences meaning that resonated with the home front public. One of the first occasions at which returned soldiers spoke out publicly in Toronto was at the mass patriotic rally held in the city on 21 July 1915. Including a meeting at Massey Hall, one held in front of City Hall and crowds of tens of thousands on the streets in the vicinity of both places, the event inaugurated the shift towards more local input over recruitment and steps towards revitalizing the war effort. It advertised the creation of the Toronto Recruiting League and called for volunteers. Returned soldiers were included in the day's patriotic events by organizers as reminders that the war was not so far away and so they could add their voice to the calls for fresh recruits.

One returned soldier, a Private Nurse, walked out on the Massey Hall stage 'non-chalantly chewing gum' and told the audience that though the war was "'a big job [...] there's some fun, too. We've got a lot of baseballs, and we need pitchers.'" This elicited the laughter and cheers Nurse no doubt hoped for and there were soldiers who followed him who emphasized the masculine sporting character of the war. One claimed an army diet and fresh air had improved his health and increased his weight. Captain Ruggies George's speech was quoted at length. He emphasized that the widespread Canadian use of the maple leaf overseas

38 Star, 3 October 1917, 5
39 Star, 3 October 1917, 5
was evidence that the fight was Canada's own and he evoked fraternal feeling to try to convince men that it was their duty to sign up. "The men who have answered the call look to you for support. These men look to you, their comrades, to fill the spaces in their ranks. There's a place in that line for you. Are you man enough to fill it; or are you going to stay back here, waving the flag and everlasting 'going on the next contingent'?" He wondered aloud how men who had not enlisted would cope with the return of the veterans they had "failed to support in their utmost need." The theme of service was important to George as well for he condemned Toronto men he had seen since his return "who have no more real interest in this war – interest that takes the form of service – than if the war was going on in the moon."

The returned men who spoke in the context of this pro-war rally cast the meaning of the war in terms of a man's duty to fight for his country, pointing out that this was a noble and necessary form of service. Their attitudes fit easily within the dominant Anglo-Canadian discourse that promoted a vigorous war effort and implied a belief in the positive value of sacrifice and selflessness and, clearly, in martial definitions of masculinity. These were common themes in news about the war and were expressed by civilians and veterans alike.

Interviews with survivors of the Second Battle of Ypres who arrived between September and November 1915 were opportunities to acquire first-hand accounts of the battle that had won Canada's troops so much praise and cost so many lives. One provides an example of the extent to which some men committed themselves to their duty as soldiers. Speaking to a reporter at his home on the day he returned to Toronto Private William Gough said that he was first wounded at St. Eloi early in 1915 but "was glad to be able to go back to the firing line." He explained that surgeries in England removed shell fragments from his back and then continued to describe his memories of Ypres.

40 Star 21 July 1915, 3
41 Telegram, 21 July 1915, 5
42 Telegram, 8 October 1915, 24
"I will never forget the sight as we returned through Ypres after the battle. The dead bodies of men, women and children lay strewn all around the streets. The sound of the German guns were something terrible. You have no idea of the number of big guns and machine guns which poured forth their continuous fire into our ranks." An Irish Terrier then came into the room Gough and the reporter occupied. The veteran said the dog had been with his unit in Flanders and stayed with him while he was a hospital patient at various locations. Gough ended his encounter with the journalist by telling him he wished "to thank the Khaki Club of Montreal for the kindly treatment they extended to us on our return."  

In addition to the continued connection to the front this veteran appeared to feel or wished to perpetuate by keeping this dog and talking about the front, Gough's comments also made the war significant in terms of the need it created for physical rehabilitation and vocational retraining. This returned man would clearly need help in re-establishing himself in civilian life and the article appeared in part to rhetorically ask readers whether he would get it. The reporter who captured this story and likely many of its readers would also have recognised that Gough's parting thanks to Montreal's Khaki Club for 'kindly treatment' related directly to their collective responsibility towards veterans. Some may not have considered the issue of 'kindly treatment' relevant for the process of rehabilitating wounded men and getting them back to work, but it was clear from Gough that whatever comforts and assistance the club had given him and his fellows were welcomed and worth remembering. Many recent returnees to Toronto similarly thanked voluntary bodies and individuals for their efforts on their behalf.

There were a number of other themes connected to veterans' experiences at the front. In an interview given in his home on the day he returned in September 1915, a Private in a locally raised battalion stressed the importance of performing one's duty, of bravery and comradeship. Harold Meredith had been wounded in the leg and gassed at Second Ypres and explained to the reporter, "I haven't much to say except that while the 48th Highlanders suffered heavy losses and many were taken prisoner, it was not a defeat, but a heroic stand for which the battalion paid." He then offered key details of his experience of the battle, in which he and some dozen others were often cut off from the main body. Reinforcements did reach his trench, but everyone was forced to retreat, his lasting memory of which was a machine-gunner who covered them as they did so, and whose name and fate he never learned. Cut off again,

---

43 Telegram, 8 October 1915, 24
directionless, it was then that he suffered his leg wound. "'Lance.-Corp. Bedford and my chum 'Babe' (Herbert) Mack, who was killed on July 19th last, came to my aid, and that's how I am here today.'" Convalescence in England at hospitals in Bristol and Bath healed his wound, but the effects of poison gas lingered, causing his discharge.44

The newspaper rendition of Meredith's account of his experience in Second Ypres revealed for readers something of the terror of battle, which was news in itself. It was clearly also presented to convince readers that the Torontonian had fought bravely and was keenly devoted to the cause. Losing contact with his battalion and the rest of the line they defended meant that Meredith and his fellows had no officer to lead them and being isolated meant it was impossible to form a clear understanding of their situation. Despite this they soldiered on; they relied on their own initiative and resisted the enemy. The article also implied that there were many Canadian soldiers in the frontlines with the courage and devotion to duty that Meredith displayed, for his comrades came to his aid when he was wounded and an unknown machine-gunner covered their retreat. Veterans' stories of combat regularly pointed towards the heroism of others rather than themselves and often suggested that comradeship was a soldier's greatest motivation for action.

The importance of comradeship is also clear from an article describing the address made by Andrew T. Hunter at an Orange lodge on the Orange Order's most important day, the 'Glorious Twelfth' of July.45 Hunter was a prominent lawyer in the city, closely connected to the Liberal party, a long-time militia officer and a Major with the First Contingent who had recently returned. In attendance and toasting Hunter's health was another veteran of the fighting, ex-Sergeant William E. Turley, a Toronto resident and former boxer known to sports fans.46 Hunter's recollections of the front emphasized the egalitarianism of the place, where good officers, such as himself, ate in the trenches with their men and shared in an unbreakable devotion to the cause, which was reduced in this context to being faithful to comrades and resisting the enemy. For Hunter, comradeship and the demands of the front worked to

44 *Star*, 23 September 1915, 3
45 *Star*, 12 July 1916, 5
46 On Hunter and Turley see, respectively: *Telegram*, 26 April 1915, 17 and *Telegram*, 16 November 1915, 5.
eliminate the separations between servicemen created by rank and his story implied it suppressed divisions of class as well.

Hunter's speech was long, involving many themes and with its humorous diversions and sarcastic commentary it aimed at entertaining his audience. It was another example in the newspapers of ways that returned soldiers interpreted the meaning of the experience they survived. It was also another example of the ways they were received by civil society, for Hunter was the guest of honour of a gathering held by his fellow Orangemen to welcome him home. News media coverage of recently returned men that found them in the sorts of contexts so far described continued throughout the war, but the most common setting in which returning men appeared in the newspapers was in articles about their official reception by government representatives.

Referred to as 'official receptions' on occasion, but more often during the war as 'civic receptions' and then increasingly from late in the war through 1919 simply as 'receptions,' the format for these events was worked out between October and December of 1915. Prior to this, returning soldiers were not received in any official way but on occasion newspapers learned of their imminent arrival and made them news. The article about Private Harold Meredith included description of the reception his family gave him as well as the interview referred to above. It was among the earliest examples of articles about receptions themselves, rather than about newly arrived soldiers, and the fact that Meredith was part of a somewhat prominent local family (his brother was an alderman) may explain why it was covered by the Star. Though it pre-dates the organization of official receptions it contains many of the themes that future articles about official receptions would emphasize and suggests the political purpose behind this emphasis.

Family and friends of the soldier began arriving at Union Station a half hour before his train was due, and when he stepped off the train his wife, father, two brothers and other family members encircled him. 'Cheer after cheer rang out, not only from the relatives and friends themselves of Pte. Meredith and the other returned heroes [...] but station hands, fellow-travelers, and the many passengers arriving by other trains, attracted by the cheering, joined lustfully in and marked the occasion as outstanding among the many scenes of patriotic enthusiasm here since the war began.' The reunion of husband and wife counter-balanced in its intimacy the jubilant group atmosphere. 'When Mrs. Meredith rushed forward to meet him, that touch of nature which makes the whole world kin brought a lump into many throats as the
spectators realized how tragically unique, in connection with the present awful war, was the scene they were witnessing.' Wishing to recognize the loss that so many families felt, the writer politely, as the reunion of husband and wife was rendered, implied that families across the city would never be able to greet their loved one again.47

But the main feeling of the occasion was celebratory. The next embrace was from his mother, and then everyone else followed, the 'series of hand-shaking, thumps on the back, and embraces' threatening to do him more harm than the enemy had, in the opinion of the reporter. The trip to Meredith's house was accomplished in 'three flag-decked motor cars,' and the home was decorated with patriotic bunting and the flags of the allies, along with a banner that read, "Welcome To Our Hero." His father's house, where some of the group visited briefly, was similarly decorated. So were those of neighbours, who, when hearing one of Meredith's brothers playing his cornet to mark to occasion ('Home Sweet Home' was one of the tunes), came out on their verandas to welcome him back. Finally, it was back to Private Meredith's own house, where he consented to be interviewed and where he stayed when the reporter and his public spotlight left.48

The welcome accorded Meredith would surely have heartened readers. Not only was the family warm and enthusiastic but passers-by and train station personnel cheered his arrival too. The coverage of train station arrivals proliferated in the coming years and the news media regularly commented on the attitude of the 'ordinary' citizens towards the arrival of returning soldiers. In making this a part of their coverage newspapers were clearly attempting to impress on readers the importance of showing their appreciation for returning men, to treat them on their arrival in the city as heroes. No doubt they also wished Torontonians to show veterans the 'kindly treatment' William Gough had gratefully received in Montreal.

It was important to do so not simply because they deserved this kind of treatment but because it was relevant for the war effort. The story of Meredith's return was part of the discussion that had been widening ever since Second Ypres about the implications of fighting a long war. It was becoming clear that this challenge included the task of re-integrating soldiers back into civil society and papers were concerned that the federal Conservative government's

47 Star, 23 September 1915, 3. The phrase beginning 'that touch of nature' was borrowed from Shakespeare's, Troilus and Cressida, Act 3, Scene 3, Line 175-180.

48 Star, 23 September 1915, 3
response to veterans' needs was inadequate. News columns and editorials urged citizens to consider a future in which a hundred thousand war veterans would return to Canada and argued that responding to the problem of their re-establishment required leadership from government. Organized philanthropy and individual generosity were championed, but since the war was a national effort in a national cause, veteran reintegration was considered a federal government responsibility.49

One forcefully written article in the Telegram clearly connected the nature of the receptions Canadians might give soldiers returning in the near future to the quality of their re-establishment. The article told readers that many more than '[t]he vanguard of the returning army' that was now in the city would be returning, including fit men when the war was over. And the article wondered 'what will be their reception? Will it be for the wounded a cheer or a tear and then forgetfulness – and for the strong a medal, a cheer and no more.'[sic]50 Though its main theme was the need to address the problem of veteran re-establishment it used the symbolism of reception to represent this issue. It was a point that could be widely understood and receptions became one element in a general effort to develop and expand the infrastructure of re-establishment.

The federal response to the new problem of returned soldiers was the appointment of the Military Hospitals Commission at the end of June 1915. Its nine members were unelected elites from across Canada, and its head was the Conservative leader in the Senate, James Lougheed. He made a Militia Department official, Ernest Scammell, secretary, who quickly began studying ways to organize re-training and job-placement services for veterans and was instrumental in having eleven hospitals opened by October that served over 500 in-patients and 600 out-patients.51 In mid-October five members were added to the MHC, its mandate was altered to include retraining and rehabilitation and a conference of commissioners and

---

49 For examples see: Star, 25 and 31 August 1915, 6; Star, 31 August 1915, 6; Star, 2 November 1915, 6; Globe, 1 October 1915, 4, Globe, 6 October 1915, 6; Telegram, 8 October 1915, 13; Telegram, 14 October 1915, 8.
50 Telegram, 8 October 1915, 13
51 Morton and Wright, Winning the Second Battle, 7-9
Voluntarism was a major feature of early re-establishment efforts too. Organizations such as Montreal's Khaki League and Winnipeg's Imperial Order Daughters of the Empire, opened convalescent homes for soldiers, serving smaller numbers than did the MHC.53

No private hospitals were opened in Toronto but elites in the city otherwise responded in similar ways to those in Canada's other major urban centres. On 21 October the Toronto Sportsmens' Patriotic Association Soldiers' Club opened at 257 Richmond street west, near John street, in the former quarters of the Liederkranz Club. This had been a German social club until it closed under public pressure in May 1915.54 Toronto's Sportsmen's Association was a pre-war institution that promoted sport and organized sporting events. It added 'Patriotic' to its name early in the war as it dedicated itself to encouraging enlistment and support for the war. The honorary officers of the club were: Sir John C. Eaton, Canada's largest retailer; Sir William Mulock, Ontario Chief Magistrate; Sir Henry Pellatt, rich businessman, militia officer, and owner of the city's latest and most audacious mansion, Casa Loma; John Ross Robertson, editor of the Telegram, and influential Conservative in the city since the nineteenth-century (he died in 1918); Joseph E. Atkinson, editor of the Star, and similarly influential as a Liberal; and finally, George H. Gooderham, another rich businessman.55 As in many places in Canada, Toronto's wealthy and powerful organized an arms-length organization to freely offer soldiers and returned soldiers a well-appointed and respectable space of their own. The day the club opened soldiers availed themselves of lunch at the dry canteen, played the piano and sang, played billiards, smoked in the smoking room, or just hung about socializing.

The conference in Ottawa closed with an agreement that broadly defined the ways in which the provinces would cooperate with the federal government to provide re-establishment services to returned soldiers. The federal commission would be responsible for retraining and rehabilitating disabled veterans. The provinces would assist with this work while focusing on finding veterans jobs. It was agreed that a separate conference would study plans for dealing

52 On these developments see Morton and Wright, Winning the Second Battle, 15-18. B.C. Premier Richard McBride could not attend, but gave his support.
53 Morton and Wright, Winning the Second Battle, 14, 19
55 Globe, 18 October 1915, 1
with post-war demobilization.\textsuperscript{56} Ontario soon created the Soldiers' Aid Commission to take on its burden of returned soldiers' affairs. It too was made up of prominent men in society, though two of its eleven members were elected politicians: Dr. W.D. McPherson of the governing provincial Conservatives, who was its chair, and W.F. Nickel, the federal Conservative representative for Kingston.\textsuperscript{57}

Military Hospitals Commission secretary, Ernest Scammell, visited Toronto the day after the conference concluded, and the day the Sportsmen's opened their club for soldiers. He said the commission would soon open an office in Toronto, and, having accepted the city's offer, would convert the old Bishop Strachan School on College Street, just west of Yonge Street, into a convalescent hospital. Scammell's explanation of the MHC's intentions confirmed what a local military official had told the Board of Control, on 14 October.\textsuperscript{58} Major Reed had said that a MHC office would register returned soldiers, provide them with their pay, and arrange medical treatment.

Official Receptions and Wartime Discourse
In the midst of all this activity Toronto officials began organizing official receptions for soldiers arriving in the city. On 12 October an Alderman told the Board of Control that seven veterans returning the day before had been welcomed as they detrained by only one person, the father of one of the soldiers.\textsuperscript{59} No one could miss the implication that this was a pathetic demonstration of the city's and the municipal corporation's high patriotism and genuine concern for veterans' well-being. The Mayor responded by preparing a series of measures he proposed to Controllers the next day that were meant to demonstrate the community's gratitude for soldiers' services and begin a process of re-integration into the community. Though some thought that the business of re-integration services was the responsibility of federal officials, everyone agreed that the city had a role to play in assisting in these efforts and in welcoming

\textsuperscript{56} Morton and Wright, \textit{Winning the Second Battle}, 18
\textsuperscript{57} AO, RG 29-165, Soldiers' Aid Commission of Ontario, Minute Book, Vol 8, 17 November 1915 meeting. The minutes are not paginated consecutively.
\textsuperscript{58} \textit{Globe}, 14 October 1915, 7
\textsuperscript{59} \textit{Star}, 12 October 1915, 6

59
veterans home. There was common recognition that failing to give returning soldiers warm welcomes reflected badly on the city and could also discourage enlistment, since men might decide not to enlist when they learned about the lack of care being provided returning soldiers. In the summer of 1915 the city became directly involved in recruitment when Ottawa relaxed the central direction of the Militia Department and gave greater responsibility to local elites and government. For this reason the municipality was especially sensitive to the significance of welcoming soldiers home and demonstrating to them, and the general public, that they would be well looked after.

Official receptions took on the format they essentially followed for the remainder of the war when city and federal officials saw them as opportunities to satisfy a variety of purposes: formally welcoming soldiers, reuniting them with family and introducing them to the re-establishment services the federal, provincial and city government were developing. Official receptions became the link between repatriation and re-establishment. Initially returning men were received on train station platforms by crowds of expectant relatives and the day's official reception committee. The out-of-towners among them were given a light meal at a downtown hotel and the Sportsmen's club offered to take them in for a night or two. The returning Toronto residents were whisked to their homes in automobiles provided by volunteers. By the start of 1916 the practice was for only officials to greet groups of returnees at train stations and accompany all of them to the hall of the College Street Convalescent Hospital. Here family and friends were invited to gather instead of crowding at train stations and it was here, or on the sidewalk outside the hospital, that the majority of reunions took place. In the hall, which was modestly decorated in patriotic colours, the men were seated at tables and served a meal and when this was over they listened to brief addresses delivered by one or more members of the day's receptions committee.

In the final stage of the reception that followed the speeches the reception hall became what was referred to as a 'clearing depot.' Returned men were directed to officials with the

60 On these proposals see Globe: 13 October 1915, 9; 20 October 1915, 14; 21 October 1915, 7.
Militia and the Military Hospitals Commission who informed them of their status, registering
them in appropriate facilities and usually telling them they were granted a week or two of leave
before they needed to report to these locations. Few wartime returnees were discharged at these
events. As in-patients and out-patients in MHC institutions they continued to wear the King's
uniform and were still subject to the bureaucracy and authoritarianism of the army. As groups
of returnees grew in size and as the re-establishment infrastructure grew in the city the
reception halls of the Spadina Military Hospital and the Central YMCA were used and
streetcars might be reserved to transport some of the men.62 Military bands became common
features of receptions, playing at train stations and outside hospitals. Representatives of the
Great War Veterans' Association became members of many reception committees in 1917, and
while they appear not to have played any unique role it is easy to imagine that they encouraged
the men in the hall to become members of their organization.

The presence of reporters at these events made them public. Head table occupants
partly had official receptions organized as a way of demonstrating to the public that
government was responsibly working to meet the needs of returned soldiers, and also to remind
citizens that the veterans deserved everyone's help. An important aspect of these events was the
speeches, but they were also likely boring and repetitive for journalists, since details of their
content was rarely reported. Their general content, however, was indicated. A September 1916
article said, for instance, that the Chair of the province's Soldiers' Aid Commission was the first
to rise after the returnees had settled in the hall. He 'extended a formal welcome to the men and
acquainted them with what arrangements are made for securing employment for all.' Thomas
Langton Church, Toronto's Mayor throughout the war and a regular at these events, then
greeted the men and told them what the city could do for them. He was followed by other
members of the official reception committee: city Councillors, the president of the Board of
Trade, Canon Dixon, Chaplain of the Military District, and Mrs. Willoughby Cummings, active

62 Lieutenant-Colonel R.S. Wilson, Officer Commanding Military District Two, summarized
the process returning soldiers were to follow at receptions in a circular letter, probably dating
from mid-1917. See: CTA, Fonds 70, Series 340, Sub-Series 6, WWI, (box 232876-16), File
18 "Orders to Men Returning from Overseas. – [between 1914 and 1918]"
in Toronto's Women's Patriotic League from the start of the war.\textsuperscript{63} Often, a member of the local Military Hospitals Commission or member of its staff was on hand too.

The brief details newspapers gave of these speeches reveal that officials at the front of the hall informed the returnees of the avenues open to them for re-establishing themselves, and that they thanked and praised the men for their service. In doing so speakers conformed to the basic tenets of a pro-war discourse that grew ever more widespread during the war. They called the men heroes, honoured their sacrifices, and expressed admiration at their bravery. The veterans were told that the city, the country, and the Empire owed them a debt that could not be repaid, but one that earned them credit in society that would never lose its value.

Though related to re-establishment, these speeches and the receptions in general, were similar to the addresses of public figures at events celebrating the sending-off of soldiers overseas, a clear indication that they were rooted in a discourse that promoted a vigorous war effort. Robert Rutherford has studied the send-offs held in the cities of Lethbridge, Guelph and Trois-Rivières during the Great War. In the two English-Canadian cities civic officials and elites took leading roles in celebrating 'the power and purpose of Canada's' armed men. Send-offs usually involved marches through the cities, in which ex-servicemen of earlier wars were often a part, and were sometimes held a few days prior to departure, or actually at the train station at departure time. The great enthusiasm of 1914 faded in 1915 and send-offs became less grandiose, but they continued to demonstrate the themes of 'imperial-nationalism, militarism, and masculinity,' as well as civic pride, with patriotically decorated automobiles and stages, and patriotic music.\textsuperscript{64} Rutherford shows that speakers claimed the nation, the Empire and the Allies were united in defense of democracy against a barbaric and autocratic foe.\textsuperscript{65}

\begin{footnotes}
\item[64] Rutherford, \textit{Hometown Horizons}, 60. Send-offs are explored in greater detail by Rutherford in his earlier article on the subject, 'Send-offs During Canada's Great War: Interpreting Hometown Rituals in Dispatching Home Front Volunteers,' \textit{Histoire Sociale/Social History} 36, 72 (November-Novembre, 2003), 425-464, but his conclusions remain the same in both works.
\item[65] Rutherford, \textit{Hometown Horizons}, 61. Civic send-offs in Trois-Rivières were much smaller and less frequent, and early-on, there were only a few Anglophone volunteers in this city that
\end{footnotes}
Miller's book about Toronto during the Great War, *Our Glory And Our Grief*, briefly mentions send-offs held in the first two months of the war, the characteristics of which seem to match Rutherford's findings.66

Officials at the receptions of returned soldiers in Toronto took the same approach as the Guelph and Lethbridge city leaders did; they referred to shared values and aspirations, and appealed to mutuality. Though at opposite ends of the process of fighting war, send-offs and receptions were similar discursively. The reason for this was that the soldiers' imminent departure or recent arrival was the impetus for organizing these gatherings. The meaning of these affairs, therefore, had to revolve around the public meaning of soldiers in the current context. This could not be separated from the dominant representations of the cause being fought for or from the patriotic masculinity assigned soldiers. These quasi-ceremonial events symbolized the social and psychological, as well as legal, threshold the soldiers occupied. Their purpose was to provide civilians with a communal opportunity to express to soldiers their admiration and thanks, and, naturally, moments during which the men in uniform could 'consume' this message. Given this context the confirmation of the central themes of war discourse by speakers at these events was virtually pre-determined, especially since they were delivered by officials responsible for the war effort.

Official speeches at receptions constructed returning veterans within the confines of war discourse, but since they gave them little attention the wordsmiths responsible for producing newspapers must have found them dull ways of getting this message across. More interesting, and more convincing, was evidence of the courage, selflessness and patriotic masculinity of returned men that emerged from the events themselves, as well as from other sources containing information about veterans. As suggested by the articles referred to above about 'un-official' receptions and newly returned soldiers, official receptions provided material that news organs could make into powerful elements of war discourse. Articles about official receptions and about returning men more generally, re-iterated and amplified the themes of war discourse and used the veterans as principal symbols to convey its meanings. Returned soldiers' own words were important parts of these news reports and were meant to confirm the construction of

---

66 Miller, *Our Glory and Our Grief*, 19-20
veterans as heroes, though they were also supposed to remind readers, as speakers at official receptions did, that veterans had sacrificed a great deal and deserved everyone's help.

A good example was the column describing a reception that took place soon after the city made its initial arrangement to officially welcome soldiers home. Mayor Church headed the civic reception committee as it and three hundred other citizens jostled each other on the platform as they waited for the train to pull in on a day in late October 1915. The *Telegram* told readers that most of the crowd were women waiting for their husbands and ""sweethearts,"" two of whom had waited for every Montreal train in the past two weeks since they had learned of the arrival of their men in Canada. Other citizens 'besieged' the Mayor with questions and as he sympathetically answered the train arrived. Once everyone realized the 'Tommies' were in the rear cars, they hustled down the platform to see them.67

Church led the van, and when Lance-Corporal Trant, who had lost his right arm, appeared, the Mayor was the first to greet the returned hero.

"I am proud to welcome you back to Toronto," said the Mayor, and he was just going to add something else when he was brushed aside by a woman, who, throwing her arms around the young man's neck, cried: "Oh, boy, boy, I never thought I would see you again." The stalwart soldier put his arm around her, and drawing her to him kissed her and said: "All right, mother, I am back to you and we are going to have a great time together." The mother nestled close to her boy whispering to him, and the father looked at his boy with eyes swimming with unshed tears.68

Six of the group were from out of town and were taken to breakfast at the Carls-Rite hotel by cars provided voluntarily and the Sportsmen's Soldiers' Club offered them its services when they were done.69

The gendered representation of Trant and his parents evident in this article (he the 'stalwart soldier,' his mother effusive and his father restrained) was typical of the papers and was not limited to articles about receptions. More specifically related to the representation of returned soldiers and to interpretations of the war was the positive way in which the article rendered the awful results of war. That Trant had lost his arm appeared less important in the

67 *Telegram*, 30 October 1915, 15
68 *Telegram*, 30 October 1915, 15
69 *Telegram*, 30 October 1915, 15
article than the fact that he could still embrace his mother and reassure her. His disablement was unspoken proof of his heroism and devotion to the cause, while his behaviour on the platform proved he remained a faithful and loving son for he still cherished and reassured his mother who must have worried so much while he was overseas.

This approach was consistent with the way that Toronto newspapers generally cast combat, suffering wounds and soldiers' deaths. As Jeff Keshen has shown of newspapers in Ottawa, suffering and sacrifice were presented by the press as evidence that soldiers acted on high ideals. The description of the reception given Trant and his comrades provided another example of this by using the words of a signaller who was among the returnees. Sergeant Arthur said the battle he had survived, Second Ypres, was "'pure hell'" and that there "'will be very few of the 48th come back'". This was hardly news anymore and was not presented as such. It appeared instead as evidence of the honourable qualities of Canada's fighting men. In addition to praising two officers for their performance this same soldier told the reporter that the Germans were scared of the Canadians because they fought so well and that if they had not been such good soldiers there would be more of them alive today.

Though particularly gruesome details from the front were rare, Toronto papers provided plenty of evidence that war led to death and misery. Newspapers printed casualty lists throughout the war, often placing them on pages that included photographs of men killed overseas and discussion of particular men that acted as eulogies of a sort. After major battles the lists were printed on many pages and it was common throughout the war to highlight particular soldiers killed in action for longer columns about their lives and service in the war. In addition to the undeniable evidence of all the death overseas, newspapers published soldiers' letters sent or forwarded to them that described the front. A letter that Private Martin Jossa sent to his mother was printed in the Star in August of 1916 and described Jossa's experiences in what was likely the Battle of the St Eloi Craters earlier that year. Filled with hair-raising details the letter concluded in a point-form manner, listing calamities that seemed too difficult to

---

70 Both Keshen and Miller note this in their studies of Ottawa and Toronto. See: Jeff Keshen, 'Words as Weapons: Ottawa Newspapers Fight the First World War,' in War and Society in Post-Confederation Canada, Jeffrey A. Keshen and Serge Marc Durflinger, eds., 78-92 (Thomson-Nelson, 2007); Miller, Our Glory and Our Grief, 45-58.

71 Telegram, 30 October 1915, 15
synthesize into prose. The letter’s hopeful ending was surrounded by a mass of sorrowful, ugly reality. ‘On the night of June 3rd we got our dead lads and buried them, but on the next day the shells churned these up again. One of our boys was buried four times. Once I was lying in a big shell hole talking to a 48th Highlander for ten minutes before I knew he was dead. It is awful, but still only for this the war would not be won.’72

Articles about returning soldiers could contain this sort of news too. Among forty-three soldiers who returned to Toronto one day in December 1916 were two soldiers who provided examples of this practice. No doubt in response to the frequently posed question of how the soldier had been wounded, Sergeant John McNulty told a Globe reporter that a shell blast had thrown him fifteen feet in the air and wounded him in six places. Private Fred Nash explained that he had been wounded in a night raid and laid in No Man's Land for three days and two nights before being rescued.73

This approach was meant to convince news readers that the war was the emergency that leaders were telling them it was and inspire them to commit fully to the massive collective effort that was needed to achieve victory. Readers were supposed to understand that the sacrifices of men such as Trant had been in their interests and, therefore, feel a sense of duty to them and to feel that their efforts needed to be sustained and not simply honoured.

Giving suffering positive meaning was one important technique in making the return of veterans to wartime Toronto a part of war discourse, but just as common a technique was avoiding the negative realities of war altogether. How Trant thought losing his arm might affect his life was not part of the story of his return. Neither was the trauma caused by being blown up in the air or the terror of lying alone in No Man's Land explored in the article reporting on the return of McNulty and Nash. Articles about receptions even made the reluctance of some returned men to discuss their stories of combat into evidence of the high character and courage of Canada's soldiers. Heroes with medals pinned to their tunics who refused to explain how they had earned the honour were praised for their modesty.74

72 Star, 23 August 1916, 2
73 Globe, 12 December 1916, 4
74 Some examples are Star, 16 November 1915, 7; Telegram, 1 March 1919, 18; Telegram, 2 June 1919, 8.
The last and probably most significant method used in articles about receptions to make them a part of war discourse was training attention on the positive aspects of moments of return. A detailed and engaging story of the return of sixty soldiers to Toronto in mid-March 1917 illustrates this point, while also emblematic of most of the major themes broadcast by articles about receptions. The narrative began in the waiting room of the Spadina Military Hospital, occupied mainly by women. Here was a situation most readers could relate to, or imagine if they did not actually have relatives enlisted. Some in the room had anxious faces for 'they hardly knew in what condition their men would reach home. One gathered from their remarks that letters from the front don't deal in detail of wounds.' One 'motherly-looking woman' was waiting for the first of 16 of 'her boys,' referring to all the relatives she had serving. A small girl waited for an uncle whose face "'has been badly hurt; we hardly know what he will be like.'" Another woman waited for a friend of her family's. Her son had been wounded and was back at the front, while her husband had been wounded and discharged home, where he was managing to work with shrapnel still in his side. Finally, one woman waited for her boyfriend. "'Yes," said the girl so personally interested, "he's lost an arm, I'm afraid, and his head was hurt, too. They were afraid for one of his eyes for a while. But, gee, I don't care what he looks like so long as he's home.'" Many of the residents of the hospital, soldiers who had returned earlier in the war, waited as well.75

The first soldiers to arrive came in ambulances. 'Many a man was helped out by some woman who walked up the steps with him, wearing an expression of pride which seemed to say: 'I know Alex's lame – probably always will be, but did you ever see a boy learn to use crutches quite as cleverly as he? Just look at him now climbing those steps all by himself!'" Here the difficulty and perhaps the pain of climbing stairs is not the story, nor is it the cause of the disabilities affecting this group of returnees. The point the article makes instead is that women nearby gladly gave the men help and were impressed at the ability of the men to use their crutches. What seems most significant, then, is the role women played in helping men and in interpreting injured bodies as masculine. There were, however, men among this group who did not have someone waiting for them. 'They had almost an air of embarrassment as they walked up the path between the crowds. One was glad when a watching soldier, pushing his way forward, grasped the hand of one of these with, "Hello, Bill! When did you leave France,'

75 *Star*, 16 March 1917, 16
old tough.\textsuperscript{76} Once again the plight of the returning soldiers was recognized by the crowd that welcomed them, but significantly the aid they needed was friendship and it was fellow veterans who were able to provide it rather than the women who gave some returnees nurse-like assistance.

Not long after the arrival of the ambulance the private cars decorated with Union Jacks pulled up and, getting its cue, the band began to play. In this atmosphere, the able-bodied returned soldiers, 'carrying their kit bags, and eagerly looking for their friends, came up the walk to the home.' Among them was the uncle the girl the reporter interviewed earlier had been waiting for. She hugged him and 'then they walked on with his gib arm around her little shoulders. She had known him all right, fortunately the wound had not disfigured his face.'

When everyone arrived, the crowd squeezed between khaki-clad residents of the hospital on its way to the assembly hall to hear speeches of welcome. On the way, and inside the hall, still more encounters were made. A former tenant talked with his landlady; a son caught the eye of his father and mother and they pushed aside the crowd to get to him; returned men were surrounded by old friends. The only 'tragedy' in this scene of warm reunion was that the soldier who had lost an arm and injured his head was not among the group of returnees that day and so the young woman who waited for him could not greet him.\textsuperscript{77}

It meant a lot that the failure to reunite was referred to as a tragedy and the wounds this soldier who failed to appear had suffered were not. In the language of war discourse they were sacrifices in a cause that was more important than the health of the young man and the feelings of the young woman. While not denying the pain of loss and real difficulty death could be for a family, pro-war discourse urged Canadians to see death for the cause as a great achievement, something to be proud of and to find comfort in. It was also meaningful that the journalist left with the 'impression that there was about the whole reception to these men an atmosphere of happiness.'\textsuperscript{78} A narrative that began with anxiety ended in happiness. The potential for real tragedy did not materialize, everyone was back together again. This was the general picture painted by this skillfully structured story of returning. It avoided the question of death

\textsuperscript{76} \textit{Star}, 16 March 1917, 16. 'Bill' and 'Old Bill' were used to refer to veterans of the army or the frontlines.

\textsuperscript{77} \textit{Star}, 16 March 1917, 16

\textsuperscript{78} \textit{Star}, 16 March 1917, 16
altogether, not to mention the reality of killing that was an ultimate goal of the efforts of patriotic citizens at home and soldiers at the front.

**Conclusion**

Despite being loaded with meanings for veterans, their families, political leaders and ordinary citizens concerned with the war, historians have all but ignored moments of return and they have not focused on the question of the place veterans occupied on the home front. For example, the theme of rites of passage is important for the second volume of *Capital Cities at War*, yet soldiers' returns are mentioned only in passing and neither of the two volumes on Berlin, London and Paris in the war explores the place veterans occupied on the home front.79 As this chapter reveals, examining these topics exposes the overlapping and interactive character of mobilization and demobilization, or mobilization and re-establishment. It emphasizes civilian participation in constructing the meaning of the war while it was still being fought and sheds light on changing home front contexts. Cultural analysis of moments of return and the theme of returning as it was treated in the public sphere shows that they were part of the history of consent about the war, a theme whose complexity historians of the war have not exhausted since it became a major topic in the 1990s.80 This chapter's focus also demonstrates the role of journalism in shaping meaning during the war. It elaborates on the Canadian history of expanding public concern about the war and commitment to victory outlined in Miller and included in studies dealing with public opinion in wartime Canada by Bray and Keshen.81

79 Winter and Robert, eds., *Capital Cities at War*.; Winter and Robert, eds., *Capital Cities at War, Vol. 2.*. Winter's chapter on hospitals in Volume II does discuss the figure of the hospital convalescent in London and he and Robert return to veterans several times in the same volume's conclusion, an interest neglected in the 30 chapters that make up both volumes of this major collective project involving multiple historians.

80 Winter and Prost, *The Great War in History*.

81 Miller, *Our Glory and Our Grief*; Bray, "A Conflict of Nationalisms: The Win the War and National Unity Convention, 1917."; Bray, "'Fighting as an Ally': The English-Canadian
Newspapers continued to stress positive themes in descriptions of receptions after the war, but by then there were thousands of returned soldiers in the city and across the country, they had formed their own associations and the postwar atmosphere was far different than it had been just one or two years earlier. The public meaning of returning during the war reflected the ways that the significance of the war was interpreted. Early on, returns were opportunities to learn about the fighting in the trenches and to promote support for the war effort. They continued to offer material the press and elites used, and returnees provided, to support the war effort and cast soldiers as heroes, but they quickly became sources for impressing upon the public the need to adequately re-establish veterans in civilian life and show them genuine appreciation for their service.

The attention veterans received when they arrived at Toronto's train stations, clearing depots, at home or in other venues was also one of the ways that they began to win themselves a voice in the city's public sphere. At official receptions there was little discursive room for them to make statements that fell outside the dominant themes of war discourse and this applied to a lesser degree to their public addresses at formal receptions held in Churches, fraternal organizations, or in the interviews they consented to as new returnees. As the population of returned soldiers grew in the city and as new arrivals became accustomed to their new reality as returned men they asserted a public role that affected the public sphere in significant ways.
Chapter 2. Battle-bonded Comrades

This chapter looks at the ways veterans represented themselves discursively as well as institutionally during the war, focusing on the GWVA. In doing so, the chapter tracks the emergence of returned soldiers as significant players on the public stage and examines how they constructed their identity for public consumption. It argues that the public role veterans won during the war was the result of their own efforts and those of civilian bodies sympathetic to their interests who helped them establish organizations and gave them other kinds of assistance. Not only did civilian groups give veterans practical help, but they fundamentally shared a similar outlook on the war. For example, there was consensus around definitions of manly duty, loyalty to king and country, and a basic sense of moral justice that was sometimes expressed in Christian terms.

Naturally, however, experience as soldiers did separate veterans from non-veterans, and the significance of this fact began to work itself out in Canadian society long before demobilization. Feelings of comradeship and veterans' unique sense of entitlement were important for the public role veterans began to construct for themselves before the Armistice. In addition, veterans' public wartime discourse was shaped by their desire to obtain credibility for their associations and win the public's favour. Returned soldiers who engaged in the public sphere constructed themselves and their comrades as patriotic men engaged in an all-important effort to sustain the war effort and provide for the re-establishment of men who were finished fighting. Representing their institutions, especially the GWVA, and themselves as respectable was a crucial element in this strategy. It was a claim tied to notions of constitutionality and legitimacy and was made in the context of rising levels of unrest among returned soldiers.

Entitlement and Comradeship
As the previous chapter showed, veterans found a place for themselves in Toronto's public sphere during 1915 and 1916 in the pages of daily newspapers, and in public settings. About their personal anxieties and the psychological affects of combat, they might make a brief,
sometimes revealing, comment or two. They were rarely dwelt on publicly. But the war pre-
occupied them, and they obliged reporters with varying degrees of enthusiasm by relating some
of their war stories. Occasionally they were critical of the lack of commitment to the war effort
demonstrated in the city, usually by mentioning the well-dressed young men they saw on the
streets and in automobiles. Many wartime returned soldiers were open about their need for
work or for some help in re-establishing themselves, a topic the public must have expected
recently returned soldiers to raise. Measures taken to assist returned soldiers, and how veterans
participated in their further development during and after the war, are taken up later on. This
section looks at the important attitudes that underlay veterans' arguments about re-establishment
during the war. The record reveals that veteran comradeship, including their connection to
overseas soldiers and to their dead friends, as well as strong but undirected feelings of
entitlement, were at work in the public positions they took.

A press interview with seven returned soldiers in October 1915 reveals many of these
themes. "'We who have come back,'" said 'one of the heroes of St Julien,' "'are anxious not only
for ourselves, who number less than half a hundred, but we cannot drive from our eyes the
pictures of the tent hospitals, the laden ambulances, the big English hospitals where we have
been, and we wonder what the lot of the thousands will be when our few dozen is so hard.'"1
Every member of the group was physically unable to do the work that had employed them
before they enlisted. One man said he had been a 'union builder,' but now could only find
temporary work. He still hoped to receive a pension, and said with that and picking-up odd
jobs "'I should be able to get along.'" But he still had no pension, and no work, and he had a
wife and five children. A former 'union mechanic' with the Russell Motor Company had his
"'nerves shattered'" by a shell blast. On application, he was offered by the "'Civic Employment
Bureau'" a $5 a week job "'tending furnaces.'" He needed lighter work that paid "'enough to
keep a wife and four kids.'"2

Four of the seven men were working for the Recruiting Depot at $1.85 a day. One of
them was a former electrical engineer whose injuries did not allow him to work, and therefore
be paid, every day. He was an out-patient of the General Hospital for damaged eyesight and
'shattered' nerves. "'If a piece of paper flutters past me suddenly,'" he said, "'I break out into a

1 Star, 5 October 1915, 4.
2 Star, 5 October 1915, 4
sweat and almost faint." Like the others, he had been paid $150 at discharge (his was the past July) and allowances to his dependents from the Patriotic Fund had stopped. Hoping for a better income to support a wife and two children, he had gone to the city's employment bureau, which found him a job packing china at $10 a week. "Packing china! I'd die the first day and smash more than my salary was worth." Asking, or offering an opinion, the reporter said it was not the city's responsibility. The veteran held out a 'trembling hand' and pointed at his 'half sightless eyes', and said, "Is this my debt! [...] I wish some one would tell me or tell my little kiddies whose debt it is!"3 It is unclear whether the former electrical engineer was outraged by the china-packing job because it was so far from the skilled work he was trained to do, or whether he was terrified of a dish breaking while he worked, triggering a reaction far worse than being surprised by a piece of fluttering paper.

Whichever it was, he and the others interviewed that day demonstrated attitudes and represented themselves in ways that were typical of returned soldiers. In speaking of their plight they reminded the public that their service had imperilled their role as breadwinner by eliminating their ability to return to the respectable occupations they had once filled, or take on new jobs that paid decently. Yet it was a role they still accepted. Unfit to fight, unfit for many kinds of work, these men still claimed their fitness for the role of breadwinner. They still felt that their wives and their "little kiddies" were their responsibility. A 'man's part' they had played in the trenches, and a 'man's place' they expected to re-enter at home. It is impossible to miss, in the growing public comments by veterans, their sense that they were owed this place by society. To them, this was simply fairness, and if any phrase summed up their demands it was the commonly repeated call for 'fair treatment.'

The argument from veterans that they were entitled to help or support from society grew naturally from the needs their service created. They had lost their health, lost their jobs, lost income and potential earnings. The majority who were working class were in a desperate situation, since they could count on little or no reserve of capital to help them get by. The nature of that service was another element of their arguments for entitlements. They had fought a war that government and a majority of almost every sector of Canadian society said needed to be fought for a host of important reasons. When speaking about their re-establishment needs, veterans employed arguments familiar to the wider public. Their frame of reference was the

3 Star, 5 October 1915, 4
same as the civilian one that appeared in newspapers, speeches and public meetings. Veterans' lived experience, which led to a unique perspective, was the crucial difference.

Who but the men back from the war could invoke to greater effect the language of patriotism, masculine duty, and sacrifice? Their collective discourse said they had fought the war, defended the Empire, democracy, and Christian principles - the great values to which too many only gave 'lip service.' We performed our duty as men, was their message. And men we remain, the message continued, with the more common, but no less important, duty of being breadwinners. Now Canada, its state, institutions and people, had to live up to the values for which the soldiers had fought, and for which so many comrades had died – that was the country's duty and that was 'fair treatment.'

Explicitly connecting these points was more often done in private correspondence. Two letters considered by Toronto's Board of Control are examples. In a May 1917 handwritten letter, 'Great War Veterans Employed at City Hall' appealed to the Mayor 'as Our Friend' for higher minimum weekly wages. Explaining that many of them were married, and that the high cost of living was making it more difficult to make ends meet, they added arguments based on veteran entitlement. 'Surley after us Sacrificing our lives for this Great War, Nothing should be too good for us. Is it right that men who have never offered themselves for Service during the Great struggle for liberty and Right should be allowed to have more than the men who has protected their lives and Homes.'

A returned soldier wrote in January 1918 for 'a refund of a fine imposed' the previous August for being drunk while in charge of the gates where St Clair Avenue and the Grand Trunk Railway crossed. While offering the explanation that he drank liquor to kill the pain of teeth extractions that day, he also underlined his position as a man struggling to support a patriotic family. Three of his seven children were at the front, and the fifty dollar sum was too much for him to afford 'in this critical time.' The fact that he was 'a returned soldier' was literally underlined in the typed letter.

Filtered through the media of the press, veterans' public wartime arguments for entitlements were usually less detailed than the ones presented in these letters. For example, news of the letter by City Hall veterans found its way into the Star. It faithfully reported that their argument to the Mayor was based on their view that 'men who have risked their lives are

4 CTA, RG2, B3 (144411) Box 118, 1917 Vol 1, Item 1392
5 CTA, RG2, B3 (144211) Box 124, 1918 Vol 1, Item 118.
worth more than $18 a week and more than the men who have never gone to the front. It also said the veterans were married men, but did not elaborate on the significance of this point. Even so, in saying this much the newspaper said explicitly what was often implied. The male breadwinner ideal was a norm in society, and newspaper readers, or audience members, would have expected that men seeking higher wages, or relief, had families to support, or hoped to have families in the future. They may even have thought that they should have families to support. It was more common for the press and returned soldiers to publicly stress the manliness of performing military duty, and allow their audience to take their role as heads of households for granted. Emphasizing their war service obviously distinguished returned soldiers from any other group of working, unemployed, or under-employed men.

Comradeship was another major theme of veterans' wartime discourse. The seven returned soldiers interviewed in October 1915 addressed the issue of entitlement mainly, but they also mentioned the wounded that remained in hospital, a great army of men who would need jobs when they returned. The subject usually arose in anecdotes about the war. Returned soldiers commonly referred to themselves and their mates when providing opinions about the war, and in stories about combat the fate of fellow soldiers and acts of bravery by comrades was commonly relayed. In its most basic form, veterans and non-veterans used the term comradeship to mean the bonds that were created between soldiers while they served, and continued when service ended. Comradeship was not limited to men that had actually served together in the same unit. All who had served were potentially linked as comrades. Public expression of comradeship existed in Toronto prior to the Great War. On anniversaries of important past military victories, and on days such as Empire Day, Victoria Day, or Dominion Day, veterans and others gathered to decorate monuments. These acts commemorated the dead, expressed loyalty to King and country and honoured military service, but they also recognized the comradeship of men at arms, and for a few hours, brought men together who may have served in the same conflicts. Associations existed in Toronto of veterans of the South African War, the 1885 Rebellion, and even the 1866 Battle of Ridgeway. The Army and Navy Veterans was another association of former servicemen that pre-dated the Great War.

Probably best known by Canadians was the Grand Army of the Republic, an association of veterans of the American Civil War whose public profile was larger than any other

---

6 *Star*, 31 May 1917, 8
organization. A *Globe* editorial in October 1915 provided readers with the association's history, which alluded to its influence on American politics late in the nineteenth century. 'No doubt,' said the editorial, 'there will be organized in Canada a similar association of veterans who survive the present war, of which the motive is just as worthy to be honored and remembered as is that of the fight to preserve the Union or free the slave.'

Views on the Grand Army were often much more cynical than the Liberal *Globe*'s, but whether returned soldiers and the public thought associations of veterans of past wars were models to avoid or emulate, comradeship was something that was expected of men that had fought war, and so it was another aspect of the discourse that the public and returned soldiers shared.

At the same time, nothing more clearly marked the difference between returned soldiers and civilians as comradeship. Veteran entitlement marked former soldiers as specially deserving, but its underlying assumption was that returned soldiers were civilians who needed to be made meaningful parts of society once more. The subject of entitlement cast veterans as fathers, workers, respectable bachelors, or as war victims whose care was now the nation's duty. Comradeship was about what being a veteran meant to veterans. Whatever else it might mean, the key point about comradeship in the context of civilian society was that it was a lived reality for ex-servicemen that made them different from non-veterans. It was based on a life they had lived together while in uniform, a life that was different and separate from non-soldiers while they trained and waited for mobilization, a life that hung in the balance every day if they reached the front. Civilians could understand this conceptually, but they had not lived it, could not trade stories, speak in the same metaphors, and share in a knowledge of soldiering and surviving war. Experience separated the two groups. By 1916 returned soldiers in Toronto were actively pursuing the logic of comradeship by working to establish their own organizations where comradeship could be renewed and perpetuated.

**Organizing the GWVA**

In May 1916, returned soldiers gathered in the hall of St John's Anglican Church on Portland Street to determine how to establish a Returned Soldiers' Association in Toronto along the lines of the Grand Army of the Republic.

---

7 *Globe*, 13 October 1915, 6
of the one already formed in Montreal. Three provisional officers were elected: President William Rowe Whitton, Secretary N. Williams, and Treasurer Ralph Humphries. The three announced they would like to hear from other returned men in the city and the audience was told that there would be a service the following Sunday to commemorate the anniversary of the Battle of Festubert. The executive probably hoped to make connections with more veterans at this service. The Star said the association's purpose was to 'unite' returned soldiers and give them a 'common meeting ground.'

The meeting's election of an executive reflected a democratic and constitutional approach that would have seemed normal to members of fraternal orders, unions, workplace and occupational associations, who would also have expected meetings to be regulated by rules of order. Fewer unskilled workers, and perhaps young men, had been members of associations, but still, they likely would have had indirect knowledge of them. The richness of associational life in this period, in Canada and elsewhere, probably made most returnees familiar with its basics. In addition to the multitude of voluntary organizations that existed in society, there were the models of organizations of veterans of earlier conflicts to inspire returned soldiers of the present war, and there was comradeship for further motivation.

---

8 Star, 23 May 1916, 4
9 Star, 23 May 1916, 4 and Telegram, 29 May 1916, 10.
To this point only pre-war veterans associations existed in the city, and returned soldiers associated with each other in a variety of informal ways, from encounters in hospitals, to meetings on street corners. Returned soldiers frequented inexpensive downtown cafes (and complained of price inflation beginning in 1917), and if they had a bit more money they could go together to a show. Clubs such as the Sportsmen's may have been the most important meeting places because they offered free admission to their comfortable surroundings. Most had a canteen where meals could be had cheaply, coffee or tea might be free, and newspapers and magazines were available. Off-duty active soldiers and returned soldiers could spend many hours in these places, behaviour that was resented in at least some profit-oriented restaurants. Some clubs also offered short-term accommodation for returned or active soldiers visiting or passing through the city, a service that would have been familiar to soldiers staying at London's Maple Leaf Club while on leave, a well known institution by the middle of the war.

As the Sportsmen's club grew in popularity, other clubs opened in the city to serve soldiers and returned soldiers.\textsuperscript{11} In mid-1916, the Royal Templars club in the old YMCA building at Dovercourt Road and Queen Street West began to serve around 500 soldiers a day. Known in following years as the Templars Khaki Club or Khaki Hall, it offered a gym, swimming pool, and room for as many as sixty-five to stay a night or two. In 1917 it became a regular location for meetings of veterans' associations.\textsuperscript{12} Located near such plants as Massey-Harris, Inglis, and others, its main patrons were likely working-class veterans living in the neighbourhood. Most of the active soldiers that visited must have come from Exhibition Camp on the grounds Canadian National Exhibition, which was not too far away. By the Spring of 1917 the Maple Leaf Club was open and apparently named after the club in London.\textsuperscript{13} The location of the club at the intersection of Yonge and College/Carlton Streets was part of the reason why the area earned the nickname 'Shrapnel Corners,' the term used by soldiers for an

\textsuperscript{11} For examples of its growth see: \textit{Star}, 11 November 1915, 10 and 14 January 1916, 9.

\textsuperscript{12} \textit{Star}, 6 December 1916, 2; 7 December 1916, 2; 17 August 1917, 2; 27 August 1917, 9; 24 November 1917, 10; 27 March 1918, 5. In early 1918 offices in the building were occupied by the Parkdale branch of the GWVA. See: \textit{Star}, 15 February 1918, 11.

\textsuperscript{13} \textit{Star}, 7 April 1917, 14; 15 August 1917, 9; 22 August 1917, 4.
intersection near Ypres. The first of Toronto's convalescent hospitals was opened here and many other services were available to veterans near these corners. The result was that returned soldiers, usually convalescents in uniform, collected at this location. Benches were put in place on one corner to accommodate them and the term 'Shrapnel Corners' became widely known.

Private services to returned soldiers continued to expand during the war, the most important example being the Red Triangle Club at Queen and Victoria streets, which opened in April 1918. This was formerly a hotel that the YMCA converted and by the end of the war over 15,000 soldiers were accommodated overnight in its sixty-five rooms, and twice as many were given meals, an indication of the immense number of returned soldiers in, and passing through, the city. It was most interested in helping returned soldiers not from Toronto, and sent representatives to train stations to inform them of its services. It offered 'reading rooms,

14 Donald Fraser used the singular form of this term when he wrote that 'Shrapnel Corner' was at 'the junction of the Menin Road with the St. Jean-Zillebeke road.' Soldiers in the Ypres Salient regularly passed this junction within easy reach of German artillery, as they did 'Hell Fire Corner,' also near Ypres. See: Roy, ed., The Journal of Private Donald Fraser, 156-7. For a map of the area see Patrick Beaver, ed., The Wipers Times (London: Peter Davies, 1973).

15 A regular section of the Telegram about veterans' news was entitled 'Chat of Shrapnel Corners.' Photographs of returned soldiers published in a number of books were taken at this location. Some show men seated on the benches and others reveal messages veterans wrote with chalk on the wall behind them. The Maple Leaf Club was at 7 College Street, adjacent the Central Military Hospital, the first veterans' hospital opened in the city. Across the street was the Central YMCA that catered to soldiers, and increasingly as the war went on, to returned soldiers. The Provincial Legislature containing the offices of the Soldiers' Aid Commission was also not far away. Located in Queen's Park a short distance from College Street, the legislative building was nearly opposite the Toronto General Hospital where some veterans received treatment. Further west was the Spadina Military Hospital, just north of College Street. One long block to the east of Yonge Street, on Carlton Street (which was what College Street became east of Yonge Street) was where Toronto Great War veterans established their first clubhouse. In this downtown region of the city veterans increasingly found rooms for themselves in apartments and houses.

16 Star, 28 September 1917, 9
writing rooms, shower baths, billiard tables, pianos, and sitting rooms, all free to soldiers in khaki, and returned men who showed their button. Rooms were cheap at forty cents a night, the cafeteria had a wide variety of items sold all day, and there was a barber shop. All the major items, such as the pianos, had been donated by ladies auxiliaries across the city, and funds for the club had been donated by these same, as well as other, ladies' associations, and other private citizens.  

Women not only donated to and helped organize these institutions but they were also staff members of these clubs, and they worked on behalf of veterans in a wide variety of other capacities, whether as individuals, members of auxiliary organizations, or members of their own independent associations. There are countless examples of the leading role they took in providing veterans with comforts, entertainments, and opportunities for them to meet and socialize. These had significance for re-establishment and are discussed in later chapters. The key point is that their work on behalf of returned men, which many saw as patriotic service, made it even easier for veterans to be in each other's company and illustrates how civilian society wished to show its concern for their well-being.

The May 1916 meeting was among the first in the city to begin the process of establishing permanent and independent veterans' organizations. Those in attendance may have been following up on suggestions made by W.D. Lighthall, the Montrealer who had helped found the Returned Soldiers Association and visited Toronto in May 1916 to encourage the organization's expansion. Lighthall had used the constitution of the Grand Army of the Republic to shape the formation of the Returned Soldiers' Association he had helped initiate in September 1915, and seems not to have minded that after it was established in early 1916 the organization soon excluded him by limiting its membership to veterans. A meeting of returned soldiers in the convalescent home on College Street in September of that year showed that veterans continued to rely on civilians, even as they attempted to escape to their own company. That meeting's principal decision was to 'to call a meeting of women to devise

17 *Globe*, 16 April 1917, 10

means of assisting returned soldiers to obtain suitable clubrooms and headquarters in Toronto.\footnote{Star, 19 September 1916, 6}

A few days later the president of the Women's Khaki Club, a Miss McColl, announced that the organization planned to raise money for a soldiers' club. She hoped the old YMCA building on Yonge Street could be its quarters. Various women's groups were willing to support certain features of the club (the Daughters of England would run the canteen, for instance). The Mayor's sister, referred to as Miss Church, was part of these efforts, and was proposing a meeting with the Returned Soldiers' Association for the following week. Already, though, she had conferred with that association's president, Sergeant Major Whitton, and learned that 'soldiers objected to a club house run under military rule or one conducted by women.' However, Whitton told Church the men needed the women to make 'the club homelike', and 'their help in raising the necessary funds.'\footnote{Star, 23 September 1916, 12} Interviewed in October, McColl and Church updated the public on the work women's organizations were doing 'to provide a club run by ladies entirely, but under military rule, where both returned soldiers and any soldier in khaki will be welcome. "It is," said McColl, "to treat the boys in khaki like kings so that others will join the forces, when they see how well the boys in khaki are being treated." That she considered this its primary role fit with the Khaki Club's origins in the Toronto Recruiting League, the establishment of which had been announced at the patriotic meeting held in July 1915 that had included returned soldiers as speakers.\footnote{Star, 11 October 1916, 7}

A club of this sort was not what returned soldiers had in mind, but they continued to use their link to the women's associations, who remained keen to help the veterans. At the end of November, Canada's new Governor-General, the Duke of Devonshire, was in Toronto, and toured the Spadina Military Hospital, where elites connected to the Military Hospitals Commission escorted him around the facility. The Duchess and the other ladies of this party were introduced 'to the women who have been active in aiding the wounded soldiers,' some, or all, of whom must have been looking forward to that evening's main event: Women's Tribute Night.\footnote{Star, 30 November 1916, 1, 8}
That evening, returned soldiers marched eastbound from the Spadina hospital, along College Street, picking up convalescents along the way, travelling down Yonge Street to reach Massey Hall on Shuter Street. They made their way in order of battle, with Imperial men of the British Expeditionary Force first, members of the Princess Pats next, and then men of the First, Second, and Third Canadian divisions, with those unable to walk conveyed in carriages by other veterans. Military bands accompanied the more than one thousand old soldiers to the hall. Inside they were cheered by the women assembled to pay them tribute – literally, in a sense. Prepared cheques ranging from $1,000 to $100, and smaller amounts, were donated from such organizations as the Union Jack IODE of Mimico, the WCTU, the Association Opposed to Women's Suffrage, the Women's Teachers Association, and the Jarvis High School. All were for the establishment of a clubhouse veterans could call their own. The collection reached nearly $5,000, and the City Treasurer was on hand to take the money into trust. The evening's program was provided by a new figure on the public scene, the Great War Veterans' Association, 'whose aims,' newspaper readers were told the next day, 'are to provide a clubhouse and headquarters for these men so that they may gather with their battle-bonded comrades.'

The event included songs sung by veterans, as well as skits, and hymns played by another military band, in memory of the dead.

Women's Tribute Night was the first opportunity (or among the first) for Toronto veterans to speak directly to the public as members of their own association. Previously they had been convalescents or pain-wracked 'cot-cases', and sometimes they were recruiters and workers or unemployed family men. Here they were returned soldiers pre-eminently. Chairing the proceedings was former Sergeant William E. Turley, who was later identified as the association's secretary. He was an ex-boxer and ex-employee of the Telegram, an Earlscourt resident, active in recruiting for about a year, and the Orangeman who had toasted Major Hunter at a lodge meeting held earlier in the year. He was a major figure for the GWVA in Ontario for years to come.

---

23 Star, 30 November 1916, 23, and 1 December 1916, 22. Toronto newspapers did not report on the origins of the organization, which were in Winnipeg in October 1916, where Robert Maxwell's recommendation for the name was followed. See: Morton and Wright, Winning the Second Battle, 67.

24 Telegram, 16 November 1915, 5. Chapter 1 mentions the Orange Lodge meeting.
the city, was now president of this new organization, and he presented the association's message from a stage outfitted with sand bag parapets, and barbed wire. In the background, for everyone to see, hung a giant Union Jack.25

Whitton said 2,000 soldiers of the CEF were home again in Toronto, and 300 Imperials had settled in the city, and a total of 50,000 men had so far enlisted in the district. It was with such "'boys we want to mix in times of peace,"' and "'the organizers of this movement feel no one is better able to care for the returned soldier than the returned soldiers themselves.'" On behalf of veterans, he thanked the women for their sacrifices, and praised them as "'the most powerful organization in Canada. It is not sympathy and pity we desire, however, but a square deal from the Government. All things being equal we should have first chance, even though they have to discharge those who have remained behind. We want to reinstate ourselves with those whom we have come in contact with and help in the great uplift. Every man who goes to the trenches goes near his maker, and is a better man for being near. He does not think of himself, but of dear ones at home.'"26

The GWVA eventually did get the clubhouse its leaders felt returned soldiers deserved. Another major patriotic event at Massey Hall was held in January to raise more money.27 In February 1917 they leased a large house at the corner of Carlton and Church streets, only a block or so from Shrapnel Corners. After securing the funds raised by the women's campaign it was officially opened on 9 March, at another event held at Massey Hall attended by the veterans, the women, and city and provincial figures.28 It is clear that the leadership of women, the sympathetic response they received from local civil society, and the supportive attitude of government were all crucial for returned soldiers' acquisition of a clubhouse. With scanty funds of its own and no prospects of raising substantial amounts through membership fees levied mainly on men with limited means, the GWVA needed this help.

The GWVA and veterans more generally continued to receive similar support during the war. On two occasions in early 1917, for example, the city cooperated with women's groups by providing streetcars to transport returned soldiers from their hospitals to the entertainments the

25 *Star*, 1 December 1916, 22
26 *Star* 1 December 1916, 22
27 *Star*, 17 February 1917, 7 and 19 February 1917, 21.
28 *Mail and Empire*, 10 March 1917, 4
women arranged for them.  This type of support became common, and was similar to small subsidies that were periodically made, such as granting in the order of $100 to $200 to each branch of a veterans' organization for the charitable Christmas events they held. The first such grant was made by the Board of Control in December 1917 to the city branches of the GWVA. The GWVA received much more substantial subsidies that year as well. Speaking for the deputation that saw the Board of Control early in August 1917, Capt. Mathieson said the Toronto GWVA would need approximately $40,000 annually and it was applying to the Ontario government for $20,000, hoped to raise $5,000 on its own, and was appealing to the city for $15,000. The Board recommended a grant of $6,000, which the association received a few weeks later, and was granted access to the association's books.

Soon after the campaign for a clubhouse was successfully concluded the federal 'Parliamentary Committee of Enquiry into the treatment of Returned Soldiers' visited Toronto and veterans seized upon this as an opportunity to expand institutionally. The twenty Ontario representatives of various returned soldiers' organizations who came to the provincial capital for the committee's meetings held a convention, electing on a provisional basis C.E. Jeakins of Brantford as President (a former CEF Chaplain), and Whitton, Turley and James J. Shanahan of Toronto as, respectively, First Vice-President, Secretary, and Executive Committee member to the nine member executive of what they agreed to call 'the Great War Veterans' Association of Canada (Ontario Provincial Branch).' The constitution and by-laws of the Toronto association were used as the basis for this new organization, which met at its first regular convention two months later in Ottawa. Also in Toronto in March 1917 to present themselves as witnesses

29 CTA, RG 2, City Executive Committee Fonds, A2, Minutes of Board of Control, (144692), Vol 34, Jan to June 1917, Minutes 266 and 404.
30 CTA, RG 2, City Executive Committee Fonds, A2, Minutes of Board of Control, (144693), Vol 35, July to December 1917, Minute 1284
31 CTA, RG 2, City Executive Committee Fonds, A2, Minutes of Board of Control, (144693), Vol 35, July to December 1917, Minutes 297, 359, 449, 781. The Ontario government granted the Ontario GWVA $50,000 in 1917 to organize and work on behalf of veterans. The Toronto branch appears to have received $6,000 of this total. See: Star, 25 September 1917, 14; Star, 16 October 1917, 1; Star, 20 December 1917, 20.
32 For background on the committee see: Morton and Wright, Winning the Second Battle, 69.
before the Parliamentary committee were veterans from the West, and the presence of this national sample of returned soldiers convinced the Ontarians and nine Westerners to hold an impromptu 'Semi-Dominion convention.' It was here that the decision to hold a national convention in Winnipeg the next month was made, which may have irked Ottawa veterans who had already called for one in their city.33

The April 1917 Winnipeg Convention voted to set up headquarters for the association in Ottawa and establish a structure which officially made the GWVA Dominion-wide. At this founding event that was remembered for posterity the total of twenty-seven delegates approved two especially important resolutions. One said that distinctions between officers and men would not be recognized in the association, a decision that suggested the significance of social egalitarianism and its correlation to comradeship for the members, who had been officers, non-commissioned officers and enlisted men while in uniform. Also significant was the decision to admit as members soldiers who had been honourably discharged from service overseas in the present war. This was a broad basis for future growth but it still excluded men who served in uniform in Canada or who had given past service as soldiers and sailors, which suggested that Great War Veterans felt that comradeship did have boundaries. This topic is explored in Chapter 6.

During the war the GWVA grew to be Toronto's largest and most important veterans' organization. As it added members, as branches of other organizations adopted the GWVA moniker and as other veterans formed new branches of the association, it quickly became the leading veteran institution across the country. The local association claimed to have about 500 members early in 1917 and 3,000 by the end of the year, by which time there were 25,000 GWVA members in Canada, up from around 4,000 at the time of the formation of the Dominion GWVA.34 Toronto GWVA leaders claimed in early August 1918 to represent a total of 5,000 members belonging to five branches, at least one of which definitely included many veterans who resided outside the boundaries of the city.35 Winnipeg was a close second to

33 ‘The Great War Veterans in Ontario,' The Veteran, May 1918, 29.
34 Globe, 5 March, 1917, 6; Star, 24 November 1917, 10; The Veteran, December 1917, 24; Morton and Wright, Winning the Second Battle, 72
35 These figures were presented at the GWVA's national convention in 1918, which was held in Toronto, and there were members who challenged them, claiming that there were really less
Chapter 2

Toronto's wartime membership lead. The size of the GWVA declined after 1919 but it remained Canada's biggest veterans' association until the mid-1920s, when it participated in a campaign to unite all veterans under one organization and joined the Canadian Legion in 1926.

GWVA Discourse

The expansion of the GWVA was the result of some hard work on the part of veterans, and the sympathetic support of groups of civilians, including politicians such as Church, who likely had their own and what they considered to be the public's interests in mind. The discourse of the GWVA can be examined both for insight into the reasons it was successful and for insight into how members conceived of the organization. This section considers both of these questions as it studies some of the key ways Toronto's Great War Veterans represented their association to the public.

The GWVA expressed its corporate identity in a variety of contexts. The first was Women's Tribute Night and the speeches delivered on this occasion are good examples of its pattern of repeating for the benefit of politicians, the general public, and other returned soldiers, the association's basic goals and essential character. This was itself another method of attracting members and it was meant to win the organization public support. The recruitment drive the GWVA took a leading role in from February through March 1917 was another context in which it spoke out publicly and will be discussed in the following chapter.

Another fairly well-publicized context was the organizing drive it embarked on in mid-1917, after the founding of the provincial and Dominion bodies, when local officials decided to establish branches in different neighbourhoods while maintaining an elected executive body for the whole city of Toronto.36 This arrangement was called at the time the 'battalion system.' In an announcement to the press of this new approach Turley explained that the city would be divided into four Companies ('A' through 'D') with four platoons each and that the "members of platoons will appoint their own non-commissioned officers in the same proportion as to a battalion."


36 Star, 14 July 1917, 4
He and his comrades in the association hoped that since "most men will understand this form of division of authority" it would increase membership and, it seems clear, allow it to mobilize more effectively. Turley also explained that organizers would work to prevent any confusion about the purposes of the GWVA by stating and re-stating the goals of the association. He began this process himself by telling the media that "The objects of the association are: (1) To win the war (2) To stimulate recruiting (3) To assist men already returned and those returning to find suitable vocations in civil life." He said that currently the association was working on improving pensions and pay rates in the civil service, where returned soldiers often found work, and that they were emphasizing to a greater degree the responsibility of the public to aid in re-establishment. He concluded by saying that "The big aim of the Great War Veterans' Association is to organize itself so that it may hold its own with other organizations, political bodies or powerful interests that might not see the way clear to do justice to individual soldiers."37

Turley's essential points were repeated by other representatives at organizing meetings across the city throughout the summer. By September the system was in place and Companies and Platoons began meetings at which similar statements about supporting a more intensive war effort were made and news was spread that the association was becoming more capable of assisting in re-establishment by acquiring information about job opportunities as well as setting-up adjustment services and distress funds.38 By November of the year the Toronto District of the GWVA appeared to have settled on its status within the provincial and national structure of the GWVA.39 In 1918 delegates from Winnipeg and Ottawa claimed Toronto was over-represented at the Dominion convention, which was held in Toronto at the end of July, and the city's metropolitan-like system of organizing was to blame. Every other city was organized as a single branch, such as Winnipeg with nearly as many members as were in Toronto, and breaking-up the city led to the election of more delegates than Toronto deserved. The objection was essentially that the Companies of Toronto's 'Battalion System' were represented as full-branches, when they should in fact be seen as sub-branches without any standing at the

37 *Star*, 14 July 1917, 4
38 For example: *Star* 27 September 1917, 13 and *Star*, 5 October 1917, 26.
39 *Star*, 24 November 1917, 10
convention. 'One city, one branch,' was the policy advocated by these speakers, who did not actually use this phrase, but did force a reduction in the number of delegates from Toronto.\(^{40}\)

By this time, in fact, the words 'battalion system' and 'company' and 'platoon' were no longer used for the GWVA's structure in Toronto. From the beginning local GWVA officials often used the words branches and sub-branches instead of company and platoon, and the military terms soon faded from use, though they cropped up from time to time. One problem with using them in 1918 was that the city had five branches by this point, which would make for one more company than was normal for a battalion.\(^{41}\) Whatever the reason for the change in terminology the important reality was that the system was employed as a means of reaching the grassroots. More branches meant smaller meetings and more potential contact with and influence with veterans. Adopting the 'battalion system' did not signify that the veterans' were aiming to make their association militaristic in character. That the GWVA did not officially recognize the military rank attained by its members is evidence of this, but most important of all was that officials were elected to their positions, worked within representative bodies internal to the association and were accountable to the membership. They did not object to martial values, such as obedience and rigid authority, but the institution GWVA leaders created was marked by democratic input and constitutionality. The majority of leaders felt that democracy was an essential principle of their association and of their cultural-political heritage, but their greater concern was constitutionality, perhaps reflecting a broad preoccupation with this idea in society.

The precise word was rarely used at the time, but 'constitution' was and so were phrases such as, 'constituted authority' or 'constitutional authority' and 'constitutional means.' What returned soldiers, or journalists, or other public voices referred to when they used this root word were ideas of respectability and legitimate authority. Evidence of the significance of the

\(^{40}\) Proceedings of Dominion GWVA Convention, 1918, 11-15. The problem seems to have arisen because Toronto received authorization and subsequent legitimization for its system of organization from the previous Dominion Secretary, NFR Knight, who afterwards left the organization. Following his departure the national executive appears to have passed a by-law rescinding Knight's decision.

\(^{41}\) They were: West Toronto, Riverdale, Central Toronto, Earlscourt, and North Toronto. See: Proceedings of the Dominion GWVA Convention, 1918, 12-13.
themes of respectability and legitimacy for the GWVA come in a variety of forms. A straightforward example was the Dominion body's hope of attaining a charter from Parliament and its disappointment at receiving one from government instead, issued under the Companies Act.42 Debate within the organization over representation and institutional structure is another obvious example, and unsurprising for a new and growing association.

The preoccupation with constitutionality was also partly linked to the organization's claim to represent the interests of all the Canadian veterans of the present war. This position had especially significant implications because it was left open-ended. The Great War Veterans did not limit themselves to questions of commemoration or club life. They said that veterans' interests included a more vigorous war effort and improved efforts at re-establishment, topics of public policy that potentially affected all Canadians. The extent of the association's interests was, therefore, considerable, but this was not the only reason that representing 'all' of the interests of returned soldiers was significant. The claim also implied that government was doing a poor job of acting in veterans' interests. For several reasons, this was an attitude that could be interpreted as threatening. The nature of their service gave returned soldiers a greater claim to the attention of the government than any other interest group in the country, such as farmers or temperance advocates. Observers of the growing veterans' association might worry, then, that returned soldiers would eventually dominate the government's agenda, become overly influential and cause excessive spending of the public purse.

There was also reason to wonder about what might happen if government refused to 'give in' to the expansive demands of returned soldiers. By the time of the conscription crisis there were already local examples in Canada of the unruly behaviour of returned soldiers and men still in the service. For example, the Telegram implied that part of the reason behind November 1915 reforms in the repatriation system that would see large groups of new arrivals quickly dispersed to other centres was the rowdy behaviour of returned troops in Quebec City.43 Other reports, such as ones in the Globe later in the war about soldiers arrested for public drunkenness and for fighting (including with the police who arrested them), may have shocked readers who indulged in fantasies of soldiers as saints in a moral cause, but surely most readers were acquainted with common stereotypes that represented soldiers as hard-drinking, rough

42 Proceedings of the Dominion GWVA Convention, 1918, 30-1
43 Telegram, 15 November 1915, 15
men. 44 A courtroom report in the *Telegram* in 1917 about a soldier who pleaded guilty to bigamy (with an 'immigrant,' which the soldier feared made matters worse) probably added to the impression that soldiers often led disreputable lives. 45

The more serious examples of disorderliness were the riots in which soldiers played a part. February 1916 riots led by soldiers in Calgary caused considerable property damage and were reported in Toronto papers. 46 In his article on these disturbances, P. Whitney Lackenbauer shows that civil authorities were ill-prepared to stop rioters and required the cooperation of the military to prevent further outbreaks. Lackenbauer finds that civilians joined with the soldiers who targeted the businesses of supposed enemy-aliens, but he does not speculate on whether there were returned soldiers in these crowds. 47 Torontonians may have paid more attention to the unrest in Berlin Ontario, which became Kitchener in September 1916. If they did, they would have known that soldiers were at the centre of the violence in this city caused by anti-German sentiment. 48

Torontonians who were only dimly aware of these stories could hardly avoid learning about the riotous behaviour of returned soldiers in 1917 and 1918, which will be discussed in the following chapters. As the conscription crisis mounted, returned soldiers in Toronto violently broke up anti-conscription meetings and, in various ways, vigorously demonstrated their views about the need for reinforcements and the need to curtail the freedoms of foreigners. Veteran riotousness in Toronto culminated in August 1918 with major riots against the owners of restaurants who were accused of being unpatriotic foreign profiteers. Unrest lasted for five days early that month, included the destruction of a considerable amount of private property and clashes with the police.

44 *Globe*, 16 April 1917, 9 and *Globe*, 19 November 1917, 8.
45 *Telegram*, 31 October 1917, 16
46 *Star*, 11 February 1916, 10
GWVA leaders wished to allay any nascent fears in 1917 about unreasonable and rough veteran behaviour and 'normalize' their new organization. One way this was done was by parading, such as the parade that preceded Women's Tribute Night. Others took place as aspects of commemorative episodes, such as the one organized for a memorial service on the second anniversary of the Battle of St Julien. Parades were opportunities for groups to display their identity and advertise their role in society. Their 'language' was well understood in society and parading was common. They occurred regularly on special days, such as Empire Day, and they could be more spontaneous, such as the parades of striking street-railway workers or their supporters that aimed to persuade the public to boycott streetcar service for the duration of their work stoppage. Parading, therefore, both conformed to well established norms of collective behaviour and was also a form of discourse, since it was meant to communicate basic messages to a broad public.

While the format of parades, whether seemingly spontaneous or planned in advance, were familiar to everyone, their particular messages could vary and audiences for parades could interpret their character in different ways. It would have been difficult to misunderstand the purpose of the GWVA's presence at commemorations during the war. When they were still officials of the Returned Soldiers Association, Whitton and others were pictured in the *Telegram* as among those who attended a May 1916 service commemorating the Battle of

---

49 *Globe* 19 Apr 1917, 8


The following March GWVA officials were among military, city and provincial leaders invited to a memorial service honouring Lt.-Col. S.G. Beckett of the 75th Battalion, who had recently been killed in action. The presence of GWVA representatives at similar events, all of which included civilian participants and civilians as members of congregations and audiences, was repeated frequently in the years to come. Late in the war and after it, the association was among the veterans' organizations that sent representatives to participate in internment ceremonies at Prospect Cemetery, where a plot of land was set aside for veterans who died without any relations or an estate that could pay for a marked grave. These burials usually included a procession of family, friends, comrades, and possibly other figures, who accompanied the casket into the cemetery. Surely everyone who saw or read about these events would have assumed the veterans were there to honour their comrades and this would certainly have helped the association accomplish its objective of appearing to be serious and community-oriented.

GWVA leaders also stressed the reasonable nature of their views and proposals in speeches and in writing, as well as simply describing the character of their organization as respectable. They generally did not use the term 'respectable,' but the word provides a good way of summarizing one of the central ideas in the GWVA's construction of itself, as a number of examples will make clear. When the officers of the recently founded Toronto GWVA, Whitton, Haight, Turley, Meredith, and D.D. Shaw, submitted their application for the funds raised by the city's women's organizations and kept in trust by the city, their letters stressed that the association was reputable and of real value for the public good. Submitted to the Board of Control on letterhead of the now defunct branch of the Returned Soldiers' Association, the application for the $5,000 said the money would be used to furnish and maintain their new clubhouse at Carlton and Church, which would have rooms for veterans needing a place to stay. They provided the board with a copy of their constitution, which declared that it was 'independent of governments, parties, politics, benefactors and all other outside influences.'

52 Telegram, 29 May 1916, 10
53 Mail and Empire, 10 March 1917, 4
54 For examples see: Telegram, 16 October 1917, 1; Star, 1 March 1918, 2; Star, 14 November 1918, 27.
55 CTA, RG2, B3, (144409) Box 116, 1917 Vol 1, item 523.
Applying for public support and proclaiming independence did not conflict in the opinion of the GWVA, just as in the future it would profess to be non-political while it worked feverishly in the political arena to advance its goals. The constitution listed as one of the association's objectives its intention to 'inculcate' loyalty to Canada and the Empire and to continue to serve in their interests. A section dealing with 'discipline' outlined a process for judging and punishing members who were disloyal to the country and the empire, committed a 'scandalous offense against the laws of the land,' or whose 'conduct was prejudicial to good order and discipline.' These points made it clear that the association would act responsibly by encouraging the highest forms of patriotism and reputable behaviour.

At the request of the board the veterans' organizations provided them with more information in a second letter about a week later. As they had in the first letter, the GWVA explained its objectives to the Mayor and Controllers, and they added the news that initiation was fifty cents, membership was available to men honourably discharged from overseas service, the fee for membership was two dollars, and the executive expected the association to expand its membership from its current 500 local members. This showed that the organization was attractive to returned soldiers and that it would be self-supporting. The letter also reflected more broadly on the value of the association. The Great War veterans reminded Controllers that returned soldiers of past wars had been 'thrown on the charity of the public,' or had fallen into abject poverty in the very country for which they had fought. 'It is the aim of our Association to see that such does not become the case as a result of the present war' and, in their opinion, a clubhouse was a necessary part of achieving this. 'We also have no doubt,' continued the GWVA, 'that our Association will be the means of putting a stop to impostures on the public, prevent overlapping of charity, and in many ways become an asset to the public generally by inculcating all that pertains to good citizenship both by precept and example.' Finally, the authors claimed they knew more than anyone else 'the needs and requirements' of the current 40,000 Toronto men yet to come home, and would make a valuable contribution towards re-establishing them. Once again, representatives argued that the association had the public interest at heart and was better positioned to represent the interests of veterans than other public or private institutions.

---

56 CTA, RG2, B3, (144409) Box 116, 1917 Vol 1, item 523.
57 CTA, RG2, B3, (144409) Box 116, 1917 Vol 1, Item 544.
Later that month, local president Whitton, secretary Turley, and member A.E. Lowery presented themselves as a committee of the GWVA before the Parliamentary Committee investigating returned soldiers' complaints. All of their recommendations to the MPs seemed reasonable, as did those made by different representatives of the GWVA and other veterans' associations from various places in Ontario and the West. One of the points the three Torontonians stressed was that issuing adjusted pay to discharged men needed to speed up. There was no good reason why many waited months at home for this money and the result was that returned men became more suspicious of government and impatient with doing things 'by the book.' Despite having done everything they were suppose to do – filling in the right forms and sometimes sending more proof of their claim to Ottawa when requested – they waited while their funds dwindled and while many of them could not find work for which they felt fit. Committee members appeared to be impressed by this logic; something straightforward had larger implications in terms of the faith former soldiers had in their government. The other suggestions made by Whitton, Turley and Lowery mixed some of the proposals passed during the Winnipeg convention held the next month.58

In April the association in Toronto sent four delegates to this conference where the GWVA was formally made into a Dominion-wide institution. Many of the resolutions passed at the conference echoed the views expressed in Toronto. The gathering complained about medical boards in Canada whose decisions reduced their pensions, and recommended that only personnel who had served at the front should qualify to sit on such boards. The whole pension scale needed to be revised upwards, argued the veterans, and payments to officers and men equalized. They also argued that unless munitions workers were returned men they should be paid according to army rates, instead of the high wages currently earned. Delegates concurred that all aliens in Canada should be disfranchised and that any land owned by enemy aliens should be appropriated by the government. Aliens and Canadians fit for service who held government positions should be replaced by returned soldiers, and the head tax on Asian immigrants should be retained, though it would be better if they were simply denied the right to enter at all. To demands for jobs were added proposals for assisting veterans wishing to farm. Supposedly unused or under-used land could be made available from areas used for pasture, lands reserved for railway companies, and Indian reserves. Loans would cover start-up costs,

58 Toronto Globe: 22 March 1917, 8; 23 March 1917, 9; 24 March 1917, 12
while the land itself should be granted. As for recruitment, which had stalled the previous year, convention members agreed that the CEF needed reinforcements and if conscription was the only option than it had better be adopted.59

On the closing Saturday of the convention a public meeting was held in a church, where the GWVA's Dominion president, G.W. Purney, was given the opportunity to speak. He chose to explain to his audience, which included journalists, the goals of the new association and he 'assured those present that the members would always conduct themselves in a manner which would warrant any sympathy which the people of Canada may extend to them.'60 When other officers of the association urged city residents and Canadians everywhere to give all they could to the cause, including donations that would pay for local clubhouses for the GWVA, it was clear that good behaviour was more than an end in itself, but a means to an end. 'Veteran respectability' would garner public support, which, in turn, would help achieve the objectives of that symbol of veterans' respectability, the GWVA.

Another example of the GWVA's efforts to represent itself as respectable came in June 1917, when President Purney addressed the Parliamentary Committee investigating the complaints of returned soldiers, which had returned to Ottawa by this date. Purney finished his remarks by saying he wanted the committee to understand that the aims of the GWVA were ""worthy ones, and we trust that we shall not so conduct ourselves that the public of this country may think that we are unreasonable."" The organization would keep its ""demands within the bounds of reason, realizing that there is a tendency in some quarters possibly to go beyond that stage."" In all, the text of the three-sentence final paragraph of his speech before the committee invoked 'reason' four times.61

The first issue of the GWVA's official organ, The Veteran, was another way this association introduced itself to Canadians. By this point the association had chosen a symbol for itself, and the first issue of its magazine displayed this to readers. A stylized shield had within it the crossing bars of the Union Jack and a maple leaf, inside of which were the letters 'G.W.V.' Surmounting the shield was the imperial crown and all this was presented on a background of imperial red. The connection to the monarch, to Britain, and to Canada were

59 Manitoba Free Press, 12 April 1917, 6, 7 and 13 April 1917, 10, 12; Globe, 13 April 1917, 2
60 Manitoba Free Press, 14 April 1917, 15
61 President's Address,' The Veteran, December 1917, 21
obvious, and they seemed to stress ethnic and political acceptability. The military symbolism represented by the shield-like shape was less obvious, suggesting that the other symbols were meant to be more important. The magazine outlined the association's basic goals, stressing the country's responsibility to the dead and to the soldiers still fighting. Appearing in 1917 late in November, or early December, *The Veteran* called on voters to support Union government in the coming election and the conscription measure it had passed in August, the Military Service Act.

If encouraging support for conscription was the magazine's primary aim then a close second was its intention to present the GWVA as a broadly supported, moderate, and reasonable association. It proudly stated that its membership stood at 25,000, up from about 10,000 midway through the year.\(^{62}\) It was no less proud of its 'simple and honourable pedigree,' which was explained as a spontaneous coming together by the earliest returnees in 1915 in communities across Canada. The national organization created at Winnipeg in April 1917, claimed the magazine, provided for the co-ordination and enlargement of good works on behalf of disabled and unfortunate veterans, and their dependants, which had been a part of veterans' public role from the start. The aims of the GWVA that resulted from this coming-together were even more noble, implied the editorial content of this first issue. The GWVA would formally express the spirit of selflessness created out of the tests of war, and lead the way in 'renovating our national life.'\(^{63}\)

**Conclusion**

Little has been written about the origins of the associations Great War veterans created. Morton and Wright sketch the establishment of the GWVA at the national level and explain that it grew out of and then capitalized on the local organizing across the country that began in 1915-16.\(^{64}\) The local roots of organizations in Germany, France and Britain are also briefly

---

\(^{62}\) *The Veteran*, December 1917, 7, 15, 21  
\(^{63}\) *The Veteran*, December 1917, 7-10

\(^{64}\) Morton and Wright, *Winning the Second Battle*, 62-8
passed over by historians. The sustained attention given this topic here provides insight into the early public relationship between returned men, the public and elites that other works do not. In showing the important role that women played as facilitators for veterans wishing to institutionalize their organization it demonstrates the importance of gender relations and identity for the establishment of the veterans' movement in Canada and suggests this as a theme worthy of greater attention for studies of veterans elsewhere.

The discourse of veterans is also not the focus of histories of former First World War soldiers. An exception is William Pencak's study of the American Legion up to the Second World War, which devotes considerable space to examining the association's nationalist ideology, its public opinion campaigns and debate within the organization. Unlike the American Legion, the GWVA did not enjoy the prominent leadership and financial support that gave their southern comrades almost instantaneous legitimacy. Canadian veterans also formed their associations in the middle of the war, rather than at its conclusion, and did so partially in response to the problems mobilization generated. Analyzing the organizing work and discourse of Toronto's returned men broadens our understanding of wartime public opinion and politics, and provides a clear example of popular participation in the public sphere. As this and the remaining chapters demonstrate, local and national politics were performative and veterans were key players in the dramas staged in Toronto.

Veterans represented themselves in this sphere in a variety of ways during the war. They spoke as interviewees in the dailies, they addressed comrades, officials and the public in meetings and at rallies, the GWVA published its own official organ and veterans frequently paraded on city streets to mark different occasions. In virtually all contexts returned soldiers stressed their pedigree as patriotic, British-Canadian men. When speaking about their own needs as former servicemen they said they were dedicated to the breadwinner role and were entitled to fair treatment that would assist them re-enter that role. Especially when they spoke as members of associations they declared their respectability and adherence to constitutional norms and claimed that the public good was their guiding principle, using this to garner support and to legitimize their institutions.

66 Pencak, For God and Country.
The opinions and objectives of wartime returnees were shared by many in civilian society and the efforts of women's groups and the support of politicians stand out as examples of how civilians gave them a prominent place in home front society. While they made their own room in the public sphere, Toronto's returned soldiers also took advantage of the permissive attitude shown them by authorities. Their efforts to reinforce the CEF by recruiting and supporting conscription are the clearest examples of this pattern and are the topic of the next chapter.
Chapter 3. Patriotic Men

In 1917 in Canada the question of instituting a compulsory military draft was the central issue in a broader public debate about managing and intensifying the war effort. Debate took place within the context of an imperfectly informed but growing awareness that the Allied position was precarious. The success of the Canadian Corps that year, at Vimy Ridge in April and the less definitive victory at Passchendaele that ended late in the year, went against a worrying trend.

In March 1917 Germany secretly drew back its frontlines to better positions, making the Allies' chances of breaking through less likely. On the heels of a failed offensive that followed this strategic move much of France's army suffered a crisis of discipline in the summer of 1917. It was not reported on, but weakened the Allies' position nonetheless.¹ Russia's Tsarist regime collapsed in March and the country's war effort continued to weaken despite the efforts of a provisional government. In November the Bolsheviks took control and by the end of the year arranged a ceasefire with Germany that signaled the end of the Russian war effort.² This permitted Germany to move large numbers of troops to the Western Front and it made the revolutionary Soviet government an enemy of the Allies. German and Austrian forces broke through the Italian front at Caporetto in October, forcing a massive retreat. Though the advance was halted in November the break-through nearly precipitated a general collapse of the Italian war effort. Germany's commencement of unrestricted U-boat attacks on ships supplying Britain early in 1917 was another reason for concern. This new offensive finally brought the United States into the war in April 1917, which was good news for the Allies, but opinion was not as optimistic as it might have been since it became clear it would take the US as long as a year to mobilize troops for action in France. The possibility that the war would be lost seemed more real to Torontonians as the year wore on.

² The Treaty of Brest-Litovsk the two signed in March 1918 formalized the peace.
Chapter 3

The gloomy outlook in Europe was compounded domestically by the realization that recruitment had permanently stagnated. Though many still argued that if recruiting were done intelligently it would find the volunteers needed, there were more who admitted that voluntarism had run its course and compulsion was necessary. This was Prime Minister Borden's conclusion in the Spring of the year, after being enlightened about the military situation while attending meetings of the Imperial War Cabinet in London. The crisis that resulted from this decision has received considerable scholarly attention. Granatstein and Hitsman's 1977 book, Broken Promises, remains the most in-depth study of the crisis and many other works consider the question of conscription from one perspective or another.3

This chapter deals with the protracted, bitter, national crisis that came to a head in the federal election of December 1917, from the point of view of returned soldiers in Toronto. Veterans in Toronto argued for a total commitment to victory, employed a variety of methods to communicate their message and supported constraining individual freedom as well as

limiting democracy and public debate in the interest of this commitment. Veterans worked in a variety of contexts, acting as recruiters, as enforcers of conscription and as election candidates and campaigners. In fighting the war on the home front in these ways, a significant number of returned soldiers stressed their identity as patriotic men, emphasizing the warrior element of their patriotic masculinity. Pronouncements in public settings and in newspapers forcefully represented their masculinity and patriotism, and they were attempts to convince un-enlisted Toronto men to adopt this identity themselves. Their attitudes garnered widespread attention, were reflected in the discourse of many leading public figures, and as a symbol of the reasons to 'carry on' the fight Unionist candidates in the election that ended the year sought their endorsement. Though Toronto veterans were united in support of conscription, the question of representation divided them, causing conflict over whether to endorse election candidates and which pro-conscription candidates most deserved their support.

Recruiting
Veterans expressed interest in seeing Canada's war effort improved as soon as they arrived home. For example, Private Richard Scarboro had been home only one day in 1915 when he delivered his recruitment message. He was visited by a reporter at his family's home, where he was recuperating from shell shock, and after describing some of his experiences, he said he wanted to say something on behalf of his Toronto comrades at the front. They had told him to explain to the boys at home that "they are all needed out here, and if they don't come now they will have to come later." He was surprised upon returning at "the number of well-dressed young men on the streets," and thought, "Little do they realize the struggle that the Empire has on its hands and the scenes in Belgium and France. I guess it will take another battle like St. Julien to wake them up." Once again, a returned soldier's message to the public was rooted in his feeling of connection to the men who were still overseas.

Returned soldiers acted in an official capacity as recruiters as well, as recruiting Sergeants and as speakers at recruitment and patriotic meetings across the city and across the country. An important example was the part they played in the 'great patriotic meeting' held at

---

4 *Star*, 4 October 1915, 4
5 For examples of returned soldiers acting as recruiters in Toronto and elsewhere see: Miller, *Our Glory and Our Grief*, 72-3; Rutherford, *Hometown Horizons*, 79-80, 234.
Massey Hall in the evening of 20 July 1915, held to promote interest in the war, encourage enlistment, and inaugurate a more local approach to recruitment. Leading figures from the military, churches, government, and business 'were all there urging by their presence and their part in the proceedings the need for Canada to make good her promises, and put lip loyalty into action.' Soldiers acted as ushers, conducting men to the ground floor, and women to the balconies. A military band played on stage. Flags and recruiting posters hung everywhere. Speeches were given, appeals made, patriotic songs sung, and music played inside the hall. Similar rallies were held outside Massey Hall and on the steps of City Hall. Sharing the attention of the huge crowds that attended all these events were returned soldiers. Inside Massey Hall that evening, one 'Private Nurse' strolled to the front of the stage 'non-chalantly chewing gum. "We've got a big job on over there," said he. "But there's some fun, too. We've got a lot of baseballs, and we need pitchers."' The crowd laughed and cheered at this, before listening to two other returned-soldiers, who also spoke about the fun part of soldiering life. One of them said that he had put on weight thanks to the army diet and fresh air.

A rally in Earlscourt in August 1915 was another example of returned soldiers acting as recruiters. A former Princess Pat, Private Frank Porter, convinced a dozen men to enlist at this meeting. He was described as 'hero and man,' and though his legs were 'half paralyzed' he stood erect as he could, speaking to the crowd of about 2,000 'with such a telepathic force that [it] made the blood of all present leap in their veins.' This article implied that the veteran's affect on the crowd was made more powerful by his disability. Disability was proof of the man's devotion to the cause and his empassioned speaking in spite of his disablement was proof of his continued high degree of patriotic masculinity. Another survivor of Second Ypres tried to rouse interest in enlisting at an outdoor, Earlscourt neighbourhood rally in May 1916. Framing his recruitment call in national and local terms, Sergeant-Major Arthur told his audience that Canadians were the best fighters over there, and that many men from their district were among them. One of the best known returned soldier recruiters was a Sergeant E.W. Niemeyer, who traveled across the country looking for more recruits. He was an English-born immigrant to the Prairies some five years earlier, a veteran of the South Africa War, and member of an Alberta regiment in the first contingent. By the time he reached Toronto, the

---

6 Telegram, 21 July 1915, 5; Star, 21 July 1915, 3
7 Star, 13 August 1915, 5
8 Telegram, 1 May 1916, 6
"Voice of the Great West" or the "Pledger from the Prairies" was known for badgering and shaming men into volunteering.  

Straightforward patriotic appeals were commonly made by recruiters, while Niemeyer's manipulation of manly ideals of bravery and duty was an approach that appears to have increased as recruitment sagged in 1916. That recruiters were constantly at work in the city is shown by the many newspaper accounts of their work, some of which told of individuals who resented being singled out. William Simmons, a former Royal Navy sailor and veteran of the South African War, was one who complained sharply of recruiters who called him "a slacker and a yellow dog," adding that the insult was all the worse because it was delivered "in the presence of my wife." That Simmons was ready, as he put it, "to shed my last drop of blood for my King and Country," was proven by the fact that he had offered himself for naval service in Halifax at the start of the war and tried to sign up in Toronto early in 1915, failing on both occasions to be accepted. Other men in Toronto faced accusatory women who demanded to

---

9 Telegram, 25 May 1916, 8. For examples of his style see: Star 2, 5, and 13 June 1916, page 17, 2, and 3 respectively.


11 Star, 28 January 1917, 19
know why they had not signed up and pinned them with white feathers to mark them as cowards.\textsuperscript{12}

By the second half of 1916 the calls for conscription were increasing, and returned soldiers in Toronto were among those who argued it was the only way to obtain the men necessary to support the war effort. A recently returned Lieutenant was one of many returned men who spoke in favour of conscription at a Massey Hall recruiting meeting for the 255\textsuperscript{th} Queen's Own Battalion in December 1916. The Lieutenant told the crowd that men were needed overseas because units were under-strength. He also said that working in munitions factories amounted to shirking one's duty for women should be doing this work, as they were in England. At the meeting's end the audience filed out of the theatre's doors past more returned soldiers who collected the 'Give Us His Name Cards' that people in the audience completed during the meeting. The men identified on these cards would be visited at their homes by recruiters in the following days.\textsuperscript{13}

By this date the Great War Veterans' Association (GWVA) had been organized in the city and had begun looking for new strategies to encourage enlistment and fulfill its stated goal of helping to win the war. In December 1916 a deputation representing 265 veterans met with the commander of the Military District, Major-General Logie, and the new Militia Minister and MP for Toronto East, Edward Kemp, who was in the city at the time. The delegates proposed the formation of a veterans' battalion commanded by an officer who had seen frontline service. Logie thought a double company attached to a regiment was a better idea, and this was the plan that was followed when recruitment for the GWVA Overseas Company, part of the 109\textsuperscript{th} Battalion under the command of Lieutenant-Colonel W.S. Dinnick, began late in February 1917.\textsuperscript{14}

This appeal for recruits attracted mainly former soldiers fit largely for base duties, and was among the last-ditch efforts in the country to find volunteers. Granatstein has recently argued that Canada's political leadership hoped that recruitment efforts during this late stage

\textsuperscript{12} For a retrospective account of being white-feathered and the mood of Toronto in 1916 see Pierre van Paasen, \textit{Days of Our Years} (New York: The Dial Press, 1946)., 62-5.

\textsuperscript{13} \textit{Star} 11 December, 1916, 6

\textsuperscript{14} \textit{Globe}, 9 Dec. 1916, 10. Ideally a company consisted of 250 soldiers and a battalion of 1,000. The proposal, therefore, was to raise 500 men. In practice battalions were often smaller than the ideal and Logie may have imagined fewer than 500 enlistees for the double company.
would confirm for public opinion that volunteer enlistment really was at a dead end so that the adoption of conscription would appear more legitimate. If nothing else, then, this particular campaign offered this kind of hope to Logie and others. Including a series of rallies and elaborate newspaper advertisement, the appeal made for volunteers for the GWVA Overseas Company was unlike any other in the city's wartime history. The campaign used various techniques to appeal to the widest audience possible and put veterans up front as spokespeople with the government and elites providing support in the background. The presence of, and speeches made by high-ranking military officials and leaders in the city and provincial governments at rallies and dinners held for the recruitment drive were symbolic evidence of the broad support authorities gave the venture. The fact that recruitment was subsidized by the city is more evidence of this, though who precisely paid for the ads is unknown. As Paul Maroney has argued and as discussion of the campaign will show, anti-modernism was among the central themes of the campaign, but neither Maroney nor any other historians have discussed the ads and the veterans' actions at length. The following analysis shows that recruiting for the company increased the public profile of the emerging GWVA in Toronto, giving it credibility. The campaign also revealed some of the veterans' deeply-rooted ideas and contributed to a wider construction of the public identity of returned men.

From a quarter to a half of a newspaper page in size, the fifteen recruiting advertisements appeared in all six of the city's daily papers between 27 February and 15 March, 1917. Each one was unique and displayed a realistic illustration (by Carlton G. Beale) of a figure or action central to the text that appeared underneath. Most assumed a male audience, though one was directed at women, calling on them to encourage their men to enlist and support those who made this decision. This ad sympathized with women left on their own during wartime, but argued that 'Unless you send your men, the civilization which shelters you and guarantees your children's freedom may fail.' The classic interpretation of women's role being

---

15 Granatstein, 'Conscription in the Great War,' 62-75 in Canada and the First World War

16 CTA, RG 2, City Executive Committee Fonds, A2, Minutes of Board of Control, (144692), Vol 34, Jan to June 1917, 497. Newspapers often printed recruitment advertisements at reduced rates or free of charge. See Keshen: Censorship and Propaganda, 42.

17 Star, 5 March 1917, 7. As already mentioned, the recruiting advertisements appeared in all six of Toronto's daily papers. Reference is made to the Star for each ad in the following
restricted to the domestic sphere is clear in this instance, while overall the major themes the ads stressed were the masculine duty to fight and a shared British heritage.

The third ad to appear is a good example of both the themes of ethnic and gender identity. Its illustration showed the Earl of Percy presenting an invitation, not to dinner or a wedding, as the ad explained, but 'TO WAR!' The long-dead earl was 'only one of the countless heroes of YOUR blood, YOUR race, YOU[R] kith and kin,' readers were told. The list of these heroes was about as inclusive as it was possible to make the idea of 'Britishness.' Not only were English heroes such as Walter Raleigh and Francis Drake mentioned, but so were past enemies of the Crown, Oliver Cromwell and Robert the Bruce, and those with Canadian connections, such Wolfe, Dollard des Ormeaux, and the Aboriginal leader Tecumseh, an ally of the British in the War of 1812. Even John A. Macdonald and George Brown were included among the past 'Kings and King-makers' whose legacy Canadian men were urged to live up to. As a number of the following ads did, this one implored men to realize the significance of the moment. 'MAN! MAN! Wake up!', it declared before asking male readers to put aside work for a moment and consider that if the 'fighting men' of the past had known that the freedoms they had won would be inherited 'by men with no fighting spirit left' they may never have 'struggled for liberty.'

The theme of class is present in these texts too. Using a language that commonly mixed a sympathetic, person-to-person approach with unmistakable urgency, it is clear that the major discussion because they were first encountered in this paper and because it is available online in a searchable format (as is the Globe).

18 Each ad was numbered.
19 There is no clue as to which Percy in English history the ad referred, or whether the figure was meant to be a generic aristocrat. There were two recent Earls of Percy. One was Henry George Percy (1846-1918), who was Earl of Percy until he became Duke of Northumberland in 1899. In that year his son, Henry Algernon George Percy (1871-1909), became Earl of Percy. He had been known as Lord Warkworth until that year and was a Conservative MP from 1895 to 1909 known for his expertise on Ottoman Turkey. See: Marc Brodie, 'Henry Algernon George Percy (1871-1909),' Oxford Dictionary of National Biography, http://www.oxforddnb.com.myaccess.library.utoronto.ca/view/article/35474?docPos_3, (Accessed 14 December 2007).
20 Star, 1 March 1917, 14
target of the ads were middle-class men, and certainly men with white-collar occupations. One ad began this way: 'It's nice to have Victory for breakfast. Read about it on the way to the office! It's nice to have a victory for lunch... Gives the lunch-room cronies new appetites for old dishes... Of course, Victory for dinner is not so satisfactory. Too late in the day...'

Reference to 'the office' and to a morning paper read at breakfast make this sound distinctly like a middle-class man's day. Working-class men tended to leave earlier and finish their day with an evening paper after dinner. The ad shifted gears abruptly after this passage to demand that men connected to the war in this distant fashion stop talking about the war and join the fight. 'We sneer at Uncle Sam,' who had yet to enter the war, but the ad wondered whether Canadians were 'any better? Are we fighting – or talking?'

Two days later a new ad related how a man 'came into this office a few days ago' and enthusiastically congratulated those present on "Bully advertising! A great recruiting campaign – but you're over their heads!" The rest of the ad made it clear that the recruiters did not think they were asking 'only the poor [...] to enlist.' They were speaking also to men 'who can spell Archimedes' and 'know who he was.'

You comfortable fellows with nice homes and ambitions –

YOU – are quite as much open to this appeal as the man whose only stake in life is boarding-house and dinner pail.

The final four advertisements most clearly spoke to a white-collared audience. One told the story of a bank employee of nine years who left to enlist, and another compared a book-keeper's dedication to his work to the commitment soldiers had made overseas. In both cases the tone and content of the pieces were meant to inspire enlistment. The final one called on employers to release men for service by encouraging them to go, promising them some of their pay while they served and their position back when they returned. The advertisement directed at salesmen explained why they, and all able-bodied men, needed to enlist: because 'it is right' and because 'there's a part of your nature that wants to be let out! The HEROIC side!'

Of all the arguments used, it was the point about men's inner nature that was most compelling for the author's of this paper campaign. At work in many of the ads was the idea that inside every man was a hero that wartime service would reveal, and a number of the ads

---

21 *Star*, 6 March 1917, 6

22 *Star*, 8 March 1917, 6. Archimedes, the ancient Greek thinker and inventor, featured in the first ad.

23 See: *Star*, 12-15 March 1917, pages 6, 6, 4, and 8 respectively.
implied that there was romance and adventure at the heart of soldiering. The fourth ad expressed this most clearly when it urged men to let in "THE SPIRIT OF ADVENTURE!", a spirit men had known as boys when they stole apples or 'played "hookey" and went fishing for chub in the Don,' the river running through the city. The following day's ad suggested how keenly felt this idea was among the veterans who had a part in directing this campaign. Describing a scene from a frontline engagement with the enemy, it told readers that if they had experienced combat they would understand veterans' views. Using idiomatic language that none of the other ads used, the text built to a climax, asking readers whether they would have answered the call to reinforce the platoon holding a position against a more numerous enemy that closed in from three sides. 'G-- --! YOU'D 'A COME!', was the veterans' answer. 'And if you HAD come?' was the next question. 'Well – that's the difference. Nothing would ever have been the same to you again. Nothing IS the same to us who are back. We've tasted a drink you've never tasted – a thrill (as we swung over the edge of that parapet) for which you, if you'd had it, wouldn't have exchanged a year's misery!' For the returned soldiers responsible for this message, war did produce the tremendous positive emotion that stories and pictures of battlefield gallantry tried to evoke. The difference between their experience and romantic representations of battlefield courage was that the veterans knew that it was a feeling produced by actions that bore little resemblance to the stereotypes of heroic warriors, and was not an individualized phenomenon. The fighting the ad described was portrayed as 'desperate,' rather than as highly skilled or gallant, representations that tended to imply something positive aesthetically. And the soldier who signalled for help did not stand steely-eyed and wave his comrades out of their trench, but leaned 'against a stump of a tree wig-waggin' back for reinforcements with his one good arm...' Finally, it was a group of soldiers who responded to the wounded man's call and the fact that it was a collective action rather than the impressive effort of an individual did not make it unheroic.

It was the emotion or whatever spirit that drove soldiers to act in such moments that was important, argued the veterans, and many of the ads in this campaign implied that this spirit could be sparked in any man. Soldiers returned from the front had learned that background, physique or personality were not predictors of the courage a soldier might display when pressed

---

24 Star, 2 March 1917, 8
25 Star, 3 March 1917, 8
by extreme circumstances. The veterans knew that book-keepers could be good soldiers and they wanted them overseas to reinforce their comrades. They tried to convince them to go by telling them that as soldiers they would encounter a part of themselves that lay hidden in their adult lives, and that the experience was worth it. Part of the conclusion of the fifth ad read: 'We say to you men of Toronto: We've been in the army. We know its drudgery. We know it's hard work – but we never knew fellowship, brotherhood, comradeship – and LIFE – till we enlisted.'

The work of actually recruiting multiplied the expressions of warrior masculinity and repeated themes linked to anti-modernism. The recruitment campaign was ceremonially kick-started at a Sunday church service at St Paul's Anglican Church on 25 February, two days before the appearance of the first recruitment ad. In attendance was the Governor General and Lieutenant Governor, the Premier, his Cabinet and the Leader of the Opposition, along with Archdeacon Cody, who presided. More than 1,000 veterans listened to the service. They would have their chance to speak in the coming weeks. The men paraded from their newly acquired clubhouse to the church, accompanied by members of the 109th and its band. When the service was over they marched out, through the downtown, and to the Armouries. The next evening the GWVA gathered in a hall to organize the campaign. Two hundred in the


27 *Star*, 3 March 1917, 8

28 *Globe*, 26 February 1917, 6

29 *Star*, 23 February 1917, 10; *Star*, 27 February 1917, 10; *Globe*, 24 February 1917, 6
audience volunteered to help and in his speech to them, Mayor Church gave the city's sanction to the recruiting drive and the GWVA.30

The atmosphere of the meeting was hazy with cigarette smoke and periodically the men sang 'rollicking songs of the trenches or the march.' Speeches by the veterans were 'short, sharp,' and 'impulsive,' according to the reporter, and the audience responded with cheers and 'lusty shouting.' GWVA secretary Turley's speech was longer than the others. He told stories of transcending bravery from the first year of the war, "those happy days when the Germans were thick and shooting was good!" His war stories were connected to his advice about how to appeal for recruits; telling their war stories to the un-enlisted veterans could convince them that glory really was won on the battlefield and win more recruits for the CEF. He then made his own appeal, this one for help in the coming recruitment drive. "I'm sick of these men who say we're going to win the war if all our neighbors' sons have to go," he said. "I'm sick of this petty quibbling, this dollar disease. I want to get back with the old gang where men are real men. How many would go with me if they were fit?" Practically everyone, reported the article, jumped to his feet, or clambered out of his chair and stood with crutches. There were thirty, in the end, who volunteered to re-enlist.31

The next day about 100 veterans recruited from the steps of City Hall, plain evidence that the municipality endorsed the formation of the veterans' company.32 Former Sergeant-Major, and current GWVA member, A.E. Lowery spoke to the crowd of a couple of hundred, seemingly all men. He asked them whether they were "going to face the issue" and do their "duty as men." He made it clear to them that he and his comrades had. "We have been shot to pieces, yet about a dozen of the returned soldiers went to the Armories this morning and enlisted again. We are merely asking you to do what we are not afraid to do a second time. Men, rally to the call! You have had crippled relatives come back to you. You have relatives in the war. Are these sacrifices going to be in vain? We can't tell you your duty if you don't see it." Lowery moved on to argue that men working on munitions were not doing their duty.

30 Star, 27 February 1917, 10
31 Star, 27 February 1917, 10; Globe, 27 February 1917, 6
32 Apart from the symbolism of the site, use of city property had to be authorized by the Board of Control, usually on the recommendation of relevant department heads. This was precisely how the board granted various groups the right to recruit in front of City Hall up to the announcement of conscription.
This was work that women were employed at in Britain and a pattern that should be followed in Canada. If his audience did not already know it, he speculated about how uncomfortable it was for 'fit' men in the city at the present time to ride street cars, go to the theatre, or be looked at by a woman. Everyone, Lowery was implying, expected him to enlist. Finally, he assured his listeners that the GWVA guaranteed, by some implied influence that it had, that dependents of recruits would receive the support payments they deserved. Since this was guaranteed, Lowery felt he and his comrades had a right to ask them to sign up and replace a fallen soldier.33

On the evening of 6 March returned soldiers participating in the recruitment drive were treated to a dinner at the Cafe Royal. Ontario Justice Sir William Mulock presided, and attending were two other provincial officials, the Treasurer T.W. McGarry and McPherson of the Soldiers' Aid Commission.34 General Logie was among the speakers who told the 400 men at the dinner that the time for conscription had come and its introduction was expected soon. A few of the city's Controllers were there and the Mayor joined them after the dinner, receiving a warm and familiar welcome from the soldiers, who ushered him towards the head table, taking his winter coat, hat and scarf as he went. They sang, "Here Comes the King" when he reached the front, and cheered him. The Mayor proved their favour well-placed when he told the gathering he thought government, meaning Ottawa, was not doing enough for returned soldiers, and that it should give jobs to more of them. GWVA secretary Turley and then president Whitton followed, and it was likely they who asked for volunteers for that night's recruiting 'raid' on a factory.35

About 100 volunteers mustered at the Armouries of the 109th after the dinner and at midnight they fell in at the office of a factory, counting off into parties that went to different parts of the complex. "As the hoarse factory whistle blew at midnight, the machines became quiet, and the toilers who worked at them gathered in groups for a half hour lunch time, and the

33 Star, 27 February 1917, 12
34 A former Minister under Laurier, Mulock was closely tied to the Liberal party and his appointment was made by the federal government (Robert E. Babe, 'Mulock, Sir William,' The Canadian Encyclopedia, online at: www.thecanadianencyclopedia.com/indexcf.?PgNm+TCE&Params+A1ARTA00005509, (Accessed 14 December 2007). McGarry and McPherson were Conservative members of the provincial government under Hearst.
35 Globe, 6 March 1917, 10; Star, 6 March 1917, 2
men sallied forth." Turley was among a few veterans who spoke to workers who ate at tables, telling them that munitions work was no longer an acceptable alternative to enlistment. "Intelligent women, returned soldiers, and men who are unfit to fight, can do your work, skilled tool-makers excepted." The shift-workers continued their meals and made no reply to the recruiters. "Down through the dim factory half-light and the hundreds of belts and machines and another meeting was in progress. Figures in khaki moved among the beds of shells, half indistinct in the haze of dust-laden air, making their personal call to the wage-earners." Though the veterans spoke to the workers personally in this part of the plant, and at least some of them smiled and chatted with the workers, the results were the same. "Then again, the hoarse whistle, the belts flapped into motion, the machines clattered and the rattle and jar of shop called the toilers back to the second lap of the thirteen-hour shift until after daybreak." The reporter's account ended with the news that many of the 280 night-shift and over 400 daytime workers in the munitions factory were 'foreigners – Russians, French-Canadians, and others.'

Seen in retrospect, the observation is a telling comment on the growing antipathy of Anglo-Canadians towards not only non-British immigrants, but to French-Canadians. Not for the first or last time would the press count roughly a quarter of the country's population, virtually all of which was Canadian-born, as 'foreign.' As the pressure to enforce conscription built, the Liberal press in Toronto increasingly represented all of French Canada (which in Toronto newspapers was almost always synonymous with the province of Quebec) as being opposed to the war. Earlier in the war, the Liberal dailies the *Globe* and especially the *Star* were sympathetic towards supporters of federal Liberal leader of the Opposition, Wilfrid Laurier, and to the cause of bi-cultural co-operation. They downplayed the lack of enthusiasm for the war in Quebec and were respectful of Laurier's political approach to solving the dilemma the war caused for him and his national party, which relied on seats in Quebec. That sympathy, which did not exist at the offices of the Tory papers, gave way in the polarizing atmosphere of 1917, the year of the conscription crisis.

The novel and unsuccessful approach to recruitment represented by the GWVA Overseas Company advertisements gave way too, and officially, so did 'raiding' for recruits by GWVA members. Perhaps veterans no longer wished to partake in recruiting raids, but the imminence of the compulsory draft was a political reason for stopping too. The failure of the

---

36 *Star*, 6 March 1917, 2
final national effort to obtain recruits, the drive to find men for the Canadian Defence Force which was supposed to free up soldiers on duty in Canada for overseas service, was for government the incontrovertible evidence it needed to say definitively that voluntarism could no longer be relied upon.37 Prime Minister Borden announced to Canadians on 18 May 1917 that his government would move ahead with conscription, and the Military Service Act was introduced to the House on 11 June. Debate on the bill continued until it passed on 24 July, becoming law on 29 August.38

Enforcing
Veterans warmly welcomed Borden's adoption of conscription as his policy. Two days after the Prime Minister announced that the 326,000 men in the CEF would receive drafted reinforcements, W.D. McPherson of the provincial Soldiers' Aid Commission was officially welcoming a group of returning men at the Spadina Military Hospital. Though they had no doubt heard the news McPherson repeated the announcement to the men and they cheered. Newspaper readers learned that other groups of returning soldiers elsewhere in the city celebrated the news as well.39 Evidence from the remainder of the year would show that a majority of Torontonians supported the compulsory draft. This may have been true of English Canada in general and the support given the conscription law (the Military Service Act, or MSA) Borden's government introduced to Parliament in June certainly received a large majority from English-Canadian voters at the end of the year. It was not the case in Quebec, where French-Canadians viewed the measure as over-stepping the obligations of Canada towards the Empire and as an unjust infringement of Canadian liberty.

In Toronto and elsewhere, however, those who gave their consent to conscription continued to criticize the government. Torontonians shared in the tendency of Canadians to see the need to deal with the crisis in recruitment as a part of a variety of problems associated with the war effort that it was the government's duty to solve. Since Ottawa was managing the war effort it was responsible for leading the way in finding solutions to the problems that resulted

38 Granatstein and Hitsman, Broken Promises, 64-9.
39 Star: 19 May 1917, 18 and 21 May 1917, 2.
from this effort, such as demand for military manpower, but also price inflation or the allocation of labour.

Veterans agreed with this perspective, calling, for instance, on local and national officials to address the problem of profiteering, which in many people's opinion was a major cause of the price inflation Canadians were increasingly complaining about. They were involved in all the debates about how to govern the home front and manage the war effort. For instance, returned soldiers' representatives agreed with the demand, most often made by labour, that 'conscription of labour' be accompanied by 'conscription of wealth.' No doubt most Canadians agree with this position, but there was uncertainty about what conscripting wealth meant and how to do it. Government spokespeople argued that new federal taxes on business profits and on the richest personal incomes were examples of conscription of wealth.40 Others demanded a more rigorous approach, one that would cap profits at five per cent, for example, and put vital industries and services under public control. The limited intervention of government on a case by case basis to regulate industrial relations or wholesale marketing was, once again, an example used by conservative voices as evidence that Ottawa's regulatory approach was innovative and sufficient. Critics of the government found the nationalization of a number of railways into the Canadian National Railway the government announced in August 1917 more convincing evidence of good public policy and urged the government to go further.41

Though veterans engaged in debates of this sort they were less likely to qualify their support for conscription than were other groups in society. Simply put, veterans' public advocacy for conscription was unconditional. As were the most fervent home front patriots, the large majority of returned soldiers at the time insisted that the measure be put in place regardless of opposition to it and despite the government's shortcomings. The extent to which the logic of this position was followed depended on the patience and outlook of individual veterans. Many returned men felt it was their duty to enforce conscription and accused

40 It was precisely in these terms that these measures were first introduced by Finance Minister Thomas White, the day after the MSA passed Parliament. A small tax on business profits was introduced in 1916. See: Brown, Robert Laird Borden, Vol. II, 95.
authorities of permitting unpatriotic dissenters to shirk their duty and spread offensive ideas. Most GWVA leaders advocated a restrained approach to pursuing these goals. They called on returned men to pursue constitutional means to remedy both the existence of opposition to compulsion and the slow progress made towards actually drafting men into the service. Other groups of veterans chose to enforce their own views roughly on the streets and in workplaces.

The most dramatic example of this began the evening of 3 June when 500 veterans marched to the Labour Temple to oppose an anti-conscription meeting organized by socialists. Led by Lowery, and '[w]earing their wounds like stars, they marched like men who had some serious business to perform or as they did when they sallied forth against the Hun in No Man's Land.' The meetings' organizers knew the soldiers were coming and did not object to their presence, saying afterwards they were welcome to debate with speakers. By 8:00 many of the former soldiers were in seats among the men and women of various nationalities, according to the journalist, who were already there. The vocal among the veterans demanded to know where Simpson and Rigg were, two local representatives of labour who were moderate socialists of the British Labour Party variety. The meeting's chair, partly to pass the time as everyone waited for more of the evening's featured speakers to arrive, asked the 'Finnish band' to play the 'Marseillaise,' which it did. At least some returned soldiers cheered the anthem, but then a group of about fifty declared that 'God Save the King' be played instead, and at this the band stopped. The veterans sang their anthem and told everyone to join in. When they finished they cheered and again demanded Simpson and Rigg, and then someone shouted, "Now get out of here."'

'The scene that followed beggars description,' reported the Telegram. 'Seats were knocked down and tables went spinning about the room. Everybody was shouting and fists filled the air. Some of the Socialists were handled roughly. All were making for the several exists, women screaming, children crying and men shouting.' Those on the stage escaped out the back. Those in the hall were chased out the front by the returned soldiers who struck at men, but seem to have spared women and children. All spilled into Church Street where a group of policemen under Inspector Robert Geddes waited and did not intervene as the assaulted meeting attendees fled. The police and former soldiers avoided each other, the

42 Telegram, 4 June, 1917, 11
43 Telegram, 4 June, 1917, 11. These events are remembered by a witness: van Paasen, Days of Our Years., 63.
returned men forming up under Lowery and marching away, while the police moved to bar the Labor Temple's doors to prevent any further meeting, something 'foreign-looking men' insisted they be allowed to do. Carried by the crowd that was forming outside, news that the socialists were trying to resume their meeting reached the column of returned men, causing it to reverse its course. The reporter found it remarkable how quickly the men with crutches moved back to the scene.  

Lowery was up the steps of the building first, announcing to the crowd that there would be no meeting. They sang the national anthem once more, got a 'foreigner' to take his hat off while they did so, and then headed to the steps of City Hall, the familiar location of recruitment meetings since the start of the war, a site of unimpeachable loyalism. A few of the veterans spoke to a crowd assembled to listen to conscription speeches, telling them they had broken up the last anti-conscription meeting any socialists would be holding in the city. "We fought in France, and we are able to do some fighting yet," said Sergeant-Major Lowery, "and we want the citizens of Toronto to stand behind us."  

Descriptions of the actions of these groups of returned soldiers on 3 June clearly reveal that though talking tough and acting rough, these men were not acting spontaneously or wildly. They marched in columns as they had while serving in their platoons, companies and battalions, and followed the direction, if not orders, of a leader, GWVA member ex-Sergeant Lowery. They had a clear goal and planned their activities in response to the news of the anti-conscription meeting, which is similar to the organized nature of the March 'recruitment raid' described above and, to a lesser extent, the 'alien hunting' that took place in April described in the previous chapter. The attitude of police and public officials to the breaking-up of the anti-conscription meeting was similar to their reaction to 'alien hunting' of earlier in the year. It seemed to be more than tolerated. Perhaps officials were largely indifferent to the welfare of 'foreigners,' but perhaps their inaction signaled consent. In any case, there was no attempt to provide a police guard at the Labour Temple door, or by police at the scene, who also did not try stop the veterans from driving people from the hall or apprehend them for their actions afterwards.

Press coverage of the Labour Temple confrontation and reaction from local socialists demonstrated media support for the veterans' objectives, if not their rough methods. All six

44 Telegram, 4 June, 1917, 11
45 Telegram, 4 June, 1917, 11
Toronto dailies strongly supported conscription and likely shared the concern of Borden and his colleagues that the opposition to the policy that was spread unevenly across the country would organize and block implementation of the measure. Raising awareness about the activities of anti-conscriptionists seems to have been part of a strategy to organize in support of conscription to ensure its implementation. The Win-the-War movement and campaign for Union government in 1917 are examples of this kind of organizing and the fact that the arguments made against the military draft were rarely reported on in Toronto is more evidence. Unlike the attention given to the arguments of veterans in favour of conscription, the views of anti-conscription socialists in Toronto or elsewhere were only rarely represented in Toronto papers, and the same was true of the views of nationaliste speakers in Quebec. The campaigns against conscription were newsworthy, especially the one in Quebec since enormous crowds attended the speeches by leaders such as Armand Lavergne, but the case opponents made against the draft was not. The *Star* report on the Social Democratic Party of Canada meeting held two days after the Labour Temple riot told readers the socialists protested the suppression of free speech and assembly perpetrated by the veterans and that they accused the state of being complicit in this. It said nothing, however, about why socialists opposed conscription.⁴⁶

The actions taken by returned soldiers in early June 1917 helped suppress opposition to conscription in Toronto. Two days after the assault at the Labour Temple around 200 returned soldiers gathered in Queen's Park to prevent an anti-conscription meeting that did not materialize. The men therefore marched to the Labour Temple to see if the meeting was in progress there, collecting interested hangers-on as it went.⁴⁷ At the Temple, the caretaker and then representatives of unions told the veterans a union meeting and not an anti-conscription meeting was being held at the time. Alderman Gibbons intervened on behalf of the unionists after some of the returned men demanded to know why the men in the meeting were not in khaki. 'He said that no Socialist meetings were being held at the Temple, which belonged to organized labor, and that the Street Railway Men's Union had over 800 of its members on active service, an announcement that was cheered.' Gibbons went on to say that Jimmy Simpson was still in Ottawa, so he would not be appearing before the crowd, and that the

---

⁴⁶ *Star*, 6 June 1917, 7

⁴⁷ It was in fact taking place at 363 Spadina Avenue, as the same article (*Star*, 6 June 1917, 7) explained to readers, thereby allowing individuals or groups to visit this location of socialist and anti-conscription activity in the future.
caretaker had been instructed not to rent the hall to socialists in the future and not to allow any future anti-conscription meetings.\textsuperscript{48}

Sergeant-Major Lowery was once again in the middle of things that night and told the crowd that a deputation could ask the city's Board of Control and Trades and Labour Council to prevent any further 'seditious anti-conscription meetings in the city,' and he invited the returned men to 'the meeting of the Great War Veterans at the Y.M.C.A.' that was scheduled that evening. One hundred or so veterans attended this meeting at which some of the progress towards expanding the organization was discussed, calls for immediate conscription were repeated, and opponents of conscription, such as Jimmy Simpson and all French-Canadians, supposedly, were condemned.\textsuperscript{49} Acting on the wishes of this meeting, Secretary Turley wrote the Board of Control the next day, arguing that city government should prevent anti-conscription meetings because returned soldiers should not be relied on to prevent the passage of anti-conscription resolutions. It was bad for their health and created a negative impression of these men in the public's mind.\textsuperscript{50}

Turley had been in touch with city government already on the issue of conscription. At the end of May he wrote on behalf of his association to request a public meeting 'for the purpose of passing resolutions to strengthen the hands of Premier Borden in enforcing conscription by selective draft.' He also suggested the meeting might raise the issue of votes for aliens. 'Our comrades in Alberta and Saskatchewan,' wrote the local GWVA Secretary, 'are outnumbered on the polling lists of many places by the voters of enemy alien birth and inclination now resident in these provinces.'\textsuperscript{51} The meeting in Queen's Park that took place on 4 June satisfied the GWVA's request and was an example of the conjunction of interests on the issue of pursuing some form of compulsory military service. The Mayor was already planning

\textsuperscript{48} \textit{Star}, 6 June 1917, 7; \textit{Telegram}, 6 June 1917, 8. Gibbons was a business agent of the street-railwaymen's union.
\textsuperscript{49} \textit{Star}, 6 June 1917, 7; \textit{Telegram}, 6 June 1917, 8
\textsuperscript{50} \textit{Star}, 7 June 1917, 12. The letter does not appear in the records of the Board of Control's correspondence, but the receipt of the letter is recorded in its minutes: CTA, RG 2, City Executive Committee Fonds, A2, Minutes of Board of Control, (144692), Vol 34, Jan to June 1917, 1492.
\textsuperscript{51} CTA, RG 2, City Executive Committee Fonds, A2, Minutes of Board of Control, (144692), Vol 34, Jan to June 1917.
such a meeting when Turley's letter was dealt with by he and city Controllers, and the attendance of 10,000 people at the outdoor gathering was an indication of the high level of support for conscription in the city.52

Veterans were prominent at the meeting. GWVA delegates placed the association's standard at a corner of one of the two speakers' platforms in the park and sat in chairs provided for them near this stage. Two of these delegates helped the oldest veteran present to a seat on the stage itself – Michael Brophy had fought in the Crimean war.53 The presence of Brophy and the more recent survivors of war was one way of personalizing the debate about military service. They were examples for the public of the personal commitment men had made to fighting for the Empire, and they were reminders that conscription was not only a policy meant to win the war but a promise to these men that their sacrifices and the deaths of their comrades had not been in vain.

These were the most significant arguments made in favour of conscription, by veterans and non-veterans alike, including the Prime Minister, but there were others. Another fundamental one was expressed by James H. Dodd, who joined debate about conscription by writing a letter to the *Star* as a 'RETURNED SOLDIER.' As his comrades had as recruiters for the GWVA Overseas Company, and as many non-veterans did as well, Dodd argued that '[i]f you don't do your duty as a man should, you are then unworthy of being called a man and should be classed as accomplices of the Huns.'54

Veterans' calls for conscription were often made at GWVA meetings held to organize the 'battalion system' in late July and early August. Newspaper reports of these meetings show that the appeals speakers made to returned soldiers in the audience to become GWVA members stressed two broad points about the value of the association: it was a tool for assuring that government would give returned soldiers the programs and preferential treatment they deserved, and it was Canada's most adamant champion of the need to reinforce the units of the CEF.55 The GWVA's organizing drive coincided with the Win-the-War campaign waged by

---

52 *Telegram*, 4 June 1917, 6
53 *Telegram*, 4 June 1917, 6
54 *Star*, 8 June 1917, 21
55 The *Star* gave the local GWVA's "battalion" organizing campaign of 1917 the most coverage: 24 July, 6; 26 July, 9; 28 July, 6; 1 August, 6; 4 August, 10; 8 August, 2; 11 August, 6, 9; 16 August, 7; 17 August, 2; 5 September, 5; 25 September, 14; 3 October, 12.
pro-conscriptionists in the summer of 1917, a campaign that grew out of earlier efforts to encourage recruitment and shape public opinion in favour of a greater commitment to the war effort.\(^{56}\) Toronto lawyer and Liberal partisan John Godfrey was one of the movement's principal leaders and he chaired the proceedings of the Resolutions Committee of the Ontario Win-the-War Convention he helped to organized early in August 1917. The committee met at the King Edward Hotel, but the mass meetings of delegates that followed in the next two days were held in the Arena on Mutual Street.\(^{57}\)

The city's organized veterans were honoured participants on the convention's first full day, an indication that convention organizers courted their support and hoped their presence would attract a larger audience to 'the cause'.\(^{58}\) The returned soldiers' proud entrance suggested they wished to represent themselves as independent and capable actors in the politics of shaping public opinion. Their interventions from the convention floor left no doubt of this. According to newspapers 1,500 veterans mustered at the GWVA headquarters at 72 Carlton Street, most of them GWVA members, but some were Army and Navy Veterans. They formed up as a battalion would, with the organization's officers in positions in front of their respective sections. The formation included many with crutches. Men who could not march rode in automobiles. Crowds cheered the progress of the column towards the arena, the Union Jack and the GWVA banner leading the way.\(^{59}\) When the veterans arrived the band broke into 'O Canada' and the 3,000 or so who were already there stood to watch and honour the veterans as they marched to seats in areas reserved for them in sections flanking the central seating.

The convention supported resolutions that represented positions fleshed out and regularly discussed in public debate since Borden's May announcement that he would pursue the compulsory draft. Support was given to calls for conscription of men and wealth, for

\(^{56}\) For more on this see: R. Matthew Bray, "Fighting as an Ally": The English-Canadian Patriotic Response to the Great War,' Canadian Historical Review 61, 2 (1980), 141-168. See the Globe, 25 July 1917, 7 for a details about the upcoming convention, such as its organizers and purpose.

\(^{57}\) Star, 2 August 1917, 17

\(^{58}\) The convention began the previous evening. Dominion GWVA Secretary Norman Knight was among the speakers. See: Star, 3 August 1917, 1; Telegram, 3 August 1917, 8 and 13; Telegram, 2 August 1917, 6.

\(^{59}\) Star, 3 August 1917, 8
passing a conscription law prior to any election, and the formation of a coalition or non-partisan government. That winning the war was the priority of the convention was clearly expressed, and a resolution was passed which stated that as far as was possible all other affairs should be set aside until the war was won.\textsuperscript{60} Debate was not the purpose of the convention. Rather, as Bray has argued, it was organized to advance the cause of a non-partisan, pro-conscription Dominion government by creating a context in which clearly worded objectives would be democratically endorsed and the whole process reported on for the benefit of a wider audience.\textsuperscript{61} Though much grander, its purpose was essentially the same as the pro-conscription rally Mayor Church had organized and Turley had called for in early June.

Returned soldiers' representatives understood the convention was a form of political theatre, but they were worried that convention organizers had a hidden, Liberal political agenda. Secretary Turley expressed the veterans' concerns, which stemmed from two facts. The first was that the address of the Dominion GWVA Secretary, Norman Knight, had been cut off by the convention Chair on the opening evening. Chair Godfrey said that Knight's speech had been curtailed simply because he wished to keep to a demanding schedule. The second was that convention attendees were now dealing with a resolution about a potential upcoming election. The veterans were opposed to an election because it would delay the enabling of conscription and distract from the war effort, and Turley and his comrades seemed suspicious that the Win-the-War movement was a Liberal strategy to prepare for an upcoming election by advertising and promoting a revised platform for managing the war effort.

A number of speakers responded directly to Turley's misgivings about the authenticity of the convention, assuring him that they did not favour an election for the same basic reasons as the GWVA and others. They explained that the resolution was introduced because an election seemed inevitable.\textsuperscript{62} Most, if not all, those who attended the convention, from 'ordinary' Toronto residents to prominent leaders, understood the reasons for this.\textsuperscript{63} Laurier's

\textsuperscript{60} *Star*, 3 August 1917, 2

\textsuperscript{61} Bray, "Fighting as an Ally"; Granatstein and Hitsman, *Broken Promises*, 70-71

\textsuperscript{62} *Telegram*, 3 August 1917, 6; *Star*, 3 August 1917, 2

\textsuperscript{63} Well known figures at the convention included Newton Rowell, an ardent home front patriot and Liberal leader of the opposition in the Ontario legislature until he became a member of Borden's Union cabinet. Ontario Liberal MP Hugh Guthrie was also present and became part of Union government.
opposition as official leader of the Opposition to extending the Parliament's term any further or to enter into a coalition with Borden made an election necessary.64

The proposed resolution, therefore, called on voters to support only those candidates who fully endorsed all the win-the-war principles being laid out in the convention. Local dignitary Aemilius Jarvis took the floor to tell Turley "'that whether there is an election or not this convention is sincere and that I would send him with a guard to bring in the election."' In case anyone missed his wish that victory in a potential election be enforced by armed men, Jarvis added, "'you know, Sergt. Turley, what I mean.'" Apparently Turley did know what Jarvis meant, for he thanked Jarvis and said, "'[t]hat is the information I came here to get.'" In the end, the resolution then being debated was voted down and the convention instead expressed itself hopeful that an election would be avoided.65

Other interventions by returned soldiers that day were less constructive, but they were emphatic expressions of a win-the-war attitude and perhaps no less effective in generating support for a win-the-war platform. To calls of 'shall we have conscription?' from the speakers' stage the hundreds of veterans shouted 'yes!' When GWVA official Lieutenant Machell asked what it meant to veterans that soldiers of the First Division went eighteen months in the trenches without relief his comrades replied by yelling 'murder!' When a civilian speaker mentioned French-Canadians returned soldiers interrupted. "'Don't call them French. They're not French. They're traitors!' came in a volley of loud calls from the men who had fought side by side with the French in Flanders.' Disloyalty in French Quebec was blamed for making conscription a necessity.66

64 After talking with Borden and others on the matter in May, Laurier informed Borden of his decision to refrain from coalition on 6 June. On the same day, Laurier told Borden he would oppose an extension of the Parliament's current term. See: Brown, Robert Laird Borden, Vol. II, 89. On 17 July Borden failed to win a majority vote among Liberals for an extension of the Parliament, a condition the Prime Minister set for extending Parliament a second time (he received the support of his own party). See: Brown, Robert Laird Borden, Vol. II, 99. For more on Laurier's position see: Granatstein and Hitsman, Broken Promises, 68-69.

65 Star, 3 August 1917, 2

66 Star, 3 August 1917, 1. GWVA members attended convention proceedings the next day as well (see Star, 4 August 1917, 10.). Less attention was given the poorly attended final day of the convention that was dedicated to the women who were part of the win-the-war movement.
Returned soldiers were part of another mass meeting a few days after the Win-the-War Convention closed. It was a mass meeting of local GWVA members held as the culmination of that association's organizing drive. Held in Massey Hall, members heard reports from their officials on the progress of institutional expansion, elected a new local executive and passed more so-called win-the-war resolutions. The main ones called on government to grant the vote to soldiers in Canada and overseas, another expressed the association's intention to assist in the election overseas, and finally, that all enemy aliens be disenfranchised.  

These and other resolutions passed by pro-conscription bodies in the city and elsewhere in Canada during the Summer were all soon realized. By mid-October the Union Government of Conservatives and pro-MSA Liberals was formed and men were beginning to be called to attest for military service. Between this point and the Win-the-War conventions of early August Canadian national politics, electoral democracy and citizenship fundamentally changed. The conscription bill, the MSA, caused some of this change as it pressed Canadians into martial service for the first time under the British Crown. It also influenced change by altering the political context of the moment, forcing those who supported a vigorous war effort to take a position on this specific proposed law. Borden's failure to convince Laurier to form a coalition and the necessity of an election by the end of the year were other factors that led to sweeping political change.

Borden approached the imminent election with two basic political problems in mind. In the first place, public opinion, and his own, favoured the creation of a coalition government to implement conscription and manage the war effort until victory was achieved. Laurier's stand made a 'true' coalition impossible, but the creation of a non-partisan government was still possible if Liberals could be convinced to join Conservatives in a form of coalition, or union government. Such a move would give the MSA the maximum amount of legitimacy possible in the current situation, and it would increase the chances of electoral success. Borden sought this achievement during the prolonged Parliamentary debate over conscription in which the polarization of opinion between French Quebec and English Canada became obvious.

---

67 Star, 8 August 1917, 2

68 The formation of Union government was announced to the press on 12 October, though there were a few additions made in the following two weeks. See: Granatstein and Hitsman, Broken Promises, 73 and Brown, Robert Laird Borden, 109.

69 Brown, Robert Laird Borden, 83-110 passim
Voter support for a new government and its conscription policy was the other major problem. In addition to opposition from French-Canadians to conscription there was dissatisfaction with the government and uneasiness about conscription among farmers and industrial workers. Most worrisome for federal Conservatives was their party's record at the polls since the war began. Elections in 1915 in Manitoba, in 1916 in New Brunswick and British Columbia, and in June 1916 in Saskatchewan and Alberta had returned Liberal majorities, leaving only Ontario and Prince Edward Island with Conservative governments.70 Conservatives were, therefore, worried that though they might be able to overcome anti-conscription feelings anti-Conservative sentiments offered too stern a challenge in the upcoming election. Forming a non-partisan government would go some way towards meeting this challenge, but the stakes were too high to risk failure. Alongside this fear, the men in control of government recognized that women were among the most active home front patriots and if they were given the federal franchise large numbers of them could be counted on to cast ballots for conscription.

The course of action chosen by Borden and his Cabinet was to change the nature of the Canadian electorate with two pieces of legislation: the Military Voters' Act and the Wartime Elections Act. Introduced mid-August, the Military Voters' Act gave the vote to soldiers in Canada and overseas and allowed, under easily met conditions, these votes to be placed in any electoral district the soldier-voter chose, or, if a soldier so directed, in a district chosen by a representative of the political party for which the soldier cast his ballot.71 The Wartime Elections Act was introduced to Parliament in early September, on the heels of the passage of the Military Voters' Act and passed on 20 September. It granted the right to vote to the mothers, wives, sisters and daughters of CEF soldiers, provided they were of age. It took away the right to vote from a variety of groups: from non-British immigrants who had naturalized (and thus acquired the franchise if they were men) after 1902, from Mennonites, Doukhobors and conscientious objectors (who were all opposed to military service) and from anyone

70 Brown, Borden Vol. II, 99
71 Soldiers could mark a ballot for either the government or the opposition, and not individual candidates. Nurses in the CEF were permitted to vote as well. For discussion of the Military Voters' Act see: Brown, Borden Vol. II, 100; Granatstein and Hitsman, Broken Promises, 71; Desmond Morton, "Polling the Soldier Vote: The Overseas Campaign in the Canadian General Election of 1917," Journal of Canadian Studies 10, no. 4 (1975): 39-58.
The assumption that soldiers and their direct female relatives were pro-conscriptionists was based in knowledge of wartime public discourse, in which calls for a greater commitment to the war effort were commonly made by a variety of women's organizations, returned soldiers and, in some cases, by serving soldiers. There was also evidence for the view that non-British immigrants were anti-conscriptionists, though this opinion may have been more deeply rooted in assumptions about the dubious loyalty of non-British immigrants. The elections in Alberta and Saskatchewan in June of 1916 seemed representative of the pattern of supposed lukewarm patriotism of 'foreigners.' Districts with large proportions of naturalized Canadians in these provinces had voted for Liberals. The identification of provincial Conservatives with the federal conscription bill and the absence of votes from soldiers in the elections were also thought to have hurt Conservative fortunes. Pacifists, socialists and other labour radicals were also known opponents of compulsion, but they were small in numbers, spread across many districts and pro-conscriptionists hoped they would influence few others. No specific steps were taken against them in terms of campaign strategy.

The government faced two other major problems that it dealt with during the election campaign. Farmers were a concern to Unionists, for they represented a substantial electoral constituency and their persistent claims that they were performing essential war work while coping with a shortage of labour were impossible to refute. Dominion and provincial

---


73 Granatstein and Hitsman, *Broken Promises*, 71-2. In his study of national politics and the federal Conservative party under Borden, John English cites a study that showed that most of those who voted Conservative were 'British', meaning Anglo-Canadians whether British immigrants or Canadian-born. The assumption that non-British Canadian tended to vote Liberal seems to have been generally accurate, then. Conservatives also drew more support from urban ridings than from rural ones. See: English, *The Decline of Politics*, 53, n4.
governments identified themselves with these concerns by seeking to obtain labourers for farmers by advertising for them and seeking the cooperation of civilian bodies such as the Manufacturers' Association. Unionists dealt with the electoral threat that farmer opposition to the MSA represented in late November with the promise that farmers' sons who were needed on the farm to maintain production would be granted exemptions from service. The high number of exemptions requested under the MSA by Class One men, including by Torontonians and by both English- and French-Canadians, in October and November was another problem, for it suggested that the Unionist campaign was not going well.

Alarmed at the prospect of losing an election the government felt it had put itself in a position to win by changing the franchise, it decided a change in discursive tactics was in order. Borden and his Cabinet agreed at the end of November to target Quebec as an enemy, French-Canadians as disloyal and their leaders as traitors. Unionist campaign propaganda in December linked Laurier to the most prominent anti-conscriptionists, especially Le Devoir editor Henri Bourassa, accused Laurier of wanting to quit the war, and claimed that a Liberal victory would be celebrated in Germany. The tactic, once again, altered the context of public debate, for it cast opponents of the MSA and Union government as anti-war and made the policy of conscription seem to be the only pro-war option available.

The political achievements of the Borden-led government in Ottawa were recognized by Toronto returned soldiers in a variety of ways. Veterans cheered the news that Borden would pursue conscription and the introduction of the MSA in Parliament, but it was not until October that men began to be called to put on the uniform and none of them went overseas until the new year. Disappointed with the national government yet again, GWVA representatives in the city went to see Borden early in September to learn about the progress of the measure they had been fighting for since at least April. They were told that conscripts would be in uniform within three months.

74 For the efforts of the Ontario and federal governments and civilian bodies in the latter half of 1917 see: Miller, Our Glory and Our Grief, 141-4.
75 The promise was given the weight of an Order-in-Council on 2 December. See: Brown, Robert Laird Borden, 121.
76 Miller, Our Glory and Our Grief, 146-8
77 Granatstein and Hitsman, Broken Promises, 76-77
78 Star, 5 September 1917, 5
Passage of the Military Voters' Act in September was welcomed as well. Toronto's GWVA branches may have been additionally pleased at the news in October that their association's Dominion President (and as such an advocate of conscription and win-the-war principles) former Captain Willard Purney, had been made responsible for arranging polls for Canada's overseas soldiers and nurses.\(^79\) The Wartime Elections Act was positively received as well, though once again there was tension within the GWVA about the extent to which the freedoms of 'foreigners' should be restricted. Turley told the \textit{Star} that the law read in the House by its chief author, Arthur Meighen, matched the points contained in a resolution his association passed in May, 1917. He added that the Wartime Elections Act was actually more "drastic" than the Great War Veterans had called for, an opinion the \textit{Star} was happy to share since its editorial the day before condemned the bill as unfair.\(^80\)

Turley's opinion that the law was more drastic than necessary was not the view of many of his comrades. Discussion among GWVA members at many of the sub-branch meetings held that year was evidence of this. The resolutions agreed to at the monthly meeting of the Parkdale sub-branch of the Toronto GWVA held a few weeks after Turley's interview with the \textit{Star}, and after the Act had passed the House, called for even more thorough control of aliens. In addition to calling for the conscription of wealth, members in this neighbourhood in the city's south-west resolved that allied aliens should be deported to their country of origin if they refused to enlist in Canada, and that all alien enemies should be forced to perform nationally useful labour for the remainder of the war at military rates of pay. One speaker thought these sorts of measures would show the public that veterans were interested in winning the war as a whole, rather than, presumably, simply defeating the enemy in Europe or insisting on reinforcing the CEF.\(^81\) In other words, he felt these resolutions demonstrated the broad-mindedness of veterans. The resolutions of this meeting, in addition to others related to re-establishment were confirmed at a general meeting of Toronto members about a week later.\(^82\)

\(^79\) \textit{Star}, 5 October 1917, 20; \textit{Star}, 9 October 1917, 4. Purney's official title was Assistant Clerk of the Crown in Chancery and he oversaw the actual counting of ballots. Another GWVA official, David D. Shaw, the Financial Secretary for Toronto and Treasurer for Ontario at the time, was appointed to his staff later that month. See: \textit{Star}, 13 October 1917, 17.

\(^80\) \textit{Star}, 7 September 1917, 5, 10; \textit{Star}, 8 September 1917, 6

\(^81\) \textit{Star}, 27 September 1917, 13

\(^82\) \textit{Star}, 3 October 1917, 12
ELECTING

Ian Miller's analysis of the 1917 election in Toronto focuses on the degree of support for compulsory military service. Evidence from the election and from throughout the year amply supports his claim that the city re-committed itself to victory and that veterans were part of this move. Based on analysis of ridings fully within the City of Toronto, Miller's discussion of the election omits the federal electoral districts of York East, York West and York South. These all included parts of the City of Toronto and should be part of any assessment of the extent to which Torontonians supported Union government. In addition to this, as a social and economic entity Toronto went beyond the boundaries of the municipality with that name. Neighbourhoods such as Earslcourt straddled the city limits and, naturally, the work and residency patterns of some Torontonians saw them enter and leave the municipality daily. It makes sense, then, to include the campaigns for seats in York County Miller overlooks in his analysis. York East, West and South all overlapped into the City of Toronto while York North was nearby and received attention from journalists as well as some of Toronto's veterans.

Wherever one looks in the Toronto region, there is no doubt that the policy of conscription found mass support in 1917. However, Miller's treatment of the election minimizes the debate that took place between conscriptionists and does not fully describe the political positions veterans took during the campaign. Examining veterans' often robust, sometimes desperate, public arguments and actions within the context of debate about reinforcing their overseas comrades in 1917 provides insight into this debate, adds to historical understanding of local wartime experience and reveals more about the construction of a public veteran identity.

There were six ridings in Toronto and four in its York County suburbs contested by candidates in the election, whose date was announced at the end of October as 17 December. During October and November the two major parties settled on who would run as Union candidates and Liberals unaffiliated with the Unionists gathered support for their campaigns as well. Labourites associated with the loosely organized, and Ontario-based, Independent Labor Party also began the work of fielding candidates. Veterans did not form their own political association for the 1917 election.
No doubt there were many returned soldiers and members of the wider public who saw no need for them to do so since the formation of Union Government seemed to promise veterans the win-the-war government they wanted. When the press sought the opinion of local GWVA Secretary Turley on the formation of Union government he said the association approved of the new government 'because it is only by united action along every line that we can win this war in the quickest possible manner.'83 Many returned soldiers expressed their support for Union candidates at election rallies as individuals who shared platforms with candidates or as members of groups of supporters who spoke out from crowds. From early November until the ballots were cast there were regular examples of Toronto veterans' support for Unionists.

A dramatic example came in early December when veterans intervened in the campaign of William Lyon Mackenzie King, who ran as a Laurier Liberal in York North, which was far enough from Toronto at the time not to be a suburb.84 A group of about eighty veterans appeared at a rally in Newmarket to disrupt the speeches of Newmarket's Mayor and other King supporters. They succeeded in putting a stop to the proceedings and they threatened to disrupt future meetings as well. In a letter to Militia Minister Mewburn published in the Globe Mackenzie King wrote that it seemed as if "the interruptions were part of a deliberate organized attempt to break up the meeting by men wearing the King's uniform, who had come from the vicinity of Toronto for this express purpose."85 The Laurierite and future Prime Minister provided the license plate numbers of the ambulances he was informed had conveyed the returned soldiers to the meeting from the Davisville Hospital in North Toronto. Officials at

83 Star, 13 October 1917, 12

84 The terms 'York North' and 'York East' are used here to avoid any confusion with districts and municipalities in the Toronto area that have more recently been called 'North York' and 'East York.' For consistency's sake, this terminology will be used for other historical districts, such as 'Toronto West'. Contemporary newspapers, Parliamentary publications and speakers did not abide by a definitive designation for a district, so that 'East Toronto' and 'Toronto East' (sometimes even 'Eastern Toronto') were used for the same district. The designations of provincial and federal electoral districts, along with municipal wards, changed over time, as did their boundaries, which overlapped in many cases.

85 Globe, 5 December 1917, 9. Mewburn, a Liberal, was appointed Militia Minister in the creation of Union government.
the hospital said the allegations were exaggerated. No more than three cars, carrying thirty-six men, had made the trip and not for the purpose of disrupting the meeting, but simply to hear the speeches, assured Colonel Wilson. The officer hardly instilled confidence in his view of events when he concluded by saying that the men would be paraded the following day and told such behaviour would not be tolerated.86

In the riding of Centre Toronto later in December a Colonel Cecil Williams spoke in favour of Union government at a rally at Berkley Methodist Church which expressed Methodist support for Unionists generally and local candidate and Conservative incumbent Edmund Bristol specifically. Williams said that anyone who voted against Union was a traitor. Williams' views were repudiated by the district's Liberal candidate, city Alderman J.G. Ramsden, who supported Laurier, but also supported conscription on a fairer basis.87 Private Sidney Lambert, a returned soldier who had lost a leg and who was a Methodist minister, replied in turn at a meeting held the following evening in support of Bristol and the Unionist candidate in Toronto West, former Mayor Horation Hocken. Lambert said that contrary to Ramsden's statement the Methodist Church had every right to be interested in the election. That same evening returned soldiers heckled Ramsden as he delivered an address at a hall near Shrapnel Corners, even as he condemned profiteering and promised to find ways to get recruits for the CEF.88 Returned soldiers also acted against hecklers. Nearing the end of the campaign a returned soldier ejected a heckler of W.F. Maclean, the Unionist candidate and Conservative incumbent for South York (and publisher of the Toronto News).89

Not all veterans stood by Union government, however. Certainly returned soldiers who supported Liberal candidates were a minority, but they did exist and they occasionally made the newspapers. C.W. Kerr had the support of a veteran of Second Ypres at a rally held on the final day of the campaign. Sergeant J.J. Coffery told those who attended that large numbers of his comrades overseas were voting Liberal to punish the Borden government for its past failings. Most important to him, it seemed, was its responsibility for the Ross rifle, which had failed in

86 Globe, 5 December 1917, 9. For a copy of King's letter and the response of local military officials, who received the letter from Mewburn, see correspondence in: LAC, RG24, Vol. 4375, File 34-7-55 Vol. 3
87 Star, 12 December 1917, 19.
88 Globe, 13 December 1917, 8, 10
89 Star, 15 December 1917, 22
the hands of his comrades while he was lucky enough to be manning a machine gun as the enemy advanced on them. Kerr identified his candidacy with Liberal leader Laurier, but also with conscription. Toronto papers allowed little space for Liberals to explain their positions, contributing instead to the characterization of a non-Union vote as a vote against conscription and, therefore, against winning the war. In fact, as Miller has indicated, all Liberal candidates in Toronto, such as Ramsden in Toronto Centre and King in York North, were for a more vigorous war effort that included compulsory service of some form.

The small minority of veterans who supported Toronto Laurier Liberals were not the only ones who opposed Union candidates. In two Toronto area ridings veterans organized in support of what became known as soldier candidates, neither of which were endorsed by Union government or riding associations associated with Union government. The candidacy of these veterans created controversy and was especially problematic for the Great War Veterans' Association because these men were initially endorsed by GWVA members in the name of the association, which went against the GWVA's constitution and forced local leaders to engage in debate about politics.

As did most GWVA leaders in the country, the officials of Toronto's branch publicized their organization's independence from politics from its first appearance on the public scene. They continued to do so during the lead up to and during the election campaign. When the press sought Turley's opinion about the formation of Union government he had not only expressed the organization's approval of the coalition but had also said his association 'has made it a fundamental rule that they will not interfere with party politics.' News of acting GWVA Dominion President and Torontonian James J. Shanahan's message to members made the papers about a week later. While declaring that since it was veterans' collective duty to prosecute the war effort to the fullest members should support win-the-war candidates, Shanahan's statement also said the organization was independent of politics.

---

90 *Globe*, 17 December 1917, 9
92 See Chapter 2.
93 *Star*, 13 October 1917, 12
94 *Star*, 24 October 1917, 5. Shanahan was made President in the absence of Purney in his role as overseas election official.
This may have seemed contradictory but it was consistent with the approach of the GWVA from its inception through to its decline. It regularly criticized government and recommended its own agenda to public officials and public opinion, while also seeking the support and aid of sympathetic office holders, such as Mayor Church. Political parties and electioneering were another matter, however. GWVA leaders often seemed to share in a widespread suspicion of political parties as 'machines' whose purpose was to win favours for members and friends through patronage appointments, preferential laws or regulations and awarding of contracts. Even as the election campaign began in earnest, GWVA Dominion Secretary Norman Knight provided an example of this sort of attitude. He told a Toronto reporter late in October that "patronage" and "favourtism" had prevented the best candidates from receiving key positions in government departments responsible for veteran re-establishment. In saying this, Knight indicted the government he and his organization told its members had the policies they should support in the election.

Negative opinions about politicians and governments were on the rise during the war, not because scandals were new but because the patriotic wartime discourse of selflessness and sacrifice sharply contrasted with perceptions of the behaviour of public representatives and the system of governance. Many observers considered wartime standards of public service no better, and perhaps worse, than the low standards of pre-war years. The increasing influence of reform ideas associated with movements for women's suffrage or prohibition, the accusation that big business was profiteering from the wartime boom in the economy and the argument that incompetence and selfishness affected the war effort and cost lives overseas, also aroused criticism of established politics. The GWVA's policy of remaining 'independent' of politics reflected a discomfort with associating itself with politics, but it was also a reasonable strategy aimed at influencing politics. Dominion Secretary Knight told the Telegram that though his

---

95 *Star*, 26 October 1917, 16. For discussion of politics and corruption during this period see: John English, 'Chapter 1. Politics and corruption,' in his *The Decline of Politics*, 8-30.
association might profit from a candidate, at present it could jeopardize its future. ""As an independent unit, our balance of power will be great,"" said Knight, ""and one which can be given to any party, according to our policies, at a given time.""  

Great War Veterans' Association officials were also pushed to stress their association's non-affiliation with any political parties because of the significant number of GWVA members who clearly opposed this policy when they publicly linked the association to election candidates. Vancouver GWVA leaders announced their organization officially endorsed three local returned-soldier Union candidates in early December, largely in response to claims being made that not all veterans supported conscription. Ontario veterans debated the question of endorsing candidates from October through December, and local GWVA organizations from Kingston to Woodstock chose to do just that. In Toronto the mid-October decision of 'A' Company, the sub-branch in eastern Toronto, to endorse Major R.C. Cockburn for the riding of York East sparked the controversy over political affiliation within the organization and among veterans more widely. The Toronto GWVA executive disapproved of this move. Though they said that Cockburn was the best candidate they knew of for the area they insisted that since political ties were forbidden by the association's constitution they could not condone their comrades' action.  

Cockburn attended the meeting at which this decision was voiced and told those around him that as the GWVA's constitution forbade political association he would run ""as an independent soldier candidate who has the interests of the returned soldiers first in his heart and mind, and is determined to do his utmost so that Canada may proceed with the winning of the war in the speediest and most practical manner."" Two officials of 'A' Company were not prepared to back off and said they might fight the Toronto executive on the matter. A few days earlier Turley, who was by then Secretary of the Ontario GWVA, said that the GWVA  

---

97 Telegram, 24 October 1917, 7
98 Globe, 3 December 1917, 3
99 Telegram, 29 October 1917, 7; Globe, 3 November 1917, 3; Globe, 17 November 1917, 2; Star, 1 December 1917, 11.
100 Star, 20 October 1917, 20
101 Star, 24 October 1917, 12; Telegram, 24 October 1917, 7
102 Telegram, 24 October 1917, 7
branches in Woodstock, Kingston and Toronto's 'A' Company would be asked to withdraw the nominations they had made.103

Turley's statement to the *Globe* in the first week of November suggested what he was hoping for as a solution to the growing controversy. After re-iterating that the GWVA was non-political and that no branch could endorse a candidate he advised members to 'endorse any man who is selected by representative organizations supporting the Union Government war-winning policies, and should concentrate their efforts to secure his election.'104 It seemed that this was what veterans in eastern Toronto were doing. Late in October they formed the East York Riding Returned Soldiers' Alliance to promote Cockburn's candidacy.105 A meeting of the Toronto executive attended by close to 200 GWVA members the day after Turley's statement showed that the way was not yet clear for a resolution, however. In addition to dealing with membership, finances and the branch's adjustment work on behalf of veterans, the report of the executive expressed support for the policy of political non-alignment and claimed the association's policies had the support of most members and 'the endorsation of the civilians as a whole.' A number of members responded with applause but R.J. Roberts, head of 'A' Company, did not. Rising, he said: "Do you think the boys in Flanders would applaud that?"... "No, they would favour sending a representative to Parliament, and, in my opinion, any comrade has a right to nominate his own candidate."106 A general argument followed in which at least one veteran called on another to settle their dispute outside. Turley ended the chaos by promising to have a special committee investigate the issue and, if necessary, a general meeting on the matter.107

---

103 *Telegram*, 20 October 1917, 7. According to the *Telegram* (7 November 1917, 6), Turley resigned as Secretary of the Toronto branch on 6 November. He appears already to have assumed the role of provincial Secretary by that date. He may technically have been Acting-Secretary of one or the other arms of the GWVA for parts of October and November 1917. James C. O'Connor was selected as secretary of the Toronto branch on 22 November (*Globe*, 23 November 1917, 8).

104 *Globe*, 6 November 1917, 9

105 *Star*, 31 October 1917, 12

106 *Telegram*, 7 November 1917, 6

107 *Telegram*, 7 November 1917, 6; *Star*, 7 November 1917, 8
By the latter part of November, GWVA members had endorsed another soldier candidate, Major Carson McCormack for the riding of Parkdale, a south-western district within the city limits. The executive of the Toronto GWVA therefore had to consider the candidacy of McCormack and Cockburn when it met later that month to review its policy regarding political endorsement. Given the disorderly and abusive nature of the Toronto executive's meeting early in November (and of others) it was not surprising that the body chose not to refer the question to the general membership. What is more extraordinary is that it did so at a meeting closed to the press, highly unusual for the GWVA and indicative of how sensitive the executive considered the matter. The report of the meeting released to the press included the resolution of the executive that the Toronto branch endorsed Cockburn for East York and McCormack for Parkdale, a decision limited to the Toronto branch only. The resolution also implied that this was in line with the policy of the GWVA in general, for it stated that the association backed win-the-war candidates supporting the Union platform, providing the candidate also supports "legislation favorable to returned soldiers, the dependents of soldiers on active service, and the dependents of those who have died on active service." In cases where more than one candidate in a district championed these policies then the association supported the one who was "himself a returned soldier."108 Asked about the change a few days later Turley seemed reticent about endorsing candidates, but told the Star that it was not done for political reasons but to help win the war.109

However much the statement resembled the GWVA's general stance on the election, the resolution clearly modified the local's official policy. Just as clearly, the modification was done to more accurately reflect the views of Toronto veterans. Though as Miller has said, GWVA members, and returned soldiers more broadly, were the 'most ardent supporters of the conscriptionist cause,' they were generally not enamoured of Borden and his Union government.110 Returned soldiers and other Canadians identified Union government with a poor record by its Conservative predecessor of managing the war effort and providing for veteran re-establishment. Nor were veterans necessarily entirely happy with the form of conscription the Prime Minister had put into force by mid-October. Examples appeared daily in the papers during the election campaign that many returned soldiers felt their interests would be

108 Globe, 23 November 1917, 8; Star, 23 November 1917, 19
109 Star, 26 November 1917, 12
110 Miller, Our Glory and Our Grief, 152
best served by soldier candidates not associated with Union government but willing to support its win-the-war measures in Parliament. Cockburn and his supporters in eastern Toronto provided some of the clearest examples of what these interests were besides conscription and winning the war.

At the GWVA sub-branch meeting that first endorsed Cockburn's candidacy, one of the resolutions that was passed called on the government to take over the Patriotic Fund, which provided soldiers' dependents with support payments. Such demands were made throughout Canada, and in the north-western part of Toronto the Earls court branch was especially adamant that the organization be brought under public control. The Canadian Patriotic Fund that operated during the First World War was modeled on earlier versions established in Canada during past wars, on British precedents and grew out of the still extant institution established during the South African War. Imbued with the Victorian philanthropic ethics of less eligibility and self-improvement it was a private institution that canvassed for subscriptions, which Canadians gave in large quantities.

The Patriotic Fund's private character and independence from government was only formal, for it was inextricably tied to public administration at all levels. The head of the fund was government MP Herbert Ames, a wealthy, reform-minded Montrealer. The members of its regional and local committees were elites who influenced government or were themselves elected representatives. More importantly, it was subsidized by Ottawa and the provinces, as well as by municipalities, who typically publicized their contributions to funding drives as proof of local patriotism and selflessness. Patriotic Fund agents and supporters championed this approach to its self-proclaimed job of temporarily filling the patriarchal role of breadwinner until the head of the household returned, or a government pension was issued to the dependents of deceased soldiers. They argued that isolation from political interference and business-like management contributed to greater efficiency.

Though it had support from a cross-section of society, the fund was increasingly criticized during the war by soldiers, soldiers' wives and working-class spokespeople. Critics of

111 *Star*, 20 October 1917, 20
112 *Star*, 6 October 1917, 10; *Star*, 6 November 1917, 6
113 On the politics of soldiers' family welfare during the war and thorough treatment of the Canadian Patriotic Fund see Desmond Morton's *Fight or Pay: Soldiers' Families in the Great War* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2004).
the fund said it had none of the benefits of personal involvement that a private charity might offer and all the aggravations caused by the red tape of impersonal institutions. Furthermore, its approach to relief provision sometimes seemed arbitrary, often miserly and too often demeaning. Since it performed such a patriotic and necessary service, argued an increasing number of Canadians during the war, control of it belonged to democratic government, subject to Parliamentary oversight and electoral accountability. Clearly, class difference and notions of citizenship were central components of the criticism of the Patriotic Fund by veterans and their families.

These themes were also important for the other issues raised by Major Cockburn in his campaign. At an election meeting at the end of October Cockburn delivered a speech that listed a variety of the points he would press on government if he took a seat in the national legislature. These included: the demand that wealth as well as manpower be conscripted for the cause by increasing taxes; equality of treatment for British reservists in Canada in terms of the allowances they were paid, which were less than soldiers of the CEF; increases in soldiers' pay and pensions; a stop to returned soldiers being passed over for jobs in favour of aliens; an end to profiteering; and direct government control of food storage plants, which were commonly seen at the time as places businesses used to hoard goods and drive prices up.114 At this meeting the East York Riding Returned Soldiers' Alliance that endorsed Cockburn was formed, and its officials spoke to the one hundred other returned soldiers who attended.

A Lieutenant H.W. Parsons told his comrades that the alliance was "not antagonistic to the new Government […] but we want provision for our boys in France, and his family at home. Let the millionaires take the back seat." W.E. Surtees stated that "[n]either party cares a hang for us, so we'll send a non-party representative who does. We have ideas of our own, as well as the Government, and they are to take care of our comrades and their wives and families." Cockburn took the stage next and continued to stress the class basis of the soldiers' complaints. After describing the "appalling" poverty of some of the British reservists' homes he visited he rhetorically asked: "Is it fair for the man who makes a million to give his dollar to the Red Cross? (A voice: "Take it all away!'')" Though not an official of the newly formed riding association, 'A' Company Commander Roberts spoke as well. He said that since other GWVA branches in the country were endorsing candidates he would continue to declare his (sub-) branch to be Cockburn's official supporter. Another veteran summed-up what everyone

114 *Star*, 31 October 1917, 12; *Telegram*, 31 October 1917, 17
in the hall in eastern Toronto seemed to feel. "In Major Cockburn you have a candidate in a hundred, he is out for the soldier, not as a politician, but as a man and a soldier too."\textsuperscript{115}

The support expressed for Cockburn at this rally shows that masculinity, soldier identity, comradeship and working-class identity were important reasons for the backing he received. An article in the \textit{Globe} told readers Cockburn had risen from the ranks to become a Major, suggesting that a mutual understanding existed between the returned officer and the returnees of lower ranks who supported his candidacy.\textsuperscript{116} His support was rooted in workplace relations as well. Cockburn was the manager of one of the department's of the British Forging's plant located near the mouth of the Don river in south-eastern Toronto, a facility engaged in war production on contracts from the Imperial Munitions Board.\textsuperscript{117} Cockburn employed none but returned soldiers, 162 in all, some 'so weak they could not work more than an hour or two a day at first.' Some time in the Fall of 1917 he and his comrades began outreach efforts for veterans and their dependents, doing chores at nearby homes and delivering wood-fuel or coal. By late October, around the time of the formation of the East York Riding Returned Soldiers' Alliance, this group of employees of British Forgings had formed the Veterans' Voluntary Aid Society. It collected monthly fees from its more than 200 members for expanded aid work along the same lines.\textsuperscript{118}

The key themes and assumptions of Cockburn's campaign were similar to those of the independent labour candidates who ran in 1917, including James Ballantyne, who ran for the

\textsuperscript{115} \textit{Telegram}, 31 October 1917, 17

\textsuperscript{116} \textit{Globe}, 1 November 1917, 14. Listed as a "Surveyor" on his attestation paper, Ross Collier Cockburn (No. 27987, Folio. 220) may have been a university graduate and middle-class. It was fairly common for middle-class enlistees to serve in the ranks.

\textsuperscript{117} The plant was in the riding of Toronto East, which was directly adjacent on its eastern boundary to York East. Later generations of Torontonian know the term 'East York' to apply to the region and municipality whose southern limit was near Danforth Avenue and its western boundary the Don valley. In 1917 the York East electoral district's northern boundary was Danforth Avenue and its western boundary (with Toronto East) was Pape Avenue.

\textsuperscript{118} \textit{Globe}, 1 November 1917, 14. Reading between the lines of other news reports it appears that Cockburn was in charge of the plant's yard, which likely involved directing unskilled work such as moving and storing materials and cleaning up.
East York seat as an ILP representative. Apart from veterans' emphasis on their specific issues, such as pensions or Cockburn's call to make payments to returned soldiers of the British army equal to those of CEF returnees, the major difference between the two interest groups related to labour market policy. Early in December Ballantyne told an audience that the proposal by Cockburn, and many veterans as well as the GWVA, that aliens be compelled to work at the basic military wage rate of $1.10 a day was not in veterans' interest for it would make it more difficult for them to compete for jobs. Speaking in a different hall the next evening the labourite told another crowd that he would welcome the opportunity to share a platform with Cockburn to discuss the alien question. "We must have a law giving preference to British labor. That is the practical solution to the problem he refers to," said Ballantyne, referring to Cockburn's position on alien labour.

Cockburn did not accept the invitation to share a platform with Ballantyne, but the labour representative may have forced him to more clearly articulate his position on alien workers. In mid-December a portion of one of Cockburn's addresses was quoted at length in the Star, whose reporting was as sympathetic to the veteran as was that of its rival, the Telegram, which actually endorsed Cockburn. "Our boys who are taken prisoner are compelled to do work on roads and any other rough work at a wage of about 25 cents per week," explained Cockburn one evening. "And yet we have alien enemies here walking about the streets and drawing good money. They should be forced to work in the mines at the same wages as our boys in Germany." Having dealt with 'foreigners' supposedly from enemy countries, Cockburn went on to explain how the labour of 'foreigners' from allied or neutral countries should be regulated. If international law prevented the government from conscripting

---

119 For histories of labour in politics during this period see: Craig Heron, ed., The Workers' Revolt, 1917-1925 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1998); James Naylor, The New Democracy: Challenging the Social Order in Industrial Ontario, 1914-1925 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1991). Ballantyne was also endorsed by East York Liberals who did not put forward their own candidate. See: Globe, 7 November 1917, 8.

120 Star, 4 December 1917, 16

the ""ordinary foreigner"" who was ""unwilling to fight for either his own country or Canada"
the government should conscript his labour ""at $1.10 a day, and the difference between that
and the standard pay should be paid over to the Government for the prosecution of the war.""\textsuperscript{122}

Groups of returned soldiers intervened at the campaign rallies of East York's Unionist
candidate, city Controller Thomas Foster, but they did not appear at Ballantyne meetings.
Given the workplace origins of the Returned Soldiers' Alliance this may have been due to a
feeling of affinity for the ILP candidate and sympathy with his platform. The fact that
Ballantyne had his own veteran supporters may have been a reason too. William Varley, a
union organizer and combat veteran whose son had enlisted and who campaigned for local ILP
candidates, was Ballantyne's most notable returned soldier supporter.\textsuperscript{123} Returned soldiers
appeared on platforms with Foster to speak out in support of his candidacy too, but they did
nothing to help his cause among Cockburn's veteran supporters. At the pro-Foster meetings the
unidentified Cockburn supporters attended and disrupted throughout December, they expressed
their greatest outrage at the returned soldiers who backed Foster.\textsuperscript{124}

Returned soldiers who backed McCormack in Parkdale were likewise especially critical
of comrades who did not. They were criticized for associating with the Unionist candidate,
Herbert Mowat, who, in their opinion, had dubious credentials as a longtime Liberal and as a
Militia officer who did not go overseas.\textsuperscript{125} Unlike in York East, however, there was a Laurier
Liberal running in Parkdale and veterans felt greater antipathy towards him. By mid-December
Gordon Waldron must have been weary of defending his position from attacks by returned
soldiers who shouted and denounced him and his supporters at his campaign rallies. Weary or
not he countered claims that his followers were cowards, Laurier was a traitor and that ""Quebec
is a dark blot on the country,""\textsuperscript{126} at a meeting held two days before ballots were cast.

\textsuperscript{122} \textit{Star}, 14 December 1917, 6
\textsuperscript{123} \textit{Star}, 14 December 1917, 7
\textsuperscript{124} \textit{Star}, 8 December 1917, 7; \textit{Star}, 11 December 1917, 23; \textit{Star}, 13 December 1917, 13; \textit{Star},
14 December 1917, 16
\textsuperscript{125} For an example see: \textit{Globe}, 6 December 1917, 8. Mowat's defenders pointed out that he had
been denied overseas service despite his best efforts to go. Mowat was a lawyer and nephew of
former Ontario Premier Oliver Mowat.
\textsuperscript{126} \textit{Star}, 14 December 1917, 26
At one point during the meeting Waldron complained that he had never suffered so much 'interruption from the old land.' This set off a storm of protest from the pro-McCormack returned soldiers at the meeting who were British immigrants. Their reaction is suggestive of the disproportionately British-born origins of Canadian soldiers. Waving a cane in the air one veteran loudly reminded Waldron that 'old countrymen' and British 'forefathers' had fought for him. Across the hall another man who said he had six brothers in khaki told the veteran to sit down. The cane-waver refused and shouted, 'I have been in this country eleven years and three years I served in France for Canada,' and he wanted Waldron to take back what he said. By now Waldron was calling for someone to get a 'policeman.' A clever voice said he would have to find 'a new policeman as they are all old countrymen.'

In Parkdale and East York Unionist won as they did in all Toronto and York County ridings, victories that returned soldiers celebrated after a majority win was declared at eleven o'clock at night by parading down Yonge Street. Contradicting its own news reports over the past few weeks, the Star claimed that '[c]onvalescent soldiers' were happy with 'the result of the elections' for they were all fully supportive of 'the candidate endorsed by the Union Government.' Turley's attitude was more honest, admitting that though the loss of soldier candidates was felt by some veterans he was sure that the victory of conscription would boost morale overseas and that returned soldiers knew this was the main "issue at hand."

At a meeting of 'A' Company after the election Cockburn thanked his supporters and consoled himself that Foster won by the slimmest majority "that any Unionist candidate secured." He sounded a note of warning too, telling his comrades that "the fight is not over yet."

Conclusion
Tim Cook called his first book focusing on the CEF on the Western Front, At the Sharp End. As this chapter demonstrates, Toronto veterans took a similarly advanced position on the home

127 Star, 14 December 1917, 26
128 Star, 18 December 1917, 20
129 Star, 20 December 1917, 20
130 Tim Cook, At the Sharp End: Canadians Fighting the Great War, 1914-1916 (Toronto: Viking Canada, 2007).
Chapter 3

front. This chapter's analysis of the actions and arguments of returned soldiers as recruiters, as enforcers of conscription and in the federal election campaign of 1917 reveals their significance for the history of the home front and suggests that further study is needed to understand their influence in other cities and regions. Historians have recognized the political significance of the issue of re-establishment for wartime and postwar politics, but the involvement of veterans in these politics has not been explored in great depth, and the question of their role in debates about the war effort is not posed in the literature on First World War veterans' movements.131 Canadian urban histories of the war suggest that veterans were active on city streets across the country, while in the key comparative work in the European urban history of the war the political significance of veterans is not raised.132

The chapter has also shown that veterans' participation in the debate about the war effort was distinctive and independent. Returned soldiers who spoke out and became active in 1917, felt that their perspective needed to be represented in this debate. They felt that contributing their unique views to public discussion would enlighten Canadians about the reasons to commit the country to greater sacrifices and they appeared to hope that explaining their views to civilians would create greater understanding between them. An important minority were also frustrated by the slow rate of progress on the matter of the compulsory draft and angered by the debate about the measure. Once again, their experience as soldiers was crucial to their justifications for acting: talk meant delay and delay meant more of their comrades would be killed and wounded in the trenches.

Returned soldiers were not united in their approach to reinforcing their comrades, any more than Canadians were united in their opinions about how government should manage the war effort. Miller's emphasis on the virtual unanimity of support for conscription in Toronto deflects attention from the nature of the debate that did take place. It may seem startling that


nearly 100 per cent of the ballots cast by eligible voters in the city were for pro-conscription, win-the-war candidates, but it is not. Clearly, Torontonians massively supported the war effort but if any of them really did not want Canada to intensify this effort then they had no one to vote for. Can the unanimous support for a more intensive and 'total' war effort be anything but expected? Voters, therefore, made choices between candidates arguing about the best ways to manage the war effort; in other words, to confront domestic problems while contributing to a resolution of the crisis on the Western Front. While convinced that soldier candidates would best represent their interests in Ottawa, veterans wanted their comrades reinforced above all else. With this victory achieved they began fighting a new battle on the home front.
Chapter 4. British Citizens

Early in the evening of 2 August 1918 an angry group of returned soldiers walked to the White City Cafe on Yonge Street near Shrapnel Corners. Their canes, bandages, missing limbs and returned soldier buttons identified them as they approached the cafe and there was no mistaking their intentions. The returned men waited until staff and patrons in the restaurant fled before moving inside to destroy the place. They broke furniture, tore down decorations and fixtures, wrecked equipment, and smashed plates and glasses. One returned man battered the large front window with his crutch, trying to break it.¹ In the evening and night that followed veteran-led rioters roamed the city, smashing up a dozen small restaurants and clashing repeatedly with police. The next night veterans and their supporters protested the actions of police and demanded the release of friends arrested the night before. Rioters threw bottles and rocks at police and swung sticks and crutches. Police replied with truncheons and whip-cracking constables on horseback charged crowds. The police won. Minor disturbances occurred the next few nights, but the introduction of troops on the streets and the actions of police brought an uneasy calm to the city five nights after the riots began.

Veteran anger over the supposed mistreatment of a comrade by café workers sparked the rioting, but the more significant reason for the violence was rooted in veterans' discontent over the status and freedoms of aliens in Toronto and across the country. The café workers who beat up a returned soldier were 'foreigners' and the cafes that were wrecked were owned by non-British immigrants. This chapter's examination of veterans' attitudes and actions towards foreigners demonstrates that rejecting non-British Canadians was a fundamental impulse of returned soldiers from the emergence in Toronto of the Great War Veterans' Association (GWVA) in 1916 through the end of the war. Returned soldiers' perspectives on the 'alien problem' were connected to their desire to fight the war at home, to their conviction that they were entitled to better re-establishment efforts and to a vision of Canada as a British country.

¹ Star, 3 August 1918, 10
Claiming that aliens were working in jobs to which returned soldiers were entitled and that foreign shop and restaurant owners were profiteering, Toronto's veterans mounted a campaign in 1918 that demanded that government act to curtail these unpatriotic actions. Their views were shared by a wide cross-section of Canadian society and their proposals found support among elected officials. As they had been in the debate about conscription, returned soldiers were more vehement in their demands and more willing to take violent action in support of their views than their civilian supporters. And as they were during the conscription crisis, returned soldiers were divided about the methods they should use to pursue their goals. The leaders of the GWVA and many others advocated 'constitutional means' while a militant minority argued that forceful measures were warranted. Whatever their views were about tactics, veterans did share an idea of citizenship they used to justify their rejection of aliens. The characteristics of this citizenship were not defined in political or legal terms, but in terms of British-Canadian ethno-nationality. Defined in cultural and racial terms veterans insisted this essential 'British' identity was the norm for Canada and they saw themselves as its champion. Returned soldiers also defined citizenship in terms of sacrifices made for 'the cause.' They accused aliens of making no sacrifices for the country and empire that protected them while enriching themselves as Canadian residents, often at the expense of men to whom they owed a great unacknowledged debt.

A number of studies covering this period identify veterans as the most reactionary and violent anti-immigrant activists during a time of heightened nativism, which began with the war and climaxed in the first Red Scare immediately after the war. Explanations of this phenomenon stress the exacerbation of pre-existing prejudices by exaggerated home front anxieties about foreigners as competitors in the labour market, and as unpatriotic slackers or radical agitators. \(^2\) Morton and Wright, the only ones to have focused on veterans specifically,

limit their insights to these basic generalizations, and so does Miller in his study of wartime Toronto.\textsuperscript{3} The evidence from Toronto supports these conclusions, but it also reveals the value of dealing more fully with anti-foreigner attitudes and collective violence on the home front. Doing so adds to our understanding of this history of racism in Canada and shifts the focus in the literature on this subject from British Columbia and western Canada to the country's second largest city.\textsuperscript{4} Wartime studies have also concentrated on attitudes towards enemy aliens, whereas the evidence from Toronto shows that home front discourse dealt with all 'foreigners.' By revealing the differences that existed among veterans over the questions of foreigners and methods of achieving change, this chapter also paints a more nuanced picture of returned soldiers than exists in the current historiography for this period. Finally, examining wartime anti-alien activism sheds light on how Canadians conceived of the cause they were fighting for, on how they defined citizenship and their own identity.

The 'Alien Problem'

The GWVA addressed the 'alien problem' as early as November 1916, even before the association was well established in Toronto. The local GWVA president wrote the city to remind decision makers they had promised to prefer returned soldiers when filling jobs, and dismiss employees, especially bachelors, eligible to serve to make way for veterans. He claimed that at two factories in the city women were receiving inflated wages, implying that returned men ought to have these positions. He also had information that foreigners, including "forty Chinamen at a very low rate of pay," were being hired by a local manufacturer over "citizens of British birth." Since veterans were being badly treated by employers, the local GWVA leader said the former soldiers may soon make their complaints public "unless they are treated as men, given a square deal, also offered situations at a living wage."5

This early example of veterans' views regarding the 'alien problem' made connections between foreigners, economic practices (hiring practices in this case) and government policy. Veterans, as well as civilians, continued to make these links throughout the remainder of the war, as well as in the post war years. Though they spoke as returned soldiers and implicitly or explicitly invoked veteran entitlement, they also spoke as economic actors. Veterans spoke as earners in public statements about foreigners and the need to regulate the labour market to provide Canada's ex-servicemen with jobs they deserved. During the war, when the cost of living rose dramatically and became a major public issue, veterans also spoke as consumers when they clamoured for regulation of alien business owners, who were accused of profiteering, as were so many owners of big and small businesses.

Veterans held local and provincial governments accountable for addressing the 'problems' aliens gave rise to, but they held federal government most accountable. It was responsible for permitting non-British immigrants into the country, for regulating the legal rights of Canadian citizens and residents, and wartime (and the 1914 War Measures Act) gave it authority in virtually all areas of life. Civilians made these connections too and though returned

5 The president's points are contained in the reply made by the city in a letter of 6 December 1916. The City Clerk still identified the veteran as president of The Returned Soldiers' Association, which became the GWVA in Toronto, with the same officers, sometime between October and late November, 1916. See: CTA, RG2, City Executive Committee, B3, Board of Control Communications, (144406) Box 113, 1916 Vol 2, item 1378.
soldiers, employers, labour leaders, middle-class spokespeople and politicians did not all agree on how to fix the 'alien problem' there was a broadly based attitude that their presence did pose problems for society.

The 'alien problem' was defined and debated in the public sphere by British Canadians, the majority and the dominant group in English Canada. In the English language press and in other English language sources, aliens rarely spoke for themselves, and few elected councilors or legislative representatives spoke on their behalf either. Even the investigation into the 1918 riots that included the destruction of foreign owned and run cafes marginalized the voices of the non-British immigrants rioters targeted on the first night of violence. The Greek restauranters victimized by rioters were represented at the inquiry by the head of the city's restaurant owners' association and their voices rarely appeared in the mainstream press.6

Even when they were returned soldiers, the views or interests of aliens were rarely made known in Toronto's public sphere, and when this did happen aliens typically did not speak for themselves either. Two examples illustrate this pattern. Among the many adjustment cases GWVA secretary Turley pursued on behalf of returned men was one in August 1917 for Aliz Hwozdesky, a Private who had enlisted in 1915 and served on the frontlines with the 67th Battalion. Recently discharged, Hwozdesky complained that the Pay and Records Office in London had not forwarded his separation allowance to his wife in Russia. Hwozdesky also hoped that despite wartime restrictions on international travel his status as a veteran would enable him to return to his home in Russia.7 A month later Turley was seeking a job placement for another veteran of the CEF, a Bulgarian immigrant who after two years of service was finding it difficult to find work.8 In neither of these cases did the non-British nationality or ethnicity of the men in question spur further discussion. The articles did not address the question of what the status of either man was as a resident of Canada, nor did they speculate about whether their service in the CEF made a difference to their status. Did it, or should it,

---

6 Toronto's dailies reported on the hearings of the inquiry into the riots and published the report the Police Commissioners released, but as Miller explains in Our Glory and Our Grief, the records of the inquiry (such as records of testimony or a statement of its mandate) apparently no longer exist.

7 Star, 22 August 1917, 4

8 Star, 10 September 1917, 10
earn them citizenship? Was it proof they had become, or genuinely wished to become, Canadians?

These are worthwhile questions for historians to pursue for the literature is mainly silent on the participation of non-British Canadians in the CEF, the significance of this for these men, their communities and for the history of Canadian nationality. Competence in non-English language sources will no doubt be needed to unearth this history, for these issues appear not to have been directly addressed in wartime or postwar Toronto's public sphere. Silence on the issue and the lack of any presence for ethnic minority returnees in the public sphere suggests that in the opinion of most Anglo-Canadians the answers were 'no.'

Historians have written about the response of non-British Canadians to the anti-alien views and actions with which they dealt during this period. Ukrainians were the major victims of internment and police regulation and they have received the bulk of attention.9 Research into other non-British ethnic communities have little or nothing to say on the subject, a pattern that holds true for Toronto. Lillian Petroff’s study of Toronto's Macedonian community in the first half of the twentieth-century reveals that there remains a memory of peoples experiences of the war, including the complexity of their national status, internment and police registration, and jobs in factories that were often lost when soldiers returned. Interviewees also told Petroff stories of Macedonian restauranteurs along King Street West facing riotous anti-Greek soldiers from the nearby Exhibition Camp during the war. Macedonian identity apparently protected the immigrants in these incidents.10 Other studies of immigrants in Toronto do not provide insights into this topic. For example, John Zucchi's discussion of the significance of the war for

---


Toronto's Italians does not include the enlistment of Italians in the CEF or their response to any anti-Italian sentiments, or anti-alien ones more broadly.\(^\text{11}\)

The 'alien question' or 'alien problem' was posed in terms that often made it seem simple. In fact it was complicated by changing wartime circumstances, differences between official definitions and popular notions, and ambiguous language. To begin with, the term 'aliens' could itself be a source of confusion. In its broadest usage the word was a catch-all term used to identify an 'other,' its meaning determined by context.\(^\text{12}\) The normative identity it signalled was 'white' and 'British.' The term 'aliens,' therefore, could be applied to people in Canada and the British empire who were not white and it could describe some white people outside the empire, such as white-Americans.\(^\text{13}\) Notably, the terms of anti-alien wartime discourse were increasingly applied to French Canadians. More often, though, 'aliens' referred to Europeans immigrants whose numbers in Canada had increased enormously since the end of the nineteenth-century, and sometimes to Chinese, who formed a far smaller group in the population.\(^\text{14}\)


\(^{13}\) Richard Dennis' conclusions about the meaning of 'foreigner' complements this analysis of the meaning of 'alien': Dennis, "'Foreigners Who Live in Toronto.'"

\(^{14}\) Table A260-269, Population, Canadian, other British and foreign-born, by sex, census dates, 1871 to 1971, Historical Statistics of Canada, Statistics Canada, online at:
There were major differences in the way these two general categories were represented in Canadian public discourse, which conformed to patterns in Britain and its 'White Dominions,' as well as attitudes south of the border.\(^\text{15}\) Chinese and other Asian immigrants were commonly believed to have racial and cultural traits that conflicted with the norms of Canadian society, giving them an unfair advantage in the market for unskilled labour and making them a danger to public health and morality. Prevailing attitudes about European immigrants were more mixed. They were constructed in racial terms less often than were Asian immigrants and there was debate about whether they could integrate into Canadian society, whereas it was assumed that Chinese, Japanese and South Asians (often called Hindus, or Hindoos) could not.\(^\text{16}\)

Wartime altered the context in which immigrants were perceived and saw the emergence of three categories: enemy aliens, neutral aliens and allied aliens. These categories changed during the course of the war as nations entered and exited the conflict and as government policy shifted. Just as significantly, popular perceptions contested official definitions. The most outspoken anti-alien activists either conceived of the identity of aliens in


relatively fixed racial terms or else saw ethnicity as a rigid identity, connecting aliens to their presumed country and culture of origin rather than to their country of adoption. Most of these commentators also dismissed naturalization, the acquisition of citizenship in Canada, as a technicality without bearing on an immigrant's true loyalties and values. The government's disenfranchisement of many non-British immigrants under the Wartime Elections Act powerfully expressed and legitimized this notion. Determining cultural identity and national affiliation by ethno-national origins made it easy to apply assumptions about non-British immigrants to their descendents, or to anyone 'foreign looking,' a phrase occasionally used in news columns to provide a shorthand description of an individual or group of people observed by the writer.17

Citizenship was an idea and legal reality tied to the question of aliens and its precise meaning could be as difficult to determine as the term 'alien.' In popular usage, the words 'citizen' and 'citizenship' were synonymous with the term 'British subject,' which was a recognized legal category and used less frequently. At their broadest these terms referred to all who lived under the authority of the British crown. Using this meaning, then, Canadian citizenship encompassed people under the authority of the federal government in Ottawa. The rights and duties of these people were not uniform, however. For example, Natives, Asians and, until the war, women, could not vote, a classic test of citizenship. Wartime further exposed the differential status of Canadians, especially in relation to military enlistment, which applied to men.

Natives and Japanese argued that the enlistment of men from their communities, despite racial discrimination and lack of the franchise, was more evidence that they deserved to be full citizens. As Walker has shown in his study, race was the more important barrier to enlistment in the CEF than citizenship. Racist ideas about Natives and Japanese made their enlistment difficult and even more so in the case of blacks in Canada. The former two groups were not full citizens, while African Canadians were, at least in ideal legal terms.18

---

17 *Telegram*, 4 June 1919, 11

18 Walker, 'Race and Recruitment in World War I.' For more background on minority communities and enlistment in the CEF see: Dick, "Sergeant Masumi Mitsui and the Japanese Canadian War Memorial."; Fred Gaffen, *Forgotten Soldiers* (Penticton, British Columbia:
aliens who had not naturalized were generally European immigrants who could be considered white. Some of them enlisted.  

To a limited extent, the heterogeneity of Canadian citizenship rights (or the differences in status of British subjects in Canada) was paralleled by the variegated nature of the government's authority over those who lived within its borders, for citizenship did matter when it came to conscription.  

Responding in January 1918 to protests about the injustice of being

---

19 Peter Melnycky has estimated that 2,000 Ukrainian immigrants from Russia fought in the CEF, while 'thousands' of Ukrainians from Austrian provinces 'registered as Russians, Poles and Bohemians or anglicized their names in order to enlist.' See: Melnycky, 'The Internment of Ukrainians in Canada,' in Loyalities in Conflict, Frances Swirypa and John Herd Thompson eds., 1-24 (Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies, Edmonton, 1983), 5. In his regional analysis of CEF enlistment, Christopher Sharpe states that 7.6 per cent of those eligible to serve were foreign-born, based on 1911 population figures. More than 42 per cent of this group volunteered for the CEF and a total of over 54 per cent eventually served. 'The comparable figures for Canadian-born eligible men are: 28.6 percent served and 20.3 percent volunteered.' See: C.A. Sharpe, "Enlistment in the Canadian Expeditionary Force 1914-1918: A Regional Analysis," Journal of Canadian Studies 18, no. 4 (1983-4).: n9 p28. I am grateful to Professor Sharpe for sending me his unpublished manuscript, 'The Canadian Expeditionary Force 1914-1918: An Analysis of its "National" Composition' (1982), that elaborates on these findings.

compelled to fight while denied citizenship, Ottawa clarified the status of certain groups under the Military Service Act. Natives and Japanese were exempted from the draft and so were those Canadians who had been de-naturalized by the Wartime Elections Act. In March exemption was extended to those who had been disqualified from voting at a federal election.21 Once again, allied and neutral aliens were in a similar situation. Ottawa legal opinion held that since the government lacked specific treaties with various allied countries it had no authority to compel them to fight. A treaty of this sort was arranged with the US, and though federal officials apparently sought agreements with its other allies these did not materialize.22

These exemptions were announced while the burdens of citizenship increased for other groups of Canadians. While draftees adjusted to their new uniforms and trained, the government responded to the crisis caused by the German offensive in spring 1918, and to the high rate of applications for exemption, by increasing the pool of potential conscripts. In April the government cancelled the MSA exemptions given men between the ages of 20 and 22, limited more strictly the acceptable reasons for applying for exemption and expanded the reach of the act to include 19-year-olds.23

Within this contentious legal context the issue of foreigners in wartime Canada demonstrated particular regional traits. On the Prairies, for example, Anglo-Canadians complained that Germans, who were often Mennonites, and Austrians, typically Ukrainians, unduly influenced provincial politics and refused to integrate into Canadian society. In British Columbia, Chinese and other Asian immigrants were the chief complaint of the majority group. Toronto's population of non-British immigrants was small but highly visible because of concentrations in particular occupations. Former Sergeant A.E. Lowery suggested as much

---


21 Walker, 'Race and Recruitment in World War I', 19

22 Star, 1 October 1918, 6

23 Granatstein and Hitsman, Broken Promises, 91. Cancellation of these exemptions broke the promise the government made during the election campaign not to draft farmers' sons needed at home. By the end of 1917 about 94% of those who registered under the MSA applied to be exempt from service (Granatstein and Hitsman, Broken Promises, 85).
when he reminded comrades of the nature of Toronto's 'aliens problem' at a neighbourhood GWVA meeting in 1917 held in Trinity College, then in the city's west end. 'One nationality runs our fruit stands,' said Lowery, 'another nationality runs our laundries, another nationality runs our restaurants, and still another nationality grabs all our real estate.'

Was the GWVA official referring to Jews or to Germans when he claimed that foreigners were buying up property? It is impossible to know for certain, but he was almost certainly thinking of Italians as fruit sellers, Chinese as being in control of laundries, and Greeks as restaurant owners. His comments illustrate the contemporary awareness of ethnic segregation in occupations and services in Toronto, something that applied to residential segregation as well. It was also widely known that non-British immigrants typically worked in low-paying, often dangerous and often dirty jobs.

This proved to be the case during the wartime boom as non-British immigrants found unskilled jobs in munitions plants and continued to work as labourers in sewer or road construction. These workers were men and at times this was made significant in public discussion. The Star, for example, pointed out in April 1918 that there were 162,000 alien allies of countries such as Italy, Greece, Poland, China and Japan in Canada. Perhaps 17,000 of these were in Toronto, which was in addition to the '30,000 Hebrews in the city.' Since this population was disproportionately male, explained the Star, it offered a disproportionate number of potential recruits for the cause. It argued that since Toronto's allied aliens were

---

24 Star, 27 September 1917, 13

typically 'engaged in general contracting work, sewers, roadways, and such like work,' they were not performing essential home front war work and were available to fight.26

This discussion has meant to emphasize that despite the simplistic nature of much of the discourse about foreigners by veterans and others, the 'alien problem' that veterans addressed in wartime Toronto was complicated. A basic pre disposition to use ideas of race, ethnicity or nationality to explain the 'problem' underscored the entire debate, but a variety of other factors affected discussion of the alien question in important ways. Government policy decisions, the shifting fortunes of the war and international relations affected perceptions on the home front. Since the aliens in question were virtually always men, their supposed failings could be compared to the models of patriotic masculinity returned soldiers were said to represent. Most were also working class and could be cast as competitors in the labour market, or criticized for sending the money they earned to their homeland instead of investing in the country that 'protected' them. Small entrepreneurs could be condemned for this kind of economic disloyalty, too, and as merchants they were accused of profiteering.

Finally, public discourse linked the 'problem' of aliens to ideas about citizenship. Returned soldiers who participated in debate on the alien question conceived of citizenship in socio-legal terms, or, in other words, as a relationship between the state and 'the people' involving rights and duties. Many speakers and writers denounced aliens, or Canadian residents perceived to be foreign, for failing to act as good citizens by performing their duty to the government and society in which they lived. They targeted government as well, for permitting unpatriotic aliens to continue to enjoy their rights and for failing to act on its duty to govern justly. The 'alien problem' discussed and acted on during the war was at once a symptom of racial and ethnic modes of thinking within a specific context, and a nexus for debate about the complicated matter of citizenship in Canada.

Anti-Alien Politics
As they had on the issue of reinforcing their overseas comrades, veterans in Toronto took a leading role in raising the profile of the alien question and pushing government to take action on the issue. They represented their views in a variety of contexts, but especially in meetings

26 Star, 17 April 1918, 9
and on the streets, and as they did in the case of conscription, returned soldiers attempted to enforce what they saw as justice in direct and sometimes violent action. Their anti-alien activism, therefore, expressed different forms of popular politics and also helped create a temperamental and worrisome context for policy makers. As various historians have demonstrated in works about the history of immigration and racism in Canada, grassroots activism pressured government to weigh competing interests and consider intervening.\textsuperscript{27}

Toronto's first major occasion of veterans' anti-alien activism came on a Friday evening, the 13\textsuperscript{th} of April 1917, when GWVA delegates were meeting in Winnipeg. On that evening about fifty returned soldiers entered the munitions plant of the Russell Motor Company near King and Dufferin streets. They were accompanied by a few current soldiers from the nearby Exhibition Camp. According to the \textit{Globe} reporter who was on hand during what was referred to as a 'raid,' the former soldiers managed to jump over benches and machines, despite their injured condition, 'as if in charge on the German trenches.'\textsuperscript{28} The raiders promised workers they were in no danger as long as they showed the papers that permitted them to work in the factory. In the opinion of a foreman, the veterans' convictions had a basis in fact. He said he "would rather be working with white men" than the hundred alien enemies employed in the plant. Plant manager H.D. Scully was more informative. He said that of the 3,000 or so employees of the company three per cent were foreigners, and any enemy aliens were former internees of the camp at Kapuskasing, who had been brought down by government permission and were earning 30 to 35 cents an hour as labourers, the worst paid positions. He confirmed that the company had been notified of the raid in advance, and had agreed not to resist the veterans.\textsuperscript{29}

In all, work was stopped for about an hour, but the raid itself was quick. After ten minutes the veterans emerged from the plant with 'a score or two of prisoners,' workers they deemed to be alien enemies. Outside was a crowd of citizens that cheered their achievement as

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item[28] \textit{Globe}, 14 April 1917, 1 and 8
\item[29] \textit{Globe}, 14 April 1917, 1 and 8
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
they exited. In addition, there were municipal and 'military police, mounted officers, a platoon [that was not armed] from the Irish Fusiliers Battalion and members of the Headquarters Staff at Exhibition Camp,' all of whom, apparently, 'looked helplessly on.' The raid was planned by Lance-Corporal Charles O'Brien, a resident of the area wounded in the Battle of the Somme. He told the factory manager that when he had applied to work at Russell a day or two ago he had been told in "plump and plain language by a foreigner" to "Get the h— out of here." He would not stand for that 'from a Hun,' and finding support among others, the raid was the result.30

O'Brien made his views known to Scully following the raid in a discussion that took place inside the plant and included Colonel Henry C. Osborne, the Assistant Adjutant-General at Exhibition Camp. Scully promised that returned soldiers would have preferences in hiring and that he would write the adjutant to that effect that day. Emerging once more, the veteran of the Somme 'was hoisted shoulder high by his colleagues and called on for a speech. The Union Jack was waved about him and loud cheering broke out as he announced the result of the interview inside.' Colonel Obsorne also told the crowd the results of the meeting with Scully and informed them that, if he could be identified, the gate-keeper who had allegedly insulted O'Brien would be fired. The military official had more to say. He chastised a handful of returned soldiers for not saluting General Logie, head of the Military District, when he recently paraded 6,000 troops through the city. "Wounded soldiers on crutches can't very well salute!" shouted one man, and others exclaimed: "The returned soldiers should be saluted." The Colonel 'appealed for British fair play to all, and urged the soldiers to quietly disperse.' This they did, forming-up and marching up Dufferin Street with their flags flying.31

Their departure did not signal a retirement to celebrate success. From the munitions factory the returned soldiers went to 'the provision store of Jos. M. Zuber' on Queen street, and when they could not get in, some of them climbed over his store's awning and forced open the windows of the apartment above. Zuber was taken from his bed and downstairs in his store he was questioned and his papers examined. These satisfied the veterans and they left the German immigrant. The restaurant of George E. Munger, also on Queen Street, was next. Here the crowd of soldiers convinced him to admit them and answer questions about his employees. His

30 Globe, 14 April 1917, 1 and 8
31 Globe, 14 April 1917, 1 and 8
answers also satisfied them, and the pies and cakes they apparently helped themselves to did as well. Police in this area of the city, Parkdale, told the *Globe* reporter that these raids all appeared well planned and the soldiers were well behaved. There was no damage to property, and no arrests were made.32

Raiding of restaurants continued the following evening, when returned soldiers discovered one Austrian citizen who had not been reporting to police, which wartime regulations required of him. At the White City Cafe, located at 'Shrapnel Corners,' raiders brought two Greek immigrant workers outside on the street. Approximately two hundred returned soldiers were 'at work' that evening, and they were followed by a crowd of some thousand civilians, which must have increased the anxiety of the cafe workers. There seems to have been no violence, however, and perhaps the address of the leader of this large party, who went un identified, was partly the reason. Held on the shoulders of comrades, the returned man told his fellow veterans to treat aliens decently and conduct themselves peacefully. This would get the results they needed, he said. Police at the station where the Greek immigrants were taken informed the veterans that they were aliens, but not enemy aliens, and were breaking no laws.33

The *Globe* collected more of the views of returned men over the weekend, many of which were expressed at a Saturday meeting held in the office of Provost-Marshal Captain Alex Sinclair. Especially in restaurants and in munitions factories, claimed the veterans, foreigners were taking jobs to which "Britishers and Canadians" were entitled, and they should therefore be discharged so returned soldiers could take their place. At least one former soldier thought aliens could be placed on the land, a solution perhaps proposed because of the shortage of farm labour. The intentions of the raiders were also clarified. If at this meeting the veterans revealed their attitudes towards the immigrants and supposed immigrants they confronted over the past two days then the press did not report them. Newspapers left no doubt, however, as to the raiders' opinions of employers, and of the proper role of government in this situation. "The public treats us in a square manner," said one returned soldier, "but the employers of labour do not. A returned man goes to work in a factory at a certain position where he is allowed to sit down at his work. A few days after he starts he is told that he must stand up at his work or get

32 *Globe*, 14 April 1917, 1 and 8
33 *Star*, 16 April 1917, 3; *Globe*, 16 April 1917, 9
out. That is not according to the agreement, but as he cannot stand out he goes." It was bad
enough that the bosses should act this way, but government, the representative of the people,
was doing nothing to stop it. The raiders recognized that their actions might put them at odds
with public opinion, but they felt it was the only way to convince government to address the
problem.34

It was decided at the meeting with Sinclair that a conference with civic officials would
be arranged for Monday, with Sinclair heading a committee of members of the GWVA,
returned men who were not members, and one man of the AR Club, an association of men who
had attested for service but then been rejected as unfit. Meanwhile, raiding would be
suspended.35 Mayor Church announced on Monday that a conference would be held the next
day and federal and provincial leaders would be present to hear the men's views. Members of
Parliament and of the provincial legislature do not appear to have joined the meetings as
Church claimed they would. Instead, the Mayor represented the grievances of the veterans'
committee to them. Just back from Winnipeg, ex-Sergeant Turley, secretary of the Toronto
GWVA branch, told the Star that the association was not involved in the raids. It had no
knowledge of them, and as far as he, or the man who had acted as secretary in his absence,
knew none of its members had participated. The GWVA claimed it represented 600 of
Toronto's 2,000 returned soldiers and Turley said it had more important things to do than raid
restaurants.36

Information about the presence of aliens in Toronto workplaces began to accumulate in
the press even before the conference began. The Russell Motor Company showed its payroll to
officials of the military headquarters and wanted them to show it to the press as evidence that
Russell employed no enemy aliens, while it did employ 98 AR men and 167 'returned or
discharged men' of the CEF. Some of the men removed from the plant on Friday were citizens
of allied Russia, and the list of names on the payroll demonstrated that associating names with
nationality was not reliable. Employees such as 'Krupps' and 'Bimistov' were Canadians, just as
the majority of the men were who the raiders had pulled from their work because they had

34 Globe, 16 April 1917, 9
35 Globe, 16 April 1917, 9, and Star, 16 April 1917, 1.
36 Star, 16 April 1917, 3
'looked foreign.' The King Edward Hotel told the press that it had let all of its aliens go already and far from employing enemy aliens, it actually preferred that returned men fill available positions, especially the ones with the best hours and pay.

Turley's comments on Monday already revealed disagreement between the GWVA and the raiders, and as discussion at the conference proceeded the distance between them became more evident. On Tuesday the committee of veterans met in a Khaki Club in Parkdale and drafted a list of demands it would present at the meeting with the Mayor. The GWVA was not identified as one of its authors, and the association never claimed to have a hand in drawing it up. One returned soldier told a journalist apparently present at the Parkdale meeting that the gathering was not connected to the GWVA, and if some of those present were members then they were there as individuals. The list of demands began: "The committee proposes to ask the Dominion Government to stop the importation of alien labor from the United States and to exclude all alien enemies from all public works, such as munitions plants, restaurants, and all places where labor is employed, and to have the same vacancies filled by returned soldiers, A.R. men, British subjects, and naturalized subjects who are our allies, and that a living wage be paid." Other points pertained to methods that could be used to regulate alien labour in the city, such as city and veteran representatives inspecting places of work to collect data and check registration cards.

There were no representatives of the Dominion or provincial governments, as the Mayor had promised, but Mayor Church said he would present the grievances of the committee to federal officials and look into the possibility of creating a civic labour bureau exclusively for returned soldiers. This seemed to satisfy the committee, but when discussion was set to resume on Friday the Mayor found Turley and two other GWVA officials who were members of the committee waiting for him, but the other returned soldiers apparently refused to sit with their comrades. That the non-GWVA members were determined to set their own course was proven at a public meeting on 9 May in Massey Hall, where one thousand returned soldiers, AR

---

37 Globe, 16 April 1917, 9; Star, 14 April 1917, 1
38 Star, 17 April 1917, 2
39 Star, 17 April 1917, 4
40 Star, 17 April 1917, 4
41 Star, 21 April 1917, 11
men, and sympathizers gathered to express their views and pass resolutions asking, for example, that pensions be increased, the operation of the Patriotic Fund reformed, and several other reforms that were revised versions of the demands presented at the conference the Mayor had brokered a couple of weeks earlier. In demanding a 'square deal and decent treatment for the men who come back from the war disabled in body or brains,' men on the stage, 'spoke out in no mincing words, in fact some of their statements were too strong for newspaper publication.'

The resolutions and the meeting were the work of what was becoming known as a The Grievance Committee of Returned Soldiers and AR Men, often shortened to the Soldiers' Grievance Committee. Its origins were clearly among the 'alien hunters' who had raided factories, residences and small businesses in mid-April, and members explained to the audience the reasons for its formation. They said returned soldiers were finding it difficult to "make a living." employers were turning away men wearing their 'AR' buttons, and women of means were getting jobs at munitions factories where their incompetence made countless shells duds. Aliens occupying jobs returned soldiers and AR men should have was the major complaint. One speaker suggested aliens be segregated into their own government-run munitions plant where they would "not compete with our men of the Empire." He may have been inspired by a letter to the editor from "A Soldier's Daughter" who thought a government munitions plant employing enemy aliens would free up more jobs for returned soldiers, including positions as guards over any enemy aliens in this plant. Shouting from the gallery, one returned soldiers wanted to know why the grievance committee was not working in cooperation with the GWVA. At this the Mayor, acting as chair, jumped up and called for the meeting to end with the singing of the national anthem, to which no one disagreed.

The two organizations of veterans continued to meet separately to discuss the alien question and matters of re-establishment. Though former Private A.H. Warwick of the Grievance Committee insisted his committee had been formed "not with the idea of knocking any existing organization," there clearly were tensions among veterans about anti-alien policy.

---

42 *Star*, 10 May 1917, 9
43 *Star*, 18 April 1917, 4
44 *Star*, 10 May 1917, 9
45 *Star*, 17 May 1917, 11.
and, to a much greater degree, the methods they should use to pursue this policy. As shown in Chapter 3, the same problem characterized divisions among veterans working to reinforce their overseas comrades by enforcing conscription and curtailing debate on the issue. And while reinforcement was the paramount question of the moment, the alien question remained relevant during the conscription crisis as returned soldiers scorned many anti-conscriptionists for supposedly being foreigners, or for advocating views only foreigners could support. The veterans handled them roughly on occasion.

With their chief goal of reinforcing their overseas comrades achieved by the end of 1917, Toronto returned soldiers took up the so-called alien problem in earnest. As discussed in Chapter 3, this was a problem that veterans had played a leading role in inserting into election debate during the campaigning in the city. Veteran support for returned-soldier candidates Cockburn and MacGregor was the most important example of this pattern. These men ran on platforms that supported the Military Service Act and the ousting of foreigners from jobs owed to veterans, and they called more generally for an end to any non-British influence in Canada, which they defined as a British country. The push to make the alien question an election issue came from the grassroots. The leadership of the city's Great War Veterans' Association (GWVA) stayed focused on the question of conscription and Union government almost exclusively. It was forced to confront the 'problem' of alien labour when discussion of this topic began to threaten the association's status as representative of veterans' views.

In 1918 the Toronto GWVA adopted the alien question as its pre-eminent issue, making the organization the major voice of veterans on this issue in a way similar to its dominance in the debate over conscription. As had been the case with the question of reinforcing, officials of the association called for a constitutional approach to change, which contrasted with the direct action many other returned soldiers claimed they were prepared to take if government did not curtail the rights and freedoms of non-British immigrants. Neighbourhood GWVA branches addressed the question of the status of aliens in meetings throughout January, and they communicated with each other about organizing a mass meeting at Massey Hall to publicize the importance of the alien question and attract the attention of leaders in business and

---

46 Star, 19 May 1917, 7

47 For discussion of these events see Chapter 3.
government. The shortage of labour, including the knowledge that farm labour would be scarcer than ever that year, was acknowledged by the veterans, but rumours that employers wished to import Chinese workers, or that the provincial government was considering them as agricultural workers, were not acceptable solutions. Many veterans objected to the presence of the non-British Canadians already in Canada.

The non-veteran speakers who were a part of the Massey Hall meeting the local GWVA held in early February suggested how returned soldiers were influencing public discourse on the alien question. Though farmers were in desperate need of extra hands, Premier Hearst declared he was utterly opposed to the importation of Chinese labourers. The Conservative leader also informed listeners that the issue was a federal responsibility. Mayor Church said that the problem had been going on too long, long enough for industrialists to be knighted while employing aliens. He felt that foreigners should be conscripted into useful labour. James Ballantyne, labour candidate in the recent general election and representative of the Greater Toronto Labor party, agreed with the Mayor. "If employers in general were more patriotic," he said, "they would give the returned soldier a preference." The reverend C.E. Manning of the Ministerial Association declared that Canada should follow the lead of the United States in using a literary test to restrict immigration to desirable entrants only.

As usual it was Turley, the Ontario GWVA's secretary by this point, who articulated the association's position most succinctly. "The alien labor question, so far as I'm concerned, has resolved itself into a slogan of 'work, fight, or get out'." Other speakers revealed the racial concepts that underlay the views of at least many in attendance. A Colonel C.G. Williams, who was secretary of the Navy League as well as a GWVA member, said that no one could sit on the fence on this issue. "Those who are not with us are against us," said the Colonel. "[W]e want our country white from shore to shore," he continued. Canada could not be allowed "to drift into the hands of aliens" and if Canadian soldiers died for a "$1.10 a day then that should be the maximum day's wage for aliens." Concluding, Williams declared, "[i]n that way, and

48 For examples of meetings of four different branches see: Star, 3 January 1918, 9; Star, 4 January 1918, 17; Star, 12 January 1918, 11; Star, 22 January 1918, 12.
49 Star, 5 February 1918, 5
that way only, shall the alien make his contribution in war time to the land that has sheltered him."50

At this time, the question of aliens as a source of labour preoccupied participants in anti-alien politics and conscripting aliens to work at army rates appears to have been the official policy of the GWVA's local leadership. Many members opposed this position. At a regular branch meeting held a week after the Massey Hall rally the Central Toronto GWVA branch announced that its members would raid munitions plants in the city if employers did not accede to their demand that they dismiss all their alien employees. Some of the branch members who attended the meeting declared that they were prepared to go to jail if necessary. Twenty veterans were selected to act as a committee that would meet with heads of munitions plants and other branches in the city were asked to cooperate so that 200 or more could engage in the work. When interviewed on the matter the secretary of the Toronto District GWVA, James O'Connor, said that he disagreed with the strategy, preferring to force aliens to work at a $1.10 a day and give returned soldiers preference in hiring.51 Turley concurred with O'Connor. "We are the disciples of peace, not force," he told a reporter later in the week.52

Reports in the following days showed that there was division within the branch itself. George Murrell, the secretary of the Central Branch, had moved the resolution supporting the use of force if it proved to be necessary. Murrell finished his explanation to a reporter by saying that he had just "had a brother killed on the Italian front fighting for those skunks. It is not right."53 Murrell clearly felt that there were Italians at work in Toronto munitions plants and their presumed connection to an allied country did not soften his attitude towards them. In fact, it likely made him angrier, for as the statements of many veterans' attested, the honourable course of action for allied aliens in Canada was to return 'home' to fight. Other members of the branch did not like their comrade's plan of action and called a special meeting which denounced the use of force. The District organization similarly resolved against force at its regular meeting held that same Saturday.54

50 Star, 5 February 1918, 5
51 Star, 13 February 1918, 10
52 Star, 15 February 1918, 1
53 Star, 15 February 1918, 1
54 Star, 16 February 1918, 2
On Monday the principal officials of the Central Branch aired their differences. Secretary Murrell claimed that when he had made his motion to use force if necessary a week ago everyone who attended the meeting supported it. Arguing the government was not going far enough in addressing the alien problem, he said that if his motion regarding the use of appropriate force to rid munitions plants of foreign employees was put to the membership of the whole District it would receive ninety per cent support. Murrell also questioned the legitimacy of the special branch meeting that took place on Saturday, claiming that, effectively, no meeting had taken place. Branch president J. Tweedles conceded that Murrell's motion about using force had passed a week ago, but that less than the 1,000 members of the branch were in attendance. Besides this, Tweedles was worried that the motion put the association at odds with public opinion. The president lost his argument with his secretary and announced his resignation later that week. Murrell planned to go ahead with the raids.

At the branch's next meeting at the end of February the tensions within Toronto's GWVA were increasingly evident. The president of the District organization, Colonel Hardy, warned Central Branch members to be cautious about their approach to the alien question. ""The Government is watching the G.W.V.A.,"" Hardy told his audience, ""and Bolsheviki tactics will do us no good."" District secretary and founder of the local GWVA, Harold Meredith, took the same line as Hardy. He told those who favoured marching from one factory to the next to make their demands known that this was another form of Bolshevik behaviour. What Meredith and many others meant when they used the root-term 'Bolshevik' in this way was public and political actions that were unconstitutional and illegitimate, as well as disreputable.

Many of the veterans at the meeting disagreed with Meredith and let him know it, telling him, for example, that his views would be scorned by veterans overseas. The essence of the arguments of the un-named, pro-force members was that if the government was not going to do anything about the alien problem then acting on their own was legitimate. According to this view, it was the only just thing to do. In the end, the meeting could only resolve to call another mass meeting on the alien question.

55 *Star*, 18 February 1918, 4
56 *Star*, 21 February 1918, 10
57 *Star*, 28 February 1918, 5
Raiding munitions plants was avoided for the time being and the official GWVA proposal regarding forced alien labour was made clearer. In the first in a series of articles outlining the debate on the alien question printed in the *Star*, GWVA member Hardy explained that his association advocated employing aliens because their labour was needed for the war effort. However, foreigners employed in this way should be paid a soldier's rate of pay and the difference between this and prevailing rates in Canada's labour market should go to the government for war purposes. At a recent mass meeting in Hamilton Hardy said he had "urged moderation" and told his comrades "that we should not use force until after all law abiding means have failed." He warned that if government did not act soon it risked not only unjustly permitting aliens to profit while patriots suffered, it also risked encouraging the "tendency for Bolshevism, which is fostered under the present methods of dealing with the alien." 58 The Hamilton meeting's resolutions were endorsed at a meeting of Toronto's Central branch which added the demand that government make the Military Service Act applicable to allied aliens, and if international treaties made this illegal (as news on the subject indicated) then the government should negotiate new treaties to make it possible. Until this was done married men of the first contingent, some of whom were home for their first furlough since 1914, should not be sent back to France and second-class men should not be drafted. The meeting also resolved to censor reporters' notes about the meeting, suggesting a heightened concern not to offend public opinion. 59

The opinions of groups with a special stake in the debate were outlined in the *Star's* series also. The Manufacturers' Association and the Employers' Association both felt the policy was achievable, and they undoubtedly wished to prevent the raiding for recruits and for aliens that had disrupted munitions plants and small businesses in 1917. Organized labour was

58 *Star*, 8 March 1918, 14
59 *Star*, 12 March 1918, 8. For more on the abbreviated trip home of veterans of the first contingent (the "Old Original" or "Original Firsts") see Miller, *Our Glory and Our Grief*, 166-7. The *Star* reported on their presence in the city during their furlough and on the founding of the Originals' Club in 1918: 6 April, 5; 23 April, 1; 29 April, 14; 6 May, 19; 20 May, 12; 28 May, 11; 6 June, 7; 14 June, 6, 7; 17 June, 2; 18 June, 2; 28 June, 9.
divided.\textsuperscript{60} Toronto District Labour Council secretary T.A. Stevenson said that his organization would ""fight any proposal by the Government to tax the alien enemy all his earnings over $1.10 a day." He argued that if a man was good enough to be allowed into Canada then he had the right to earn what he could. If, on the other hand, the man was a risk to public security then he ought to be interned.\textsuperscript{61} Though asserting that ""95\%"" of all enemy aliens were labourers doing unskilled, heavy work, Stevenson clearly did not place them beyond the pale of the interests of organized labour.\textsuperscript{62} This may have been a sign of the growing, and temporary, solidarity of the whole working class in evidence at this time.

The secretary of the Toronto Street Railway Employees Union felt differently. W.D. Robbins was both a city Controller and the secretary of a high-profile, quasi-public sector union with many returned soldiers as members, as well as many former employees overseas. His sympathy for the GWVA's position was, therefore, unsurprising. However, he did more than concur with the veterans' proposals; he said that the plan would help rid the country of foreigners altogether. ""[W]e would be better without them, anyway,"" said the elected representative of the city and of one of its most influential unions.\textsuperscript{63}

Given the opportunity to respond to Stevenson's views in two other articles on this subject, Turley stressed the changed circumstances of wartime and the transformed perspective

\textsuperscript{60} \textit{Star}, 9 March 1918, 7; \textit{Star}, 12 March 1918, 4. When questioned on the motion to raid factories in mid-February management for the Dodge Manufacturing Company and the John Inglis Company said they did not welcome the veterans. The British Forgings Company said that it employed no aliens and the veterans were welcome to look for themselves. \textit{Star}, 15 February 1918, 1.

\textsuperscript{61} As did all contributors to debate on the alien question (and other questions) Stevenson normalized aliens and workers as masculine subjects.

\textsuperscript{62} \textit{Star}, 12 March 1918, 4. An interview with management at the Dodge Manufacturing Company showed that Stevenson's generalization about the kinds of jobs non-British immigrants typically occupied certainly held true for this plant. The plant's manager explained that the aliens employed there did the hard, unskilled work of "handling pig iron, coke and lumber". He also said he would be glad to employ others for this work "if this were possible". See: \textit{Star}, 15 February 1918, 1.

\textsuperscript{63} \textit{Star}, 12 March 1918, 4
The Ontario secretary of the GWVA said that the war had given the alien an advantage over native labour, and that since drafted workers would be the responsibility of the state, wards in a sense, then conditions of work would be improved. He then underlined the common membership of his organization and local unions, claiming that nine of ten veterans were working class. The next day's column on the alien question had an editorial tone, arguing that a compromise between organized labour and veterans was possible, especially because, as Turley had argued, they had, in a sense, the same membership. The proposed compromise amounted to shifting the 'alien problem' westward. Canada's enemy aliens would be employed in Prairie farm production, with the government paying them their $1.10 a day.

This article ended with Turley's second contribution to the discussion presented in this series. Referring to the view of government and of labour leaders such as Stevenson, the combat veteran and association official speculated that opponents of the GWVA's position were "actuated by a wrong perspective."

They have not seen what we have seen, and they do not see things as we do now. We went overseas and we did things which were said to be impossible because they were never done before. Everyone will admit that the Canadian soldiers have taken positions on the lines which were called impregnable. We do not claim to be supermen or anything like that, and we think that the men we left behind would have done just as well as we did. [...] Now, when we come home we are told that some things are impossible – just because they have never been done before – and we do not believe it. Turley ended by challenging his opponents to prove to veterans that it was impossible to implement their policy, for he saw no reason why aliens could not be stopped from profiting from the war.

In its next bid to influence public opinion and shape public policy, the Toronto GWVA organized a 'monster parade' for the first Saturday afternoon of spring 1918. Participants in the parade assembled at the central headquarters at Church and Carlton streets, where a crowd grew to several thousands waited to see the column embark. The parade was made up primarily of veterans, from both the GWVA and the much smaller local Army and Navy Veterans (ANV)
branch. There were civilians too, such as the member of the 'ladies' auxiliaries of the veterans' associations' who marched in the column. Each local GWVA branch marched as a group and those who could not walk rode in cars. Their route through the downtown brought them either near or directly in front of the provincial legislature, City Hall, and the armouries, as well as many of the office buildings of the crowded central core.\textsuperscript{66}

The banners they carried aloft on their circuitous way to their final destination, Massey Hall, testified to concerns expressed at least since 1917 and were clear evidence that their mood was more militant than ever. One reminded onlookers that married men would be drafted next. It implied that while these men anxiously prepared for an uncertain future 'The Alien Still Grins.' There were others that raised the theme of the duties of citizens compared to the freedoms of non-citizens more explicitly. 'Friendly Aliens and Neutral Aliens Exempted From Everything. Why?,' declared one. Another read, 'Conscript all British and Exempt all Aliens. Why?' The open-endedness of these messages, not to mention the attention-grabbing context in which they were given, shows that they were meant for broad consumption. Though veterans addressed the public at large, they wanted the ear of government in particular. One banner spoke directly to national government when it said, 'Take heed Ottawa, Toronto is in Dead Earnest.' Finally, the men in the parade let the public know that their identity as returned soldiers mattered. 'We did Not Fight to Fatten Aliens,' read one banner.\textsuperscript{67}

Similar to the patriotic rallies and pro-conscription mass meetings of recent years, one major resolution on the issue at hand had been prepared in advance with speeches given in its support. The Massey Hall meeting was simply an extension of the political spectacle that wound its way through the city. The hall was filled, police turning hundreds away at the doors. Places of honour, those rows nearest the stage, were given to invalided veterans. The crowd was made up mainly of returned soldiers, as well as dozens of the CEF old originals who were in town on leave, and citizens the Telegram described as the veterans' 'friends.'\textsuperscript{68} Collectively, the speeches constructed a narrative about the lacklustre patriotism of aliens, whether enemy, neutral or allied. According to this narrative, few enemy aliens had been interned and many allied aliens had not returned home to fight, profiting instead by working in the booming

\textsuperscript{66} Star, 23 March 1918, 5
\textsuperscript{67} Star, 23 March 1918, 5
\textsuperscript{68} Telegram, 25 March 1918, 9
wartime economy. It was British protection that permitted them to benefit in these ways, protection secured by the blood of British subjects fighting and dying overseas.

The unfairness of this situation came through strongly in the complaints and declarations of Toronto GWVA officials and their comrades from cities nearby, such as Hamilton and Oshawa. The "alien question" was called a "disease which we have to stamp out" by one, while others claimed that aliens were celebrating Germany's success in its recent offensive. Their sense that they were especially entitled to demand answers to the alien question was clearly expressed as well. According to a number of speakers, Union government was especially accountable to them because soldiers' votes and the votes of soldiers' wives had put it in office. Colonel William Hendrie of Hamilton compared veterans' rights to those of prohibitionists, saying that if they had the "right to force their ideals upon the people of Canada […] then we, returned soldiers, have an equal right." A voice from the audience shouted in reply "More right!" which brought applause and agreement from Hendrie.

As Ontario GWVA secretary Turley informed the crowd, the Saturday 'monster parade' and mass meeting were timed to precede a conference of GWVA delegates from across the country, the Prime Minister and members of his Cabinet, scheduled in Ottawa during the week following the Toronto meeting. Borden invited the delegation and the government paid its passage. Toronto District president Hardy took the resolutions of the Massey Hall meeting with him and was accompanied by C.E. Haight as the other Toronto representative. The delegation as a whole presented the Prime Minister with a petition asking that the government adopt veterans' proposals for regulating enemy alien workers (or interning them), making allied aliens subject to military service, and that no steps be taken to call up the next draft or return First Contingent soldiers to France until the alien question 'has been settled in a manner satisfactory to the citizens of Canada.' In addition, the GWVA's Dominion executive discussed the alien

---

69 Star, 23 March 1918, 5; Telegram, 25 March 1918, 9
70 Telegram, 25 March 1918, 9
71 Telegram, 25 March 1918, 9
72 Star, 26 March 1918, 2 and 5
73 House of Commons, Debates, 1918, Vol. 1, 977, 22 April 1918

171
question in its evening meetings held to coincide with the meetings if the Cabinet sub-committee.  

The Prime Minister did not respond with the decisive action the most radical anti-alien agitators wanted. Newspaper reports in the weeks and months following the Ottawa meetings explained the reasons for the government's inaction. In addition to fears that subjecting enemy aliens to onerous laws would give Germany an excuse to treat Canadian POWs poorly, there was the concern that controls on the freedoms of labour would anger workers who were already disagreeable about wages and treatment in the workplace. There was also the law to consider: proposals such as industrial conscription of aliens resident in Canada contravened international law, not to mention the fact that the rights of naturalized aliens were suppose to be upheld unless authorities deemed any of them to be dangerous.

These points were also made by members of the House of Commons during a debate in late April that came as a result of the government's lack of action on the proposals veterans presented at the meeting in late March. One of the remarkable features of debate that day was the way in which opinion was grouped in the national legislature. The government was attacked for its failure to act on the issue not by the opposition, but by back-bench members on its own side of the House. There were three motions about aliens the House was scheduled to consider, but to avoid overlap the one put forward by Unionist member for Comox-Alberni (in British Columbia) was taken up. H.S. Clements' motion seemed neutral enough: that laws pertaining to 'Alien labour in Canada' should be consolidated 'into one uniform law' flexible enough to accommodate 'the local conditions and needs of the different parts of the Dominion.'

The tone of debate was far from neutral, however, providing insight into the extent of anti-foreigner feelings at the time and the part that elected officials played in advocating

---

76 House of Commons Debates, 22 April 1918, 973-1026.
77 House of Commons Debates, 22 April 1918, 973
extreme measures. Clements argued that the alien labour question was of such importance 'that it merits every consideration possible from the Government, especially from a strong Union Government, who should deal with the situation with an iron hand.' In Clements' view, iron-handedness was needed to check 'seditious elements' that avoided service in the cause but swooped 'like a hawk' to grab jobs and businesses that men had left to go overseas. The approach was also needed to compel aliens to build and maintain railways to assist with the war effort, for Austrians, Italians and 'other elements' were 'naturally railroad builders.' Finally, a forceful attitude would deal with 'the men of Quebec.' Clements proposed that 75,000 French Canadians from Quebec be conscripted to work for 'six months or a year' in the British Columbia lumber industry. The Member of Parliament told his colleagues that he believed 'that when they returned to Quebec they would be better citizens and would educate the balance of that province.' Not surprisingly, Clements concluded his speech by saying: 'Before the clock tolled twelve to-night, I would institute in this country one flag, one school and one language.'

Were the opinions of Clements especially extreme in comparison with the other members who spoke in support of the motion? No. The anti-alien speeches of other members contained similar assumptions about the 'problem' of non-British immigrants and, to a lesser extent, of French Canadians.

Among these speakers were Toronto MPs who provided insight into the ways the supposed nation-wide 'problem' of aliens was interpreted in Toronto. W.F. Maclean of South York, whose own anti-alien motion was subsumed into discussion of the one presented by Clements, claimed the situation was so bad that it called for 'a re-writing of the definition of what constitutes citizenship, of the definition of an alien, and of the rights of an enemy alien.' Maclean argued that if government and Parliament studied the problems he and his colleagues were outlining 'we will be able to find a reasonable solution that will define citizenship and make it a law that every man who enjoys the protection of this country, be he alien or alien enemy, shall do his share of the work in hand.' Horatio Hocken of West Toronto supported his colleague, claiming that 'electors in every riding in the city of Toronto are hedged round by a foreign population which is contributing nothing to the conduct of the war, and which is

---

78 House of Commons Debates, 22 April 1918, 974
79 House of Commons Debates, 22 April 1918, 976-7
80 House of Commons Debates, 22 April 1918, 989
living in ease, comfort and luxury.' Thomas Foster, the victor over returned-soldier candidate Cockburn in East York, provided examples of conscripted citizens losing their businesses to 'foreigners' and of the 'hoarding' done by alien wage-earners in Toronto, who managed to get by 'cheaply' in comparison to 'Britishers' who strove to live on 'the best.' Foster called for immediate action to stop these kinds of injustices, despite the Prime Minister's recent news that it would 'take months, or possibly a year or two' to make agreements with European allies similar to the one nearly finalized with the United States enabling the two governments to draft citizens of the neighbouring country into their armed forces.

The speeches of the Toronto members also suggested some of the particular characteristics of the 'alien problem' in his city. For example, Foster answered his rhetorical question, 'What do we find in the city of Toronto?' by telling the House that '70,000 or 80,000 foreigners' lived in his city. They were distributed in different neighbourhoods, with, for example, '20,000 Macedonians and Bulgarians' in one 'section,' while 'in another section, about 25,000 Italians.' He estimated that half of them were naturalized. He emphasized that rising wage rates had attracted increasing numbers of foreigners to Toronto during the war. 'A few years ago a foreign voice was seldom heard in Toronto; to-day almost every second person you meet speaks a foreign language.' In walking down a main street recently, Foster had found it 'difficult to tell whether I was in Italy, Jerusalem or Toronto.'

The Parliamentary debate that day in April also clearly showed that veterans were effective in drawing attention to the alien question and making it a more urgent subject for government. Foster informed the House about the raids veterans had performed on factories and said he was worried that more serious violence would break out if something was not done to satisfy 'The Great War Veterans.' Clements and Maclean said that in their election campaigns the year before the 'problem' of aliens had been the second most important issue next to conscription, and the speeches of many MPs testified to the outspokenness of returned soldiers on the issue. Ontario MP and former Colonel of the Toronto-based 48th Highlanders,

---

81 House of Commons Debates, 22 April 1918, 994
82 House of Commons Debates, 22 April 1918, 1000
83 House of Commons Debates, 22 April 1918, 1000-1
84 House of Commons Debates, 22 April 1918, 1001
85 House of Commons Debates, 22 April 1918, 976, 987
J.A. Currie, spoke as a returned soldier and on behalf of his comrades when he weighed in on the motion. Another returned soldier MP, R.C. Cooper for South Vancouver, read into the record and for the benefit of the House the petition calling for the conscription of alien labour and the application of the MSA to allied aliens that the GWVA had submitted to Borden at its meeting with him nearly a month earlier. From the standpoint of public debate, then, the GWVA-led anti-alien campaign of the first quarter of 1918 was successful.

It took Ottawa longer to take action against aliens than anti-alien activists would have hoped, but they may have been consoled by initiatives taken locally. In the wake of Toronto veterans' anti-alien parade and mass meeting in late March, and after a fire at the Harris Abattoir that raised suspicions that foreign saboteurs were the cause, the city's Board of Control passed anti-alien motions. The first declared that in future alien enemies would be refused medical treatment at city expense, in the General Hospital or elsewhere, unless treatment or burial was a matter of public health. At the same meeting the board adopted the Mayor's motion that the assessment act be amended in the future to require employers to identify any enemy aliens in their employ. Some three weeks later City Council endorsed the GWVA's official alien policy of conscripting allied alien labour and taxing their earnings for the benefit of the war effort. Meanwhile, the Board of Control, led by the Mayor, continued to hector city department heads to make sure they employed no aliens, a policy adopted earlier in the war.

---

86 House of Commons Debates, 22 April 1918, 1006-1013. The Star (18 April 1918, 6) reported that local veterans requested that Currie press their views upon the government in the House in the upcoming debate.

87 House of Commons Debates, 22 April 1918, 977

88 The fire added to rumours that other major fires at industrial sites in the city during the war were the work of an enemy within. See: Star, 16 April 1918, 2.

89 Star, 18 April 1918, 2

90 Star, 7 May 1918, 19

91 As early as November 1914, the city executive ordered department heads to make certain they did not employ any 'non-naturalized persons or alien enemies of His Majesty the King.' CTA, RG 2, City Executive Committee Fonds, A2, Minutes of Board of Control (144687), Vol 29, July to Dec 1914, item 1257. In 1918 Controllers, with Church in the lead, were giving city
The support that veteran activists received from their Mayor, Thomas Langton Church, was an important reason for the success of the local GWVA's anti-alien campaign and for the advancement of the veterans' movement in Toronto more generally. Church was a Tory with a strong attachment to imperial identity. Since winning office in 1915, Church continuously promoted intensifying the war effort and took every opportunity to court the favour of returned soldiers. He praised them at every turn and repeated their demands for jobs, better pensions, and better treatment in general from the Dominion government, which he harshly criticized though he was himself a Conservative. Church also identified his politics with the more reactionary element of the expanding population of returned soldiers.

The speech Church delivered at the opening of the 1918 Dominion convention provides an example of his brand of Tory populism and his advocacy on veterans' behalf. Delivered in Toronto's three-year-old Technical School, where Dominion government vocational re-training classes were run for returned soldiers, the speech was typically wide-ranging. Among the topics Church addressed was the "alien enemy question," which he said was "one of Canada's most important questions." If any out-of-towners in the audience wondered where Toronto's mayor stood on this question they could not have wondered for long. "Last fall we elected a Government to solve this question," said Church, providing his interpretation of the election of Union government, "not to refer us to written and unwritten laws of The Hague Convention." Church felt that given Germany's flaunting of international law it was misguided to adhere to this treaty and it broke faith with Canada's fighting men. To applause from his audience of returnees, Church said: "Those who fought for the country should own the country, and they are going to own the country, and it is going to be a British country." 

department heads 'imperative instruction' to 'summarily' fire any enemy aliens they employed, despite any evidence that they were employed, and petitioning Ottawa and Queen's Park to basically ban the employment of enemy aliens altogether. Neutral and allied aliens were not forgotten either, coming in for treatment in a long-winded motion of the Mayor that reflected the concerns of veteran anti-alien activists. See: CTA, RG 2, City Executive Committee Fonds, A2, Minutes of Board of Control, Vol. 36, Jan-June 1918 (144694), items 245, 563, 655, 854. See also, *Star*, 8 May 1918, 2.

92 *Star*, 29 July 1918, 8

93 *Star*, 29 July 1918, 8
The ethno-nationalism revealed in statements of this sort was one of the two major themes of Church's speech. The other was the working-class identity of soldiers and returned men. "Ninety-five per cent of the members of the Canadian Expeditionary Force were from the working classes," and many of them were union members, said Church, who greatly exaggerated the working-class character of the CEF. They understood the need for labour to remain on the job while elsewhere in the industrial world unrest was growing, implied Church, mixing a plea for industrial peace with praise for the patriotism of workers. He elaborated on the shared interests of workers and former soldiers, complaining that they paid taxes "while munitions plants do not," referring to a local plant exempted from paying its assessment. Finally, he condemned government for permitting aliens to earn high wages at munitions plants ($9 to $10 a day, he claimed) while soldiers risked their lives for $1.10.94

Clearly, the local GWVA not only had the support of Toronto's mayor, but Church was seeking their support too. This was not the case with local labour leaders, though they did appear to be sympathetic to the grievances of returned soldiers. An early May meeting between District GWVA officials and TLC representative, the moderately socialist James Simpson produced a "better understanding" of the "alien labor question." All agreed that the proposal of the radical anti-alien element among veterans – that aliens be removed from their positions entirely – was a bad idea since production was needed for the war effort. However, they still disagreed about the wisdom of regulating the wages of aliens, the GWVA's official policy. It seems likely that they found more common ground when discussing the housing situation in the city than they did the alien question.95 In meeting to discuss these issues the two bodies established a dialogue; if they were not already in place, developments throughout the year showed that there were links between the two movements.

Local members of the GWVA also pushed their association to formulate clear proposals for dealing with the 'alien problem' at conventions of the Ontario and Dominion bodies in 1918. Representing sixty branches across the province, 160 delegates collected in Hamilton late in May to deal with the association's constitution, re-establishment and the alien question. A deputation of workers from Toronto travelled to Hamilton on the first day as well, wishing to

---

94 Star, 29 July 1918, 8
95 Star, 7 May 1918, 13
address the veterans on the question of alien labour, but it was denied the opportunity. Though some veterans wanted to hear the labour delegation and argued cooperation with labour was essential if progress on the "alien problem" were to be achieved, the majority likely felt that since they were already aware of what the representatives of labour would say, their time was better spent determining how to push government to adopt the GWVA's policy regarding alien workers. Debate about foreign workers led to a resolution calling on government to "immediately conscript alien labor" and delegates decided to send a telegram to Ottawa censuring the government for its inaction.

At the Dominion convention in Toronto later in the year the local members of the GWVA quickly learned that their anti-alien views were shared by members across the country. Delegates objected to the omission of the alien question from the report delivered by the Dominion secretary in the opening stages of the convention, making it evident that the 'alien problem' was of central interest to the membership as a whole. Delegates created a committee to deal with the matter, giving the issue a similar significance to bitter complaints about pension policy and administration, and the fractious issue of the association's constitution. Adopted by the convention on Friday, 2 August, the eight clauses of the report of the special committee on aliens formulated a position that went against both the Toronto GWVA's official proposal to conscript alien labour and tax alien wages, and the policy of removing aliens from high-paying war work that other veterans in the city favoured. Instead, the committee outlined steps the government should take to regulate the freedoms, property and income of enemy aliens, with favourable references made to arrangements in the US, as well as Britain and Australia. Action on the 'problem' of allied aliens called on them to be subject to the MSA and made no mention of their place in the labour market.

This relatively moderate position, given the context of the time, was undoubtedly influenced by executive officials attempting to restrain the radicalism of reactionary members. It was also indicative of differences between the local Toronto context and circumstances

96 Star, 23 May 1918, 18
97 Star, 25 May 1918, 4; Star, 27 May 1918, 12
98 Star, 25 May 1918, 4
99 Proceedings of Dominion GWVA Convention, 1918, 164-6; Star, 2 August 1918, 12
100 Proceedings of Dominion GWVA Convention, 1918, 164-6; Star, 2 August 1918, 12
nationally. With its many munitions plants and large veteran population, Toronto had an 'alien problem' unlike much of the rest of Canada. GWVA members such as Saskatchewan's Grant MacNeil, who became the association's leading figure in future years, objected as strongly as Toronto and Ontario comrades did to the presence of foreigners in Canadian society. The issue of aliens as wage-earners profiting from high wartime pay rates, especially in munitions plants, was less of a concern to delegates who were not from central Canada, however. If these specific industrial and class issues were especially relevant to Toronto they obviously were not uniquely Torontonian; many Ontario GWVA delegates were sympathetic to the objectives of their Toronto comrades and so were veterans from Montreal.

While delegates of the country's biggest association of returned soldiers discussed the resolutions dealing with aliens that first Friday of August 1918, some of their comrades gathered together to deal with the 'problem' more directly. As mentioned in the introduction to this chapter, they began by wrecking the interior of the Greek owned and operated White City Cafe early in the evening and did not stop until they had smashed up a dozen other restaurants owned by Greek immigrants. They caused over $40,000 damage, battling the police who eventually opposed the rioters, and the violence led to fifteen arrests and many injuries, though, apparently, none of them serious.101 Aside from a few comparatively minor incidents the raiding was over by the end of the first night of violence. Taking their place were parades, protest meetings and major clashes with police. Lesser disturbances occurred on subsequent days, until it was all over by 7 August.

Apart from the handful of rioters who were arrested, the street-fighters and restaurant raiders in Toronto in early August 1918 went unidentified as individuals. All accounts of the riots emphasized the extent to which civilians were involved, many of them young men, even teenagers. In a number of instances women participated by handing rocks to the men around them so they could throw them at police. As a whole, the Toronto press agreed that the crowds of rioters had more civilians than returned soldiers in them, though it was sometimes difficult to distinguish them. However, the daily newspapers were just as unanimous in giving veterans the leading role in the rioting; returned soldiers initiated the violence and led most of the crowd actions. It is also clear that large crowds of onlookers attended practically all the manifestations of riotousness or protest during those troubled days. Torontonians were out of

101 The estimate is that of the Telegram (3 August 1918, 20).
doors to enjoy summer weather and for this reason there were large numbers of people who
could easily respond, with concern or curiosity, to the news of unrest and get themselves close
enough to the central action to be part of the general scene.

As long-lasting and spacially wide-ranging events involving thousands of people, the
details of the riots are complicated and contested. No single version of any one of the major
incidents in the riots can be fully trusted and while generalizations may be made, no entirely
reliable synthesis of events is possible. Whether it is the affair at the White City Cafe involving
Private Cluderay that inflamed veteran feeling on Thursday night; the sacking of the Marathon
Lunch at which police were present on Friday; the clashes between crowds and police at
Shrapnel Corners on Saturday night; or the parade from Queen's Park, each event can be seen
and understood from a variety of perspectives. What is certain is that veterans' actions were a
logical extension of a trend begun in 1917 and that they were motivated partly by comradeship
and partly at outrage at foreigners.

Veterans' collective behaviour and the places they targeted built on the pattern of acting
directly and forcibly they had established in 1917 as recruiters, as pro-conscriptionists and as
'alien hunters.' Some of the members of the angry crowd that touched off the rioting at the
White City Cafe may have been among the veterans who raided the business the previous year,
taking two Greek workers to a police station to have their status checked.102 It is also clear that
veterans initially took to the streets to avenge a comrade. Accounts of what happened at the
White City Cafe on Thursday night are contradictory, but what is clear is that veterans believed
their comrade, Private Cluderay, had been bloodied and left in an alley by waiters at the
restaurant. Veterans organized that night to seek out one employee of the place in particular,
called a 'Turk' by some returned men, confronting the proprietor and demanding to know the
presumed culprit's whereabouts, which they did not learn. According to some accounts they
said they would return the next evening to learn where the man was and if they were still
disappointed there would be consequences.

The outrage veterans felt, then, was rooted in a story of bloody injustice which was
spread by word of mouth, so that sound or unsound knowledge of the story was widespread
among rioters. Rioters furthermore saw their actions not only as justified retribution but as a

102 These events are discussed in Chapter Two. See: *Globe*, 14 April 1917, 1 and 8; *Star*, 16
April 1917, 3; *Globe*, 16 April 1917, 9.
form of protest about the supposedly selfish and unpatriotic behaviour of foreigners and the failure of government to do anything about this 'alien problem.' One returned soldier interviewed the day after the Friday night riots characterized them as 'the consumption of a series of irritations which have been experienced for some time.' This ex-officer sympathized with 'the men,' who 'have been insulted in restaurants run by foreigners. It is another instance,' he concluded, 'of the protest of the returned soldiers to the Government for tolerating these aliens and allowing them take all their money.' Other interviewees agreed, saying, for example, that every place they went it was 'a case of handing your money over to foreigners.'

Only a minority of veterans actually participated in the Friday night destruction of restaurants and many veterans spoke out against the violence. When they learned of the violence delegates at the GWVA convention, which took place in the Technical School near Harbord and Bathurst streets, supported a resolution condemning the violence. GWVA leaders must have been especially disappointed with the rioting, for it was exactly what they had cautioned their comrades against ever since veteran unrest began to emerge on the home front. Even when regretting riotousness, though, veterans and other commentators interpreted the violence within the context of anti-alien politics; that is, as protests against unpatriotic aliens and an unresponsive government. GWVA officials said that if governments had acted on their proposals earlier the riots could have been avoided and there were civilians who agreed, such as an alderman who did not condone "'mob law'" but washed his hands of any responsibility for the situation. He explained that despite their best efforts councillors had failed to de-license foreign business owners. "'It is now a matter for the Dominion Government,'" said the city representative.

For the city's veterans protest also characterized their organized response to the riots. While condemning breaches of the law as unacceptable, the attitude of all commentators, GWVA officials also blamed officials for failing to appropriately respond to the riots. The GWVA was largely responsible for getting the inquiry into police actions during the riots initiated by the city in September. Referred to as the 'Riot Probe,' the inquiry was conducted by Police Commissioners Denison and Winchester and Mayor Church, an arrangement veterans and the press felt was a conflict of interest. The commissioners reported in October and few

103 Telegram, 3 August 1918, 19
104 Telegram, 3 August 1918, 20
were happy with the outcome of the investigation, which blamed some individual constables but otherwise exonerated the force.

At the 'Riot Probe' GWVA officials criticized the police for lack of courage and initiative, accused some constables of corruption, and also claimed that in a number of instances police had over-reacted to the situation, striking innocent civilians and veterans. In front of those responsible for the police force they argued for reform of police administration and for higher standards among constables. The local GWVA also felt that military authorities were better suited to police returned soldiers because they would better understand the attitudes of veterans.

**Conclusion**

As many have pointed out, anti-foreigner attitudes usually run high during wartime, when the enemy is often demonized and fears of enemies within spread.105 If this is a general human tendency then the more specific nature of the politics, culture and economic conditions of a given society shape the intensity and character of these feelings and the literature on the Great War's home fronts has demonstrated this reality.106 However, this topic is strangely marginalized in the literature on the veterans of the war. Morton and Wright frankly point to veterans' anti-foreigner attitudes but make relatively little of them and do not question veterans' own identity as Anglo-Canadians. Immigration was less significant for European belligerents, but the issue of 'foreignness' was certainly present as was race, yet these are never important

---


themes in the literature on the veterans' movement of those nations. Given the importance ascribed to nationalism for causing the war in the first place, and the part it played in mobilizing volunteers and generating support for the cause, this seems even stranger. The theme needs to be part of how the history of veterans' movements and their politics are analyzed. It can teach us more about veterans' motivations to fight and will certainly provide more insight into their interpretations of the conflict in which they played central roles. More than this, accounting for the ethno-national identity of returned soldiers may illuminate their wartime history and the history of home front society and politics.

Past chapters have emphasized the prominence of British-Canadian identity in Toronto and demonstrated the significance of this identity for returned soldiers in their efforts to build their own associations, call attention to their views and reinforce their comrades overseas. This chapter has shown that veterans made a direct link between this identity and ideas of citizenship and that this informed their attitudes about the conduct of the war effort, about their re-establishment and about the nature of Canada. These were amorphous, ill-defined subjects and one of the reasons the 'alien problem' emerged as one of the major home front issues of 1918 was its ability to simplify intractable problems. The basic question of what to do about the so-called alien problem was also a question of how to manage the labour force, what to do about price inflation and about the different legal status of Canadian residents.

Given the prevailing discourse about the utmost importance of patriotism and selfless service for the cause it was perfectly reasonable for veterans and other Canadians to argue that these values should regulate the job market, business profits and high wages. And why should they not decisively govern conscription policy? The Military Service Act was among several legal interventions granting Ottawa extraordinary powers during the war, all of which were justified as being in the interests of the war effort. These powers included sweeping authority over all Canadian residents including the right, which government acted on, to intern enemy aliens. Assuming that conscripting aliens into the CEF or into national works projects was not significantly different, is no great leap in logic.

Underlying the issues of policy dealt with in anti-alien politics were ideas about aliens and citizens that were vital to veterans' activism in 1918 and that illuminate the nature of the struggle in which veterans' engaged. Fundamentally, citizens were British and since aliens were not British they were not truly citizens. Citizenship might be acquired through naturalization but this process did not guarantee the acquisition of British identity. Veterans
talked about Canadian citizenship too and thought of themselves as Canadians, but the word 'British' was more important in this context because it carried ethnic meaning and suggested a historical and political framework that, at least for most veterans, 'Canadian' did not. In the view of most veterans and for many Anglo-Canadians, aliens were not British in this sense. As non-citizens the government had the right to govern them in the interests of the wartime state and of British citizens. For the anti-alien extremists who were an influential minority among veterans, it made little difference if the aliens in question were citizens. Their proposals concerning the treatment of naturalized Canadians, of French Canadians and of 'unpatriotic' ' slackers' were evidence of this.

All of this points to the importance of ideas of ethno-national identity and of race for the war effort and for interpretations of the meaning of the war itself. Calling the war a 'white man's war' or the cause a 'British cause' were meaningful shorthands for ideas that did more than shape understandings of the conflict. They clearly were part of the motivation for fighting in the first place and many of the soldiers who returned home were prepared to continue fighting for the 'British cause' on the home front.
Chapter 5. Association Members

When Willard Purney, Dominion President of the Great War Veterans Association, opened the third day of that association's convention in Toronto on Saturday, 3 August 1918 he was angry and ""disgusted."" He knew it was a ""strong word"" but it was how he felt about the previous night's rioting, ""the very"" thing he had come ""to the convention to talk about."" What disgusted him was ""the idea some returned men have that they can take constituted authority by the throat and do as they like.""1 Delegates were in agreement and heartily endorsed a resolution condemning the violence veterans led the night before.

Purney's outrage and the anti-rioting resolution are examples of disagreements among veterans. In 1918, and especially at the GWVA Dominion convention that year, disagreements were becoming more serious and causing members to leave the organization, sometimes with the intention of supporting new associations of returned men. Though the GWVA absorbed associations of returned soldiers as it expanded across the country to become Canada's largest veterans' group, far from all were assimilated and new ones continued to be created. In part, this pattern reflected the diversity of opinion and disunity of veterans but, just as importantly, diversity and disunity existed within institutions as well.

Disapproval of violent action and disagreement about methods of protest were not the only reason for disagreement within the GWVA and among veterans more widely. In addition to forms of political action, politics itself gave rise to divisive debate. So did experience in uniform. While experience as soldiers provided a broad basis for collective identity, there were important variations in soldier experience which led large numbers of returned men to feel that not all who wore khaki were worthy of being called veterans. Identity in terms of social class and military rank were underlying factors in these debates helping to create a fractious community of returned soldiers.

Focused on 1918 but examining institutional developments and rivalries in 1919 as well, this chapter explains the nature of divisions among veterans, examining the language veterans

---

1 *Star*, 3 August 1918, 10
used in their debates about politics, protest and membership. Veterans continued to emphasize the themes of Britishness and masculinity and sacrifice for the cause. Their debates about the nature of protest were connected to ideas about legitimacy that were especially important to the leaders of the wartime movement who often used the terms 'Bolshevism' and 'constituted authority' or 'constitutional means' to express their views. Analysis of veterans' discourse in the contexts explored in this chapter demonstrates the need to unpack the terms Bolshevism, politics and veteran, for each were contingent and complex.

'They are all returned soldiers'
In December 1916, the same month that the Great War Veterans' Association made its proud entrance onto Toronto's public stage at Women's Tribute Night,² 'CITIZEN' wrote to the editor of the *Star* to add his opinion to a debate about buttons for 'AR men,' a term for men who had attested for service in the CEF but had been rejected as unfit. He agreed with past letter writers that AR men should wear the buttons the AR Club had designed on their behalf, and likely for the same reasons: so that recruiters would not target them and to demonstrate a patriotism that would hopefully inspire other men to attempt to enlist.³ But 'CITIZEN' also thought that men such as he, who had served months in the military in Canada before ultimately being discharged as medically unfit, deserved an identifying button and one that was sanctioned by government. He had his discharge papers but he could hardly pin these to his chest as proof for disapproving

---

² See Chapter 2.
³ Elsewhere in the same edition, the *Star* excerpted and explained the content of a letter to its editor from the acting secretary of the AR Club that included a club circular explaining the organization's 'ideals,' one of which was that men rejected for service ought to still do their bit at home. The club's enamel pin that was partly meant to symbolize this principle bore the letters "A. R." on a red ensign, with concentric circles of white and blue surrounding it, and the club motto, "Khaki of the Button," in gold letters on the white circle.' The red ensign was Canada's widely recognized but unofficial (at the time) flag. See: *Star*, 23 December 1916, 5; the letter from 'CITIZEN' appeared at page 8.
strangers and confrontational recruiters that he had done his duty as every patriotic man
should.4

In April 1917 'A Soldier's Wife' wrote to the same paper, providing more insight into the
service of Canadian-based soldiers. Engaging in a debate over the support given soldiers' wives
through the Patriotic Fund, this letter writer informed readers that her husband had to pay his
way to 'internment camps' (where he no doubt guarded prisoners) and she did not receive any
separation allowance, something paid to the wives and dependents of overseas soldiers. Service
on the home front also meant paying the rising cost of living, unfair, said 'Soldier's Wife' for a
patriotic couple living on a fixed income of $45 a month.5 Some weeks earlier, a number of
soldiers returning from overseas were bitterly critical of the military for leading them to believe
they were fit to serve. They had passed medical examinations in Canada only to be rejected for
service in England.6 There were often such men in groups of soldiers returning from overseas,
informed the Globe, and they were examples of the minority of army enlistees found unfit to
serve.

The story of these disappointed men and those of 'CITIZEN' and the Toronto soldier
posted to internment camps illustrate how broad the scope of experience could be for men who
enlisted in the military. The figure of the frontline infantry soldier was practically iconic it so
dominated representations of military service, but there were in fact many different branches of
service and large numbers of men who did not go into the trenches. Though fighting was
celebrated and was the task commonly attributed to men in uniform, there were necessarily
innumerable non-combatant positions in camps and offices at home or overseas. Enlistment for
the cause, demonstrating the willingness to fight, and experience in uniform gave the men who
served in these contexts a claim to veteran status and their own personal identity as former
soldiers.

4 Star, 21 December 1916, 8.
5 Star, 12 April 1917, 10. Though it seems that the soldier referred to in this letter served at
internment camps located far from Toronto, the city did have a facility at the Exhibition where
so called 'enemy aliens' were incarcerated and either shipped to remote internment camps, such
as the one near Kapuskasing in northern Ontario, or else eventually released.
6 Globe, 19 March 1917, 9
A broad common identity as ex-serviceman was, however, too weak to unite former soldiers within one all-inclusive organization of veterans. In 1917 the existence in Toronto of the Association of Honourably Discharged Soldiers, the GWVA and the ANV made this truth apparent. The 'committee of alien hunters' that was organized in the spring of that year was another example of institutional diversity among veterans, for as the Star reported of its members, '[t]hey are all returned soldiers but one.'7 In the remaining months of the war and into the post-war period various other veterans' organizations were created. Examining the formation of these organizations reveals a pattern of continual debate about veterans' collective goals and the means of achieving these goals. Issues of social class and military hierarchy, as well as the nature of war service and experiences, were other major problems with which returned soldiers struggled as they sought to formally associate.

As Chapter 2 showed, comradeship was a major reason why returned soldiers formed formal associations. Here it is made clear that comradeship came in degrees and had limits. In part, veterans' debates about organizing and reorganizing their institutions were arguments about the very meaning of the word and idea 'veteran.' Debates about membership were also about politics. Membership was felt to determine the character of the association in question, providing it with its public identity and influencing its goals as an institution. Underlying membership debates and the creation of so many associations of former soldiers were differences between veterans about how to pursue their goals, divisions of class and of war experience.

Many veterans' organizations reflected the specific interests of the men who identified as veterans. For example, the Association of Honourably Discharged Soldiers was established in mid-1917 by former soldiers who did not go overseas who felt they needed their own organization. Its main goal appears to have been winning the same discharge pay for non-overseas men as those who had returned from overseas but who did not make it to the front.8 The Association of Honourably Discharged Soldiers also shared the desire of the letter-writer 'CITIZEN' (and perhaps included him as a member) for a government-approved button. This would be a personal symbol members could wear that would tell others they had joined the

---

7 *Star*, 16 April 1917, 3
8 Minutes of Board of Control, Vol. 34, 28 June 1917, 1612; *Star*, 28 June 1917, 2; *Star*, 10 July, 1917, 15; *Star*, 27 August 1917, 9
CEF and through no fault of their own their service was eventually rejected because they had been deemed unfit for the strains of army life. Ottawa appears to have responded to the requests from organizations such as the AHDS and the AR Club. It was reported in October 1917 that the government would issue buttons that displayed the letter 'A' for men who had served at the front, 'B' if they had reached England, 'C' if their service was limited to Canada, and 'D' for those who had attested and been rejected for service, so long as they had done so prior to the passage in Parliament of the Military Service Act on 10 August 1917.9

Groups of veterans with specific interests formed a number of other organizations too. The Imperial Veterans of Canada was established in Winnipeg in October 1918 to look after the special needs of British veterans.10 The Tuberculous Veterans' Association was established in 1921, but grew out of loosely organized branches that began to operate in 1918 within the various sanatoria that treated soldiers afflicted with tuberculosis across the country.11 Neither of these had much presence in Toronto. By way of contrast was the Amputations Association of Canada, founded in 1921. Its head was Sidney Lambert, whose service at the front cost him a leg and who had been active since 1918 as the spokesperson for the 'Fragments from France' in Toronto, the roots of the 1921 institution. Toronto was the natural place for organizing war amputees because all who needed to be treated for amputation, fitted and acclimated to the use of artificial limbs were brought to Toronto, where the firm contracted to supply the Canadian government with artificial limbs manufactured.12

All these associations lobbied the government on behalf of their membership, which was restrictive. Another formal association of veterans with restrictive membership was the Originals Club, an institution of combat survivors of the CEF's First Contingent. These men were often already old soldiers of the British Army, many with service in South Africa, when they enlisted in 1914. The young men without previous military service who joined the First

9 Telegram, 16 October 1917, 7
10 Morton and Wright, Winning the Second Battle, 119
11 Morton and Wright, Winning the Second Battle, 186
12 The Amputations Association emerged out of the Fragments from France, a loose organization based in Toronto hospitals, eventually became the present-day War Amps. Another important institution with its roots in Great War Toronto is the Canadian National Institute for the Blind, which grew out of a facility created in 1918 at Pearson Hall.
Contingent became old soldiers themselves fighting beside these veterans as Princess Pats or in other units that saw action early at Second Ypres.\(^\text{13}\) The club's origins dated back to March 1918 when hundreds of veterans of the CEF's first contingent, the Original Firsts or Old Originals, returned to Canada, with scores of them coming to Toronto. These enlisted men and non-commissioned officers were on their first home furlough since enlisting in 1914 and were due back overseas in May. The army may have hoped that it would not need to place them back in the firing line, but the German offensive that spring (which was widely expected) convinced them to cut their furlough short and order them back overseas. Some of Toronto's Original Firsts entrained for the journey back on 6 April. Four days later forty-one of their comrades held a protest meeting at Victoria Hall. All but two of these men were survivors of more than three years of frontline service, many were in their forties and all were married. One of the old veterans at the meeting pointed out that of the 3,412 married men in the First Contingent only 382 were still serving.\(^\text{14}\)

Clearly, these trench survivors had more reason to 'kick' than practically any other group at the time. The group unanimously passed a resolution calling on the government to replace them in the lines with married civilian men, who were not yet conscripted, or with other civilians who were as fit as they to fight. They did not demand to be discharged but they argued they had the right to stay in Canada. They compared their treatment with that of Imperials and French troops. The Old Contemptibles, the few survivors of the British force that fought in the earliest actions in Belgium, were back home with jobs, said the Original Firsts. Meanwhile, Imperials were given leave every nine months and French soldiers every six months, much more generous than the Canadian rate. The veteran soldiers also complained that while they sacrificed so much others were profiting at home, aliens worst of all. They agreed that they would pursue their grievances by making their views known to Militia Minister Mewburn, Overseas Minister Kemp, and all Toronto MPs. If they were refused, the men said they would demand to be examined by a medical board to determine their fitness. Finally, they

\(^\text{13}\) The club was usually referred to simply as the Originals. Two-thirds of the First Contingent was British born and a significant number of these men were former British Army soldiers.

\(^\text{14}\) *Star*, 11 April 1918, 6
agreed to seek permission to march past the grandstand erected for a celebratory day the city was planning in their honour for 4 May.\textsuperscript{15}

The moderation of these men seems extraordinary considering the imminence of their return to the danger zone they had lived in for so long against the odds. One of the Original Firsts explained part of the reason for this when he said that though he and his comrades had a right to remain in Canada "we are still soldiers and we've got to go the regimental way about it," in terms of protest.\textsuperscript{16} The Original Firsts in Toronto's Victoria Hall that April evening were still subject to military discipline, which they knew to be severe. All the same, considering what they faced it would have been reasonable to opt for something other than a constitutional approach to protest. Perhaps being put "in irons," as the speaker called it, was acceptable given the alternative of returning to the front? Was desertion not an option?

It is impossible to know what precisely these men were thinking and feeling at the time. Clearly at this moment, however, they hoped to influence decision-makers by performing their citizenship and emphasizing their veteran identity rather than by contravening soldierly duty. The conservativeness of their approach marked the Originals Club that was founded during their leave. It continued to exist as a private club in the 1920s, its 'conversation' with the public largely limited to the participation of members in commemorative parades and events.

Regimental associations are other important examples of exclusive institutions of returned soldiers. Some of these pre-dated the war if they were based in established regiments, while others were created by members of battalions authorized during the war and disbanded afterwards. The end of the war and the return of masses of men led to a proliferation of associations rooted in collective membership in military units. The closer associations of veterans were to actual military units the more conservative they were. Associations of permanent units tended to stick to military forms and hierarchy fairly strictly while associations of comrades of disbanded units had a more casual, egalitarian character, though officers and often former commanding officers tended to heavily influence these associations.

The purpose of such associations was mainly social. This was not limited to organizing congenial gatherings on a regular basis. It also included attending to the social needs of members and their dependents, including the families of the fallen. Former members of the 19\textsuperscript{th}

\textsuperscript{15} Star, 11 April 1918, 6
\textsuperscript{16} Star, 11 April 1918, 6
Battalion envisioned a revitalized association of former members on just these lines when they met nearly a year after the armistice. Discussion of whether the association would debate public affairs ended with the agreement that this would be left to the city's many other veteran associations. Elsewhere in the city that same day former soldiers of the Army Service Corps met to discuss creating an Army Service Corps Association that would also serve as a private social club and social service agency. But the latter group of soldiers did not preclude addressing so-called controversial subjects if they were important enough, such as the re-establishment policies of the federal government which were under intense scrutiny at the time.\(^{17}\)

Until the formation of the Canadian Legion of the British Empire Service League the Army and Navy Veterans was the most inclusive association of ex-soldiers in Canada, but its conservative outlook meant it was similar to regimental associations in important respects. The ANV pre-dated the war and had loosely connected branches scattered across the country and the Empire, welcoming former servicemen of the Crown, regardless of where in the Empire they had served or when. It was rejuvenated by the influx of Great War soldiers and put on a national footing. It did so conscious of its difference from the newly formed GWVA. ANV delegates attended the GWVA's founding convention in Winnipeg in April 1917 and left when the majority of attendees resolved to limit membership to veterans of the current war. The ANV soon had a large following in western Canada but it never reached the national proportions of the GWVA or neared the GWVA in political influence. Compared with other associations the ANV's profile in Toronto remained fairly low during and after the war but it was also present in two versions in the city. The Army and Navy Veterans of Canada in Ontario's capital was a separate organization from His Majesty's Army and Navy Veterans. The differences between the two never interested anyone enough to make them newsworthy but the latter appears to have been rooted in an association that existed in Toronto prior to the war while the former was established during the war. In Toronto neither association involved itself in the city's public life to anywhere near the extent of the GWVA, though they did engage in some adjustment work on behalf of members and relief or charitable initiatives for members and their families.

\(^{17}\) *Star*, 4 November 1919, 23
Tensions in veteran identity pulled former soldiers into different associations and in different directions, but a common identity as ex-servicemen continued to distinguish them from the rest of society and motivate them to find ways of working together. These patterns are clear from the evidence in wartime Toronto where the GWVA, the ANV, the AR Club, the Association of Honourably Discharged Soldiers and the short-lived Soldiers' Grievance Committee appeared at meetings together and occasionally met to discuss mutually important issues, to parade on city streets or to endorse specific, mutually agreed to aims. The pattern continued in the year after the war ended. As shown below, the forces of division were far more powerful in the immediate postwar period, but the motivation for mutual effort was greater too.

'Such a course of action can only be Bolshevism.'

As the previous two chapters have shown, the most serious division that existed between veterans in terms of their engagement in the public sphere was over the issue of violence. In 1917 ex-soldiers who raided restaurants and other businesses and who confronted anti-conscriptionists were criticized for their rough and disreputable methods by other veterans. Two statements from veterans symbolize the divisions that existed among veterans on this question. Midway through 1917 former Sergeant Lowery declared that he and his mates "were still able to do some fighting yet," while early in 1918 Turley, another returned Sergeant, told a newspaper reporter that veterans were "disciples of peace, not force." Turley's statement was made as disapproval of violent action began to mount among GWVA officials during the association's campaign to push the alien question to the top of the government's agenda. Just as the GWVA appeared to be making headway that would advance its policies and bolster the organization's reputation as the true voice of veterans, key figures in the organization began speaking out against unruliness and violence on the part of members and veterans generally. At a meeting of the Central Toronto GWVA at the end of February 1918, Hardy told the members of the city's most militantly anti-alien branch that 'Bolsheviki tactics will do us no good.'

18 Telegram, 4 June 1917, 11; Star, 15 February 1918, 1
19 Star, 28 February 1918, 5
In early 1918 the term Bolshevism was beginning to be widely used in public discourse, but when Hardy criticized the 'Bolsheviki tactics' of his comrades he was not calling veterans socialist revolutionaries. Neither was James J. Shanahan later that month when he used the word in an interview with the press in which he announced he was leaving the GWVA. Shanahan was upset that the GWVA granted membership to soldiers who had gone no further than England and he felt that accepting public funds was a mistake too because it 'resulted in a number of paid officials in Toronto who far outnumber the actual needs.' The past weekend's Massey Hall meeting appeared to anger him the most. He condemned civilians and returned soldiers who declared on a public platform 'that the law should be defied and force resorted to to accomplish any purpose, as was advocated by a G.W.V. at the recent demonstration in Massey Hall.' Shanahan argued that '[s]uch a course of action can only be Bolshevism.'

In the weeks following Shanahan's announcement the GWVA's leadership continued to speak out against violence and mob rule. A meeting of the District executive was called in mid-April to denounce an incident that occurred a few days earlier. On the assumption that Fred Spade was an alien who had threatened a soldiers' wife, veterans 'harshly treated' him after taking him from his home. The local officials announced to the press that it 'deeply regrets the deplorable incident' and that it was opposed to mob actions, arguing that 'the law offers all redress for wrong.'

In these examples both veterans were speaking out against a particular form of protest to which they strongly objected.

In the weeks following Shanahan's announcement the GWVA's leadership continued to speak out against violence and mob rule. A meeting of the District executive was called in mid-April to denounce an incident that occurred a few days earlier. On the assumption that Fred Spade was an alien who had threatened a soldiers' wife, veterans 'harshly treated' him after taking him from his home. The local officials announced to the press that it 'deeply regrets the deplorable incident' and that it was opposed to mob actions, arguing that 'the law offers all redress for wrong.'

The local GWVA also informed the press that Dominion secretary N.F.R. Knight called for greater restraint from members in their public pronouncements in a circular.

---

20 Star, 27 March 1918, 7. Shanahan told the Star that he planned to help organize a branch of the Comrades of the Great War in Toronto, which accepted only frontline veterans. He participated with other former members of the 3rd Battalion in creating a new regimental association of former combat veterans and visited British Columbia, where he felt veterans' institutions were less petty than in Toronto and where a greater number stressed membership for overseas men only. He either never left the GWVA or re-joined, however, for he was present and active at its convention in Toronto later that year, a fact that upset several of the other Toronto delegates who knew he had once given up on their association. See articles in the Star in 1918: 30 March, 6; 16 April, 8; 30 April, 13; 10 July, 19; 30 July, 1, 4.

21 Star, 13 April 1918, 11
letter to branches that week. Two days later reporters learned that Knight, who was frequently in Toronto, cited the problem of veterans' unruliness in a letter announcing his resignation.

Though illness was the reason the latest Dominion executive official gave for resigning it was clear that divisions within the organization deeply troubled him. In his letter that the local GWVA provided to newspapers the outgoing official said that 'there is dissention and disagreement amongst our members' that would 'destroy' the organization if it was 'not smothered out.' Writing in vagaries members were meant to understand, Knight said the 'wiles and fancies of a few' were 'doing harm that can never be repaired.' The 'only hope' of achieving the veterans' goals, argued Knight, 'lies not in government, but in the respect and good opinion of the general public and in our own ability to command the esteem of all honourable men and women.'

News about the opposition of many veterans to the rough behaviour of their comrades was one example of divisions among returned men. Despite the appearance of the term Bolshevism this conflict was more about political practice than it was about radical political ideology. As Knight emphasized in his letter and as Purney told the GWVA convention the morning after veterans destroyed Greek-owned restaurants, violence destroyed the public sympathy that was essential for the success of veterans' demands. The consequence of disorderliness, therefore, was one reason it was opposed. But there was more to it than this. Purney, Shanahan, Hardy, Knight and the executive members of the District GWVA, were all official and elected representatives of the association they helped organize, as well as symbolic representatives of all veterans. As officials of the GWVA they were committed to the respectability their association claimed, a commitment that indicated a traditional approach to political process summed up in the phrase 'constitutional methods.'

For these veterans their faith in British parliamentary traditions, democratic process, lobbying and public debate legitimized their interests and goals, while the 'Bolsheviki tactics' of some of their comrades did the opposite. Shanahan seemed to be especially conservative in his

---

22 *Star*, 13 April 1918, 11

23 *Star*, 15 April 1918, 1

24 *Star*, 15 April 1918, 1

25 For Purney's statement see above and *Star*, 3 August 1918, 10.
views, for he implied that the GWVA's public campaign against aliens was inappropriate not only because so many voices within the association clamoured for forceful action, but because sovereign government was properly empowered to deal with such questions, not associations of private citizens. The GWVA, then, could raise awareness and propose policies but forcing action on 'constituted authority' was wrong. Parliament decided what the public interest was and government took action on this basis. That was how it was meant to work. Whether used by moderates or apparent reactionaries such as Shanahan the power of the term Bolshevism lay partly in the fact that it evoked foreignness, and especially the backwardness commonly associated with Russia. Not only were rowdy veterans being told that their behaviour was not respectable, they were being told that they were acting in an un-British fashion. Only foreigners, after all, would not know how things were meant to work.

The term was all the more important because of its meanings in relation to the war. As the GWVA's inaugural issue of *The Veteran* emphasized, and as did other mainstream news outlets, the Bolsheviks led Russia out of the war. Appearing as election-day neared in December 1917, *The Veteran* urged readers to carry on the fight that Bolshevik-led Russia was backing out of, the inference being that Bolsheviks were being disloyal to Russia's allies, cowardly and losing faith with Russia's fallen soldiers. Prior to the emergence of the Red Scare in Canada in the Fall of 1918, the radicalism of Bolshevism was often less important for veterans' use of the term than the way it evoked other meanings contained in the term. Its use by returned soldiers was not, however, separated from the question of class.

---

26 Several of A.T. Hunter's interventions in the public debate about the August riots during the inquiry into the events provide evidence of this opinion about Russia. Hunter compared the lawlessness on Toronto streets during the riots with Russian Pogroms, the fault to some extent of the incompetence of Toronto police and local authorities. As for the practice of mounted policemen cracking whips, charging crowds and chasing innocent citizens (such as Hunter), he called this 'sheer cossackry' (*Globe*, 8 October 1918, 9).

27 *The Veteran*, December 1917. For more discussion of this term's relevance for veterans see the following chapter that considers the Red Scare, the context in which historians typically situate the term Bolshevism.
A significant number of GWVA leaders who accused rank and file comrades of pursuing 'Bolshevism' as a 'course of action' spoke from a position of elevated socio-economic status. Purney and Hardy held the rank of Colonel and may have felt responsible for ordinary soldiers and confident in their own superior judgement. Purney's statements as president of the GWVA clearly show that he held the position not only to advance the interests of returned men but to shepherd them in the right direction. Other former officers, such as Hunter and Hardy in Toronto, likely included this as among their reasons for joining, as well as working to expand, the association. Hunter's views about the failures of police to prevent and quell the rioting of early August clearly demonstrated an officer's perspective on how to regulate the behaviour of 'ordinary' men. The available evidence suggests that those officers who were members of the GWVA were officials rather than ordinary members. Many of them, in addition, held paid positions in the military or government, making it even less likely that they would countenance lawlessness.

With civil servants and militia officers, as well as government MPs and MPPs, as members, it was easy to identify the GWVA with government. The association was also granted public money, making the connection between the two even stronger and feeding doubts about its independence from government. This suspicion, which expanded in 1919, was well represented within veterans' circles, being shared by a disparate range of returned soldiers. Accepting public funds was clearly a problem for Shanahan, for example, who said that the money was wasted on more officials than were needed. It was also a problem for D.F. Pidgeon. A delegate at the 1918 convention in Toronto, he cancelled his membership and withdrew as the head of the Ottawa branch of the association in the wake of the August riots. A Lieutenant-Colonel, Pidgeon was head of the Soldiers' Estates Branch of the Militia Department, which he

28 In his research on Hamilton Craig Heron has drawn this conclusion about that city's Colonel William Hendrie, a former 15th Battalion officer and a Dominion official for the GWVA who attended the Toronto convention. In the aftermath of the riots Hendrie stressed the necessity of avoiding violent methods (Heron, 'Fit for Heroes,' unpublished manuscript, 2009). I am grateful to Craig Heron for sharing his research with me.

29 Hunter's views may be conveniently studied in the scrapbook of newspaper clippings that Mayor Church kept on the Riot Probe: 'Investigation into riots' scrapbook, Thomas Langton Church Fonds, AO F25.
apparently decided was a conflict of interest, though he offered no detailed explanation for his decision to the *Telegram.*\(^{30}\)

In an interview with the Ottawa *Citizen* after his return from the Toronto convention, Pidgeon did explain what he thought was the cause of all the unrest in the city he had recently left. 'Politicians are taking advantage of the large money grants which have been made by the Ontario Government to the Provincial association and by the city of Toronto to the district association there,' said Pidgeon. 'They are giving the boys the impression,' he continued, 'that they are all for furthering the soldiers' interests, and they have been exaggerating the grievances of the returned soldiers until the veterans themselves have become obsessed with the idea in the Queen City that they can do what they like without being stopped.' In his view, the rioting in Toronto was partly 'an outcome of this political wire-pulling' and he cited the passivity of police as evidence that 'some one higher up' wanted 'the soldiers to be let alone.' The other factor involved was the existence of 'a silent army' within the GWVA that wanted to create 'a second Tammany Hall.' Among this group, explained the Colonel, was 'a pretty influential Bolsheviki element.'\(^{31}\)

The element Pidgeon referred to were the many Ontario delegates and the whole of the Toronto delegates who wished to officially endorse political platforms and candidates and possibly run their own candidates in elections. These were hardly revolutionary tendencies, yet Pidgeon objected to them strongly enough that he labeled a sizeable number of his comrades, duly elected to their posts, a 'Bolsheviki element.' Class and politics were likely dimensions of Pidgeon's views for he probably assumed that the Toronto GWVA wanted to come out in support of a labour political platform. At the time of the convention combat veteran and unionist William Varley was running in a provincial by-election in the city as a soldier-labour candidate for the Greater Toronto Labour Party (though he called himself an independent). He was frequently joined on campaign platforms by local veterans who knew him as a champion for better treatment of ordinary soldiers and liked his labourite platform of political reform. Several of his veteran supporters were officials in Toronto GWVA branches, causing the

---

\(^{30}\) *Telegram*, 7 August 1918, 17

\(^{31}\) *Star*, 6 August 1918, 9
convention to remind members that their constitution forbade them from officially endorsing a candidate.32

Pidgeon's conservative approach to associational politics no doubt meant that he was more comfortable with Varley's opponent, Canon H.J.Cody, the newly installed minister of education for the Conservative government.33 Cody was also the head of St. Paul's Anglican Church located on Bloor Street at the north end of Church Street, a fact confirming his status as an establishment candidate. The church served a wealthy congregation and was an important centre for elite political power, being the regimental church of the Queen's Own Rifles of Canada and a location regularly visited by dignitaries attending the many patriotic events held there. Representatives of the emerging veterans' movement were included at these events in 1916 and 1917.34

The by-election provides an example of the shifting political context of the period. With the political objective of committing Canada to 'total war' (by confirming conscription and electing a win-the-war government) achieved by the end of 1917, class inequality was becoming the chief concern of most veterans rather than inequality in terms of sacrifices for the war effort. This is not to suggest that veterans were awakening to their class interests in the

32 Varley ran in the Northeast Toronto provincial electoral district, an area whose boundaries were similar to the federal district contested by Cockburn, the pro-conscription and independent soldier candidate discussed in Chapter 3. On reaction to support for Varley at the GWVA convention see Star, 3 August 1918, 5. For examples of veterans' support for Varley see: Telegram, 1 August 1918, 8; Star, 1 August 1918, 5; Telegram, 2 August 1918, 8; Telegram, 3 August 1918, 10; Star, 6 August 1918, 14; Star, 8 August 1918, 5; Star, 19 August 1918, 5. Other returned men who appeared in support of Varley were from western Canada. Some were attending the GWVA convention early in August, while others were apparently in the city for hospital treatment.

33 For discussion of the contest see Naylor, The New Democracy, 103-5.

34 For example, the parade of veterans that commemorated the two-year anniversary of the Battle of St Julien began at the GWVA clubhouse at Church and Carlton Streets and finished at St Paul's. See Star 21 April 1917, 2. Earlier that year veterans and elites met at the church for a ceremonial start to the recruiting campaign for the Great War Veterans Overseas Company. See Globe, 26 February 1917, 6.
summer of 1918, for as past chapters have shown they already had ideas about what these interests were. From the start of their organizing efforts at home, returned soldiers, including officers in leadership positions, stressed the particular ways in which service disadvantaged them in the labour market and most returnees insisted on an egalitarian pension system rather than one reinforcing differences in rank. Veterans' campaigns to reinforce comrades overseas and to deal with the 'alien problem' at home were also imbued with class issues. What was different about 1918 was that the absence of conscription as an issue pushed class conflict towards the forefront of public debate. But this was not the only difference. Price inflation continued to outstrip increases in earnings for most workers and the high cost of living was becoming so common a topic that newspapers were using 'H. C. of L.' and 'H. C. L.' in headlines and copy. Profiteers shared the burden of blame with Ottawa for failing to control the problem, but on other issues the government was on its own.

Veterans' complaints against government were a major part of their motivation for wrecking restaurants in August and other examples of their interjections in the public sphere that month demonstrate how much more personal their grievances were than other groups in society. For example, members of the Guelph branch of the GWVA used the August convention as a forum for protesting the treatment of Pte. E.A. Colley who, though discharged with a bad heart, was not granted a pension. Their circular letter on this matter, which they showed delegates, compared this with the $5,000 pension given Colonel Labatt for a heart condition, a case that was becoming notorious. What made the comparison tragic was that Colley died within weeks of returning home to his wife and six children.35 Pictured on the page of the Telegram that ran this story, the family was the very image of working-class respectability. Their breadwinner's death and the lack of a pension now threatened that status. The decision to raise the case at the convention brought it the publicity the Guelph veterans no doubt wanted, for a 'traveling representative of the Board of Pension Commissioners promised to telephone Ottawa at once' when he learned of the matter.36

In his campaign against Cody, Varley provided more examples of civil-military injustice and the problem of inequality. Varley told audiences at his rallies that he decided to

35 Telegram, 1 August 1918, 14. For more on criticism of the Board of Pension Commissioners in 1918 and Labatt's case, see Morton and Wright, Winning the Second Battle, 76-8.
36 Telegram, 1 August 1918, 14
enter politics to broadcast his criticism of the poor shipboard conditions of his voyage home. According to him, returning men typically endured the trip in cramped, unhealthy conditions in steerage while officers could enjoy better accommodations and fresh air. This criticism had seen him imprisoned by the military while he was still in uniform in 1917, both at the Military Hospital in Whitby and in Toronto's Spadina Military Hospital, an experience that sharpened his grievance with authorities.

The by-election, the convention and the riots all made early August a particularly significant moment in veterans' wartime history. An irony GWVA leaders must not have missed was that at the same time as the convention attempted to find a basis for collective action veterans appeared to be splitting apart more seriously than ever. The evidence was not only on downtown streets where veteran-led rioters fought for what they claimed were their rights, and nor was it limited to divisions over political representation. Inside the Technical School building where the GWVA convention was held there was considerable division too.

'We must interpret the word "veteran."'

The most hotly contested issue at the 1918 convention in Toronto were the Great War Veterans' membership rules. At this and other national conventions, as well as in local branch meetings, substantial numbers argued that only men who had seen action at the front deserved to be admitted, while others felt that any man who wore the King's uniform should qualify, no matter where he served. The compromise position which advocated membership for soldiers who had been overseas (meaning at least as far as England, if not all the way to the front) and who had been honourably discharged, won at conventions and became association policy. Local branches, however, sometimes resolved for more inclusive or more restrictive rules, the significance of which for the make-up of the association is unclear from the available sources.

37 For an example see Telegram, F 2 August 1918, 8
38 See: Telegram, F 2 August 1918, 8; Star, 6 August 1918, 14; Naylor, The New Democracy, 103-5.
Ontario members voted in a referendum on the issue in 1918, apparently at the nation-wide request of the Dominion body and handled by ballots cast at the branch level.\textsuperscript{39} According to the President of the provincial body 95% voted in favour of inclusiveness, with the province's largest branch, Toronto, being no exception.\textsuperscript{40} Ottawa was an exception, however, and its preference for restrictive membership was probably the main reason it chose not to affiliate with the provincial body.\textsuperscript{41} Ottawa delegates at the 1918 convention advocated restricting membership to men who had seen active service or had suffered war wounds from aerial bombings in England or attack at sea. As it had in 1917, the GWVA decided in 1918 on the compromise position, granting membership to 'England men' and 'France men,' but not to 'Canada men.'

The policy of exclusion was advocated at the 1918 convention by far more than only the representatives from Ottawa. Delegates from Vancouver and Winnipeg argued for it most strenuously and they were clearly supported by the Dominion executive, which included few Ontarians and no Torontonians. The manner in which a motion to reconsider the association's membership rules was introduced suggests they came to the meeting with the collective intention of ridding the GWVA of members they felt were undesirable. The debate over several days plainly demonstrates that veterans engaged in struggles to define their identity and construct it for public consumption.

Delegate Robinson of Vancouver opened debate on a motion he made to restrict membership by telling his comrades that they must make a decision about whether to admit the tens of thousands of men who had never left Canada or had remained in England. 'We must interpret the word "veteran,"' said Robinson in his speech. Arguing for exclusivity, he pointed out that other organizations in his region, such as the Comrades of the Great War, were building sound organizations of men who had been on active service. He expressed sympathy for men who 'through no fault of their own' were unable to reach the front, and was willing to grant men such as this who already had membership in the association associate status. Others, such as Maxwell, the Winnipeger who would become Dominion President in 1919, were reluctant to allow even this compromise. Robinson continued to state his views, saying that '[a]fter the

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{39} Proceedings of Dominion GWVA Convention, 1918, 43
\item \textsuperscript{40} Proceedings of Dominion GWVA Convention, 1918, 57
\item \textsuperscript{41} Proceedings of Dominion GWVA Convention, 1918, 26-7
\end{itemize}
sword is sheathed [...] the men who have bared their souls before god for the freedom and democracy of the world, will be in the ascendency, and the time will come when these men will have the say in this and every country.' Obviously feeling strongly about his position this sixty-one-year-old veteran of the front was soon cut-off by someone who objected to his opinion. 42

While a number of delegates spoke in favour of Robinson's motion the objections that were raised were many and they were delivered with as much passion as the argument for exclusion. Delegate Fry from Niagara Falls challenged proponents of exclusivity to count his record of patriotism and service as unworthy of the GWVA. He enlisted at nineteen in the British Army, serving during the Boxer Uprising in China, then in India and Burma. At twenty-six he was discharged as medically unfit for further service, but when the present war broke out he enlisted again. 'We got past the doctors somehow, and got as far as England, and we were turned down as medically unfit. Are my comrades pledged to stand by me as much as they are pledged to stand beside the France man, or do they turn us down cold?' Fry's anger must have been building as he told the convention, speaking again on behalf of those like him, how as 'young boys we left our mothers to serve our country' and then volunteered to do so again as men with many years of hard work behind them. '[A]nd when we come to a Convention like this, have you any right to say, do you mean to say at this Convention that I have not got every right to stand on this floor just as well as any other man? I know I have.' 43

Fry's position stressed his service to the cause, one that he identified with the British Empire and cast backwards in time. A number of his comrades, including other old veterans, also emphasized that service was the key determinant of veteran status, rather than shared combat experience, the position of Robinson and his supporters. One veteran put his position simply, saying that it was 'men who have tried' who deserved to be members, implying he thought that anyone who enlisted and did his best to get into active service deserved to be admitted. 44 Agreeing with many others that since the military was necessarily made-up of a variety of branches of service spread over many regions, Comrade Coles of London sided with

42 Proceedings of Dominion GWVA Convention, 1918, 38-39
43 Proceedings of Dominion GWVA Convention, 1918, 42
44 Proceedings of Dominion GWVA Convention, 1918, 43
inclusiveness, saying: 'I think the term veteran applies to the man who offered his service to his country.'\(^{45}\)

Proponents of inclusiveness had many reasons for their view. The head of Ontario's provincial body, former Army Chaplain Jeakins, said that everyone who enlisted made a sacrifice and that a man suffered in spirit if he were rejected for service in France. He also said that creating an exclusive organization betrayed the values for which the veterans had fought, which he defined in terms of liberal democracy. 'You are going to make an aristocracy of the trenches, and you have fought against autocracy and against aristocracy in every form whatsoever.'\(^{46}\) Delegate Hale of Saskatchewan supported Jeakins' views and said that if the organization wished to keep out undesirables, the way to do it was through watchfulness. The blanket approach of exclusiveness would include men whose frontline experience did nothing to change their disreputability and exclude men who had made considerable sacrifices while failing to make it across the Channel.\(^{47}\)

What speakers on both sides of this question, and those such as Topping of Kingston who favoured the status quo, had in common were concerns about the association's reputation in the public's mind and the need for a competitive edge against rival organizations. David Loughnan, editor of *The Veteran* and Vancouver resident, was among those who felt that exclusivity would keep the GWVA free of the 'Cook's tourists' and 'slackers' who were responsible for the ebbing public confidence in the Great War Veterans. 'You know very well,' he told the convention, 'that the men who make the most trouble are the men who went the least of the journey to France.' The issue was of immediate importance, he claimed, for the government had intimated to the GWVA's delegation to the capital the previous year that it would follow whatever definition of a veteran the organization deemed suitable. Finally, he advised his comrades that women always ask whether a returned soldier 'is a real returned soldier,' and by building an organization full of 'real' veterans they would have the support of '[t]he hand that rocks the cradle,' which, as everyone knew, 'rules the world.'\(^{48}\) As did Robinson

\(^{45}\) Proceedings of Dominion GWVA Convention, 1918, 63

\(^{46}\) Proceedings of Dominion GWVA Convention, 1918, 57

\(^{47}\) Proceedings of Dominion GWVA Convention, 1918, 57

\(^{48}\) Proceedings of Dominion GWVA Convention, 1918, 51-3. Emphasis in original.
in his speech, Loughnan implied that the right qualities in a soldier were proof of the greatest manliness.

Many Western delegates explained that exclusivity was a sound strategy for competing with the ANV, which was much larger west of Ontario, and against the Comrades, and the Campaigners of the Great War. What they meant was that, on the one hand, exclusiveness would distinguished their organization from the more inclusive ANV and give it credentials as the organization that truly represented the returned soldiers of the present war. On the other hand, it would help the GWVA compete with the other organizations which accepted only combat veterans, who some delegates argued would not tolerate associating with any other sort of former soldier. Two delegates from Montreal were for exclusivity too, one of whom argued that it garnered them greater support, both from the public and from veterans.\textsuperscript{49} The advocates of inclusiveness had a strategic argument too: a larger membership increased the chances of achieving the organization's goals by giving it greater influence in politics, or would give the organization more weight when it entered politics.\textsuperscript{50}

The link GWVA members made between membership and the goals of the association were clearly an important factor underlying their attitude towards who should be permitted to be a part of their organization. Delegates such as Jeakins and his many supporters in Ontario, including proponents of muscular masculinity such as W.E. Turley, envisioned a broadly-based organization that would help direct a movement for social and political change. Others such as Maxwell thought that the GWVA had a more focused purpose as a symbol of the tough patriotism of its members with the duty of holding government accountable for aiding men who had fought in its interest. Though they held these opposing views of the ideal nature of the organization they had helped found and expand they were not the central points they referred to when they argued about membership rules. Their debate clearly shows that the primary question was how a veteran ought to be defined.

Without actually describing combat and life in the trenches, Robinson and his supporters loudly proclaimed them to be at the heart of 'veteraness.' In their eyes, anyone who had not 'been there' was not a real veteran. Exclusionists at the 1918 convention suggested the reason for this was that soldiers who did not make it to the front were 'safety first' men or

\textsuperscript{49} Proceedings of Dominion GWVA Convention, 1918, 44-5

\textsuperscript{50} Proceedings of Dominion GWVA Convention, 1918, 40
slackers. Perhaps they also felt that men who had never had their baptism of fire were ignorant of essential truths that put them outside the fraternity of men at arms. Returned men such as Toronto delegates Conroy or Meredith (who was a survivor of Second Ypres) and others probably agreed that unique truths were learned in combat and this knowledge differentiated the battle-hardened from the un baptised. If this was their opinion then it obviously did not change their view that veteran identity was broader than their opponents would allow. They felt that a bond of comradeship existed between men who decided to serve the cause of justice in the military, sharing the experience of enlistment and training, if not also the experience of moving into the line, of standing watch on the firing step, of being shaken by shell-fire and of going over the top.

'Become a member of the union of returned men'

Demand for an association sensitive to the needs of men discharged before they made it overseas was a major reason for the establishment of the Grand Army of Canada. Founded in Toronto in October 1918, membership in this association whose name was inspired by the American Grand Army of the Republic was open to all those with wartime military service regardless of where they had served. Its leading members were McLeod and Carmichael, who had joined their Toronto and Ontario comrades in arguing for inclusive membership in the debate at the 1918 GWVA Dominion convention.\footnote{For membership debate at the 1918 Dominion convention of the GWVA see: LAC, MG 28, I 298, Vol 74, File 5, \textit{Report of Proceedings, Second Annual Convention}, 36-45, 50-68, 79-82, 197-210. Hereafter: Proceedings of Dominion GWVA Convention, 1918.} By the middle of 1919 the association had nearly 5,000 members, most of them belonging to its several Toronto branches and virtually all of them in industrial Ontario. It had its own official organ, a weekly named after the organization that apparently reached an audience of 7,000, its secretary was planning an organizing tour of the West and increased activity at its headquarters at 1 Elm Street meant that Post 1 needed a new home.\footnote{\textit{Star}, 17 June 1919, 11. On the formation and early growth of the GAC see \textit{Star}, 10 October 1918, 9 and 28 November 1918, 22. Widows of soldiers were allowed honorary membership}
Broad membership regulations were part of the reason it successfully attracted returned men to its ranks, but its differences with the GWVA were about more than membership; they were about politics too. During the convention and riot days of August 1918, when he was still an official for a local GWVA branch, McLeod appeared on stages with Varley, supporting him over Canon Cody. He also spoke up at the convention, calling into question the decision of the Chair of proceedings to suppress any discussion among delegates of engaging the GWVA in electoral politics. McLeod learned from the Chair that if he wished to personally support an electoral candidate he was as free as any citizen to do so but he was not allowed to do so as a member of the GWVA and since no motion had been prepared to change this feature of the organization's constitution any talk of politics was out of order. What the conservative leadership of the GWVA meant by politics was partisan and electoral politics. Executive members of the association did tend to favour conservative and traditional politicians over labour candidates but their politics were little different from the association McLeod and Carmichael founded. If the scanty historical record of the GAC is accurate then the political vision of the association was similar to the moderately progressive program of the GWVA. The chief difference was that in 1918 the GAC pushed for independent political representation while the GWVA continued to be reluctant to adopt this stance. Towards the end of 1919 the GAC was endorsing candidates and Carmichael was considering becoming one himself.

Peacetime re-establishment and the problems of the postwar world soon challenged the GWVA to sustain its non-partisan policy and detachment from politics. Frustrated with what most veterans felt was Ottawa's narrow-minded and tight-fisted approach to re-establishment, in early November 1919 the Toronto District GWVA came out in support of revising the association's constitution to allow it to officially speak its mind and participate in electioneering. By this time the veterans' scene in Toronto was more crowded than ever and other veterans' institutions were challenging the advocacy of the Great War Veterans. The

and nursing sisters were allowed full membership. The scarce records now available about the GAC do not suggest that women joined the organization.

53 *Star*, 3 August 1918, 5

54 *Star*: 3 November 1919, 7 and 13 November 1919, 24.

55 *Star*, 1 November 1919, 7. See also: *Star*, 8 November 1919, 11; 12 November 1919, 10; and 13 November 1919, 7.
position of the GWVA’s Dominion and provincial leaders on what became known as the Calgary Resolution was the single biggest reason for its relative decline. Worried about their future prospects and losing patience with government re-establishment efforts much sooner than executive members, the attendees of a February 1919 GWVA branch meeting in Calgary supported a resolution proposing that soldiers who had served only in Canada be granted $1,000, those who had gone as far as England $1,500 and $2,000 for the men who had survived service in France.\(^\text{56}\)

Also referred to as the 'bonus' and the 'gratuity,' this scheme won immediate approval at meetings of returned soldiers across the country.\(^\text{57}\) As the next chapter explains, debate over the bonus became a nexus for debate about veteran re-establishment, resentfulness and entitlement. The reaction of most GWVA leaders was that it was bad financial policy and, much worse, an unseemly demand for charity injuring veterans' reputation as self-respecting and publicly spirited. Most media outlets and the federal government felt the same way. Whatever opinions groups and individuals expressed about government cash payments to veterans, few but federal authorities argued that returned men had been treated fairly and had no right to complain. Though divided on the question of what should be done for veterans, Canadian public opinion was almost unanimous that something needed to be done. In Toronto, the debate was influenced by the support Mayor Church and the Telegram gave to the idea of a bonus. The contest to win greater entitlements reached a crisis point in early September when the Union cabinet flatly refused to meet a GWVA delegation to discuss its proposal for a Royal Commission on re-establishment.\(^\text{58}\)

Veterans reacted angrily to this news, outraged that their government would not even discuss their problems. With a history of mass veteran activism and its large population of returnees, and especially of disabled and unemployed men worried about a lifetime of poverty, the situation in Toronto may have been more volatile than elsewhere. A Globe editorial that denounced even the extension of the government War Service Gratuity that already existed for another six months as "a piece of wanton extravagance" aimed at winning soldiers' votes further

\(^{56}\) Morton and Wright, "The Bonus Campaign," 147

\(^{57}\) Morton and Wright, "The Bonus Campaign," 148

\(^{58}\) Globe, 8 September 1919, 4
enflamed feelings. Veterans burst into angry demonstration and organization the day after the GWVA delegation was turned away. Returned soldiers denounced the government in evening speeches given at the corner of Queen and Yonge streets, one of the city's busiest intersections. The next morning signs were posted supporting the bonus and calling veterans to a mass meeting in Queen's Park. An estimated 5,000 returned men showed up that Sunday to listen to a number of speakers and they all supported the formation of a Veterans' Gratuity League that would gather public support and press their demands on government, accepting no compromises. Later in the week, the league organized a mass parade of veterans that concluded at the Arena, where 15,000 veterans and their dependents pledged their united support for a populism campaign to win the bonus. Growing quickly, the league was known by a variety of names even though it officially became the Veterans' Unity League only weeks after its founding. However it was referred to, the league became the institutional voice for the bonus and for resentful veterans in Toronto.

The first speaker at the Queen's Park meeting narrated the failure to win the bonus and provided more evidence of support for the gratuity among rank and file members of the GWVA, for he was the Secretary of Toronto's Central Branch. Later in the day the men who were elected officials of the new league met at the home of Harry Rose, a member of the Grand

---

59 Globe, 6 September 1919, 6
60 "Let Us Take It by Force!," Bitter Appeal to Soldiers to Insist on Extra Grant, 'Mail and Empire, 8 September 1919, 'Veterans' Gratuity League File,' Thomas Langton Church Fonds, AO F25. (Hereafter as: VGL file, Church Fonds.)
61 '15,000 Veterans Ask $2,000 – No Comm.,' Star, 12 September 1919, VGL file, Church Fonds.
62 Even after it became the Veterans' Unity League on 20 September (Globe, 22 September 1919, 2 and 8), Flynn's organization was known by a variety of names: the Veterans' Gratuity League, the Returned Soldiers' Gratuity League, the Returned Soldiers' Gratuity Association, the Returned Soldiers' War Service Gratuity Association, the Gratuity Association, the Gratuity League, and the Veterans' League. As suggested by the references to "VGL file, Church Fonds," Mayor Church had a scrapbook of newspaper articles on the league he helped legitimize through his support: AO, F25, Thomas Langton Church fonds, MU554, "Veterans' Gratuity League File."
Army of Canada who participated in the meeting earlier in the day. As Harry Flynn, the leader of the new movement, made clear to the audience at Queen's Park and to others to come, organizers wished to create an association that embraced all veterans. He proposed the formation of 'an organization for the purpose of getting this grant,' one that would accept any veteran supporting this goal. 'Belong to what you like, but become a member of the union of returned men,' he urged.63

Harry Flynn was an instructor of Department of Soldier Civil Re-establishment vocational courses in the city. He was elected the President of the Veterans' Gratuity League that day, remained the populist leader of the association and quickly became one of the most outspoken veterans in Canada. If at first he claimed to be interested in building a movement that accepted members from any association, he was soon competing with the GWVA outright by establishing rival branches in the city and nearby. The league and the GAC also discussed amalgamation, but GAC leaders rejected this when they felt that what Flynn was really proposing was assimilating the GAC.64 Feelings were different by April of 1920 when the two joined to become the Grand Army of United Veterans.65 The league's relations with the pro-bonus GAC were cordial, but they could never be so with the GWVA, whom Flynn accused of harbouring agents of the government (such as the ardently anti-bonus W.E. Turley) paid to sow disunity among veterans and defeat the pro-gratuity movement. The deeply suspicious attitude towards politics this implied makes it unsurprising that when Flynn and his association discussed ways of influencing government he argued that what was needed rather than a political party was a political force capable of pushing authorities into adopting the right policies.66 As explained above, the GWVA was ironically in the midst of adopting just such a policy.

If the political positions of the Veterans' Gratuity League and GWVA were similar, their rhetoric continued to separate them. Flynn and his followers used a language of militant protest that threatened violence, a language provincial and national GWVA leaders rejected.

63 "Let Us Take It by Force!," Bitter Appeal to Soldiers to Insist on Extra Grant,' Mail and Empire, 8 September 1919, VGL file, Church Fonds.
64 Star, 1 November 1919, 7
65 Globe, 19 April 1920, 6 and 26 April 1920, 9
66 Star, 3 November 1919, 7
The street-corner sign that called returned men to the Queen's Park meeting that created the Gratuity League told veterans to come with 'rifles and bayonets.' The phrase seemed to mean that attendees should be ready to speak and think seriously on matters but it was clearly provocative. So were many speakers. Flynn called on his followers to 'put a peaceful demand' for the bonus before the government, but, he continued, 'if it is not answered let us take it by force.' But the threat of violence was ambivalent. Flynn told his audience in one breath that if 'riots' resulted from the government's refusal 'the fault will not be with the returned men,' and in the next breath he called on veterans to use their power to 'talk gratuity,' a peaceful strategy that would 'force them to give us our rights.' Such contradictory messages were typical of Flynn and many league speakers. One person's declaration that 'We don't want a riot' was matched by another's opinion that 'What we are going to do is K-I-C-K.' The speaker who said it was time to fight the politicians (as well as 'high muck-a-mucks, profiteers, shysters, etc.')] they had protected overseas, also said that veterans wanted 'no rowdyism or Bolsheviki stuff.'

Having witnessed the riots in Toronto it is easy to understand the concerns of Turley and other local GWVA leaders that these returned soldier activists would cast aside moderation and act on their threats of violence. As the next chapter shows, the wider context of industrial conflict in the city and across the country, as well as the unrest of demobilizing soldiers overseas, added another dimension to the mass activism of the Gratuity League. Flynn tried to manipulate fears of veteran violence by implying that only he and his League had the influence to restrain the restless anger of veterans, influence that would vanish unless local authorities assisted their campaign for the bonus. One reporter near Flynn as he left City Hall prior to parade and mass meeting at the Arena in early September heard him tell two city Councillors he passed by that he and his League officials were 'keeping down the trouble.' This was the pre-eminent concern of civic authorities, who pressed Flynn for assurances there would be no rioting and it was clearly something that worried Torontonians, for the press consistently reported on the topic during the weeks in which the League was created. One account of the

67 "Let us take it by force," *Mail and Empire*, 8 September 1919, VGL file, Church Fonds
68 'Veterans Meet at City Hall Plan Campaign for Gratuity,' *Telegram*, 8 September 1919 – VGL file, Church Fonds
69 'To Give Views in Writing,' *Globe*, 11 September 1919, VGL file, Church Fonds
parade to the arena commented that the arrival of the GAC band to head the column signaled to everyone that the affair would be peaceful. And so it was, the article duly noted.  

As demonstrations of dissatisfaction and of solidarity, the league's meetings deserve extra notice. The Arena meeting attracted three times as many people as a May Day rally in the same venue did, according to one estimate. And it was considerably larger than the estimated 10,000 who paraded on Labour Day, the first in Toronto since 1913. Allies in politics and the mainstream media may explain the remarkable support the league attracted in such a short time. Certainly, Mayor Church's advocacy on its behalf was important. It won approval for using the Arena, for one thing, but more fundamentally it gave the organization immediate legitimacy as a new voice for longstanding grievances, ones Church was never shy about voicing himself. The *Telegram*'s support for the bonus may have helped give the issue more legitimacy as well, but since all the dailies reported on the activities the league organized, the *Telegram* did not provide unique publicity. As Morton and Wright explain in their study of the campaign for the bonus, the GWVA's failure to win significant concessions from government in the Fall of 1919 caused many members to leave the organization for others in the hopes of getting a bonus. Though impossible to verify with reliable data, it seems clear that the United Veterans League benefited from this phenomenon. In November it claimed that its Central Branch had a paid-up membership of 1,800. The GWVA's Central Branch was the most pro-bonus one in the city. Perhaps its members followed Secretary Brockbank's lead and flocked to Flynn in September?

If there was any other reason why the Gratuity League touched a chord with local veterans aside from its advocacy for the bonus, it was its populist style. There was much less concern for proper forms at meetings than in evidence at GWVA affairs and, perhaps fearful they could not control veterans' passions, the Great War Veterans had not organized a protest parade in Toronto since the anti-alien activism of 1918 or any outdoor rallies since the pro-conscription campaign of 1917. The Gratuity League offered an outlet for veterans' grievances that the GWVA was no longer providing, as well as opportunities to celebrate comradeship in ways disapproved of by the upper echelons of the older organization.

---

70 *Star*, 12 September 1919, 6
71 *Star*, 2 May 1919 5; *Globe*, 2 September 1919, 8
72 *Star*, 13 November 1919, 7
The Gratuity League's mass organizing was one way veterans pursued their collective interests, and the GWVA's lobbying techniques was another. By November of 1919 both organizations, as well as the GAC, were making decisions about how to more directly influence politics through electing sympathetic representatives. The Independent Soldiers' Party that became active in the Toronto area in the latter part of 1919 (and left a scanty historical trail) was yet another intervention veterans made in the public sphere that year. Finally, there was the Veterans' League of Toronto. Not to be confused with the UVL, this was a council of representatives of Toronto branches of the ANV, His Majesty's Army and Navy Veterans, the GAC and the Originals Club. In early November a roundtable conference was held to which GWVA and UVL delegates were invited, as well as other veterans, such as one from Toronto's Pearson Hall for the Blind and others from local battalion associations. The topic was expanding the league to include an equal number of representatives from each association in the city, the main purpose being to determine a formula for taking united political action. The federal structure of the body was meant to allow each organization the freedom to take its own stance on issues but also to provide the means of achieving a consensus when it was possible. Delegates to the initial meeting liked the autonomy the structure allowed, but UVL and GWVA representatives balked at the idea of equal representation for each of Toronto's veteran societies.

**Conclusion**

As the anniversary of the Armistice approached the situation for veterans' associations was not promising. Division characterized the local movement and undermined it nationally. It was becoming clear that veterans' sympathetic hold on the public was not winning political victories. And as for influence on government, the newly elected United Farmers of Ontario were unfamiliar and their chosen leader a former opponent of the Military Service Act, while

---

73 Major T.L. Kennedy was elected to represent Cooksville in the late October Ontario election. He sat on the opposition side with the Liberals. See *Star*, 1 November 1919, 25. A branch of the party operated in the Riverdale district of Toronto. See *Star*, 3 November 1919, 7.

74 *Star*, 3 November 1919, 19 and 7 November 1919, 7
the government in Ottawa was proving to be no great ally.\footnote{E.C. Drury of the UFO ran as a Liberal in the 1917 General Election, losing to Unionist and soldier candidate J.A. Currie. Currie fought at Second Ypres as an officer with the 15\textsuperscript{th} Battalion. He became an outspoken advocate for veterans in the House, supporting the GWVA's anti-alien campaign in 1918 and the bonus movement in 1919. He was distinctly unsuccessful in influencing policy, whereas Drury's loss in 1917 and his weak identification with the war effort did not injure his political fortunes.} The Great War was over, the CEF demobilized, the peace treaty signed, but organized veterans were still trying to win the political influence they felt they deserved. In the early 1920s membership in veterans' associations declined steeply and their leaders were more conciliatory. Unity discussions, usually brokered by the GWVA after it weathered the storm of 1919, concluded in 1926 when most organizations joined the Canadian Legion of the British Empire Service League. Membership rules were inclusive and as a lobbying body for veterans the Legion was effective, but it was not the head of a mass movement. That no longer existed. The organization was also non-partisan and called itself non-political, as had the GWVA. During and immediately after the war returned soldiers sometimes declared they would 'own the country.' That dream was over.

That veterans groups followed the paths described in this chapter, including the one supposedly leading to Bolshevism, is evidence of both the divisions between them and a common desire to occupy a significant role in the public sphere and influence public affairs. Class perspectives and ideas about politics drove returned men apart and differences in terms of war experience made comradeship a contested category. Working against these divisive factors was the sense most returned soldiers shared that their service differentiated them from the rest of society and earned them special recognition. There was also the practical reality that significant numbers of them were entitled to specific payments and programs, giving them a more direct relationship with government than any other group of citizens of comparable size. It was especially on this basis that the Legion became a useful institution for old soldiers, and for future generations of veterans.

These patterns in the associational history of Canadian Great War veterans are reflected in the history of the veterans of other nations. They too created a number of different and often rival institutions, as well as organizations for groups with specific interests, such as pensioners.
or the severely disabled. In the United States the American Legion immediately attracted the large majority of veterans and these trends were most faint, but even so a number of small organizations of veterans of the European war cropped up after 1918 and many returnees joined the already existent Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW). Institutional rivalry only became significant when the Legion and the VFW vied for political influence during the Depression.\textsuperscript{76} In Britain, the strength of a handful of associations which vied for national dominance declined precipitously after 1920 and the Legion (a different institution from the American organization) absorbed the majority of veterans who still wished to be members of a national association of old soldiers. The vitality of the Labour Party and of trade unions probably drew the affiliation of working-class veterans initially interested in the political prospects of the Labour Party-affiliated Association and more Liberal-inclined Federation. The more radical organizations were never mass movements and those with Conservative connections were favourable to uniting under the Legion.\textsuperscript{77} In France and Germany large organizations reflecting the political and class divisions of these countries grew up during the war and while memberships declined after 1919 both nations supported a number of mass associations of veterans through the interwar period in the case of France and up to the ascension of the Nazis in the case of Germany.\textsuperscript{78}

The multiplicity of veteran organizations around the world should not be seen in isolation, but rather in conjunction with veterans' continuous efforts to go beyond these differences in the interest of wider unity, whether by creating the British Empire Service League, the internationalism of pacifist veterans in Europe, the efforts of the American Legion to accommodate the considerable differences reflected in the American veteran population, or the Veterans' League of Toronto. The two seemingly contradictory trends speak to the reality


\textsuperscript{77} Barr, \textit{The Lion and the Poppy}, Ward, "Great Britain: Land Fit for Heroes Lost."

that war experiences did not erase civilian identities and nor did all veterans share the same experience of the war. Rather than concluding that this is evidence of the limited significance of their experience, we should ask how else they might have expressed their comradeship and responded to the questions of civilian re-establishment. Certainly, the tensions among veterans should point to the underlying reality that they were never outside of society. In the army they were members of a special society, but they retained links to civil society in innumerable ways, not least of which being the temporary nature of their service. Combat certainly set them apart but for most it simply created a greater need to be in society again and they had only the language and forms of thought they brought with them to understand their experiences and interpret their needs as returnees. Far from erasing their civic identity, their service invigorated it, making large numbers of them interested in participating in a movement characterized by public opinion campaigns and demonstrations designed to assert their entitlement to re-establishment. Comradeship was a key component of their urge to join associations, and it created a basis for broad union with all former soldiers of the war. Similar to the way that a host of factors, such as immigration and commitment, could determine citizenship status, comradeship was also perceived in degrees and within limits.
Chapter 6. Resentful Veterans

On Thursday, the 7th of November 1918 Torontonians left their workplaces and homes to crowd into downtown streets, paralyzing traffic as they celebrated news that the deadliest war in human history was over. But the 'Swift Cyclone of Elation' was premature. The armistice they and people in cities across North America celebrated that day was false, the war was not over.\(^1\) Despite their disappointment, Torontonians and millions of others still entered the weekend expectantly. They knew that the Allies, with Canadian infantry often leading the charge in the British sector of the front, were continuing to push their enemy back towards the Rhine.

On the Saturday night of that weekend a small group of veterans gathered at Massey Hall for a Victory Bonds meeting to listen to two leaders of the local veterans' movement, GWVA officials A.T. Hunter and W.E. Turley. Turley predicted that the peace that seemed near at hand was going to usher in a social revolution in which he hoped the GWVA would play a leading role. But he said it was going to be a 'mild form of social revolution.' Hunter spoke in terms of progress and moderation too, saying that in peacetime veterans were not going to be "as quiet in our criticism of the Government" but also reminding his comrades of the need to go gently, for civilians could not fully understand or relate to their views.\(^2\) These cautious, vague statements spoke to divisions among veterans and to concerns about what, months earlier, the former head of the Toronto GWVA referred to as the 'tendency for Bolshevism.' On the eve of peace, and with examples of revolution in Germany dominating news coverage, Hunter and Turley were clearly working to suppress this tendency and, to paraphrase the warning of another official of the GWVA, keep veterans off the path that led to 'Bolshevikism.'\(^3\)

\(^1\) *Globe*, 8 November 1918, 8, 2

\(^2\) *Telegram*, 11 November 1918, 16. The *Telegram* paraphrased what Turley said.

\(^3\) For these phrases see: *Star*, 8 March 1918, 14 and *Star*, 27 March 1918, 7 (they appear in Chapter 5).
Two days later Torontonians once again surged downtown, reacting to the night-time news of a real armistice. What became of veterans’ Bolshevik tendencies in the year that followed peace on the Western Front? Did they make more forceful demands of government but exercise the restraint Hunter called for? Was there a mild revolution in which the GWVA played a leading role? Or were such moderately progressive hopes swept aside by the postwar release of tensions in evidence during the celebrations of the Armistice?

This chapter's exploration of the year of demobilization offers answers to these questions in two sections. One discusses repatriation and the relevance of the Red Scare for veterans, while the other looks at the debate about re-establishment, especially the demands of many veterans for a cash gratuity. As will be made clear, the changed context of peacetime, including the Red Scare that originated in the war, destabilized veteran identity and weakened the collective political strength veterans wielded as patriotic men. Veterans continued to be constructed as returned heroes in peacetime but the warm welcomes and earnest praise did not mask veterans’ postwar resentfulness. As Hunter predicted, returned and returning men did protest more forcefully after the war and as he and other GWVA officials no doubted feared, veterans’ tenuous wartime solidarity broke down completely as CEF soldiers demobilized and became civilians again.

Repatriation and Radicalism
The 11 November armistice caused euphoria in Toronto. The impromptu street party in the city centre was even wilder than celebrations of the 7 November false armistice and residents had a parade to look forward to in the afternoon, an event planned in advance for that day to advertise the Victory Loan campaign Turley and Hunter supported. Residents returned home from their unofficial holiday in the early evening, some continuing the party with fireworks and bonfires. As the discussion below demonstrates, the relief and joy of peacetime was reflected in the welcomes given to returning soldiers over the long period of demobilization. The local press happily emphasized the positive themes that were part of demobilization, but as this section reveals it also betrayed public concern about returned soldiers as well as veteran restlessness and resentment.

---

4 *Globe*, 12 November 1918, 1, 8, 9
In Toronto groups ranging from fewer than 100 to many thousands arrived on an almost daily basis in the city from the end of 1918 through the spring of 1919. Recognizing the strain that would be placed on dispersal services in the area, local military authorities began planning for the return of masses of soldiers soon after the Armistice.\(^5\) Demobilizing men continued to arrive more sporadically through the fall. By then the CEF was all but entirely back in Canada.\(^6\) During demobilization convalescents and cot cases continued to arrive home from the war, but there were also large numbers of healthy returnees who leapt down onto train station platforms eager to get out of army life altogether. Those who returned as members of the fighting units of the Canadian Corps, which were kept intact during demobilization, triumphantly paraded on their return. Not only was the victorious mood of these events (which will be called 'battalion homecomings') possible only after the Armistice but so was the format itself. The other demobilization stream mixed soldiers freed after the Armistice from frontline units and from units who had served behind the lines in France and in England, hospital convalescents and other personnel. Organized into drafts with married men who had served longest given priority they passed through Kinmel Park Camp in northern Wales before disembarking from Liverpool.\(^7\) Groups of returnees that were parts of this stream will be called 'demobilization drafts.'

\(^5\) For insight into the planning of postwar troop dispersal at home and the logistical and regulatory challenge of demobilization from the perspective of Military District 2 Headquarters staff see: LAC, RG24, Box 4408, File 34-7-234 Vol. 1-4, "Procedure for Dealing with Troops in Dispersal Areas".

\(^6\) About 22,000 CEF soldiers were permitted discharge in Britain too, roughly 15,000 after the armistice and 7,000 during the war. The roughly 600 Canadians who were part of the Allied force near Archangel in revolutionary Russia were demobilized with the rest of the CEF. The Canadian Siberian Expeditionary Force was mobilized in October 1918, with about 1,000 Canadians in Vladivostok by November. The force grew to 4,000 troops and was also brought home in 1918 (Nicholson, *Canadian Expeditionary Force*, 532). On the CSEF see Isitt, *From Victoria to Vladivostok.* and John E. Skuce, *Csef: Canada's Soldiers in Siberia, 1918-1919* (Ottawa: Access to History Publications, 1990).

\(^7\) For discussion of the planning and process of demobilization, as well as the difficult conditions in which it took place see: Nicholson, *The Canadian Expeditionary Force*, 528-531;
There was no immediate change to the form in which soldiers returned to Toronto after the Armistice, though as early as the beginning of December 1918 many felt that more fitting welcomes were needed. On the day he was introduced to the public the incoming Officer Commanding Military District Two, Colonel John A. Gunn, acknowledged this to the press. He said he would consult with the outgoing commander, General William A. Logie, and other parties to improve the welcomes given returning soldiers. Gunn was responding to questions prompted by the badly managed arrival of 550 returning soldiers after midnight that morning. Headquarters in Toronto had received an un-alphabetized list of the soldiers aboard the train only in the evening and posted the list at the North Toronto station at 9:30 that night. This meant that relatives had been unable over the past few days to confirm with authorities whether their man was returning that evening or not and when the train was arriving. The result was that the crowd that night was much larger than normal, and it pushed back guards to swarm over the platform and spread dangerously across the tracks. Many of these people would have been among the countless callers in the preceding days who had occupied staff at District Headquarters and the Mayor's office, and possibly newspaper offices which were common places for citizens to go or telephone for information.

The numbers of people who sought information from military and civilian authorities and the size of the crowd that turned up that evening is evidence of how important soldiers' homecomings were for Torontonians. When badly handled they were a nuisance for administrators, embarrassed politicians and created difficulties of crowd control. District Headquarters seems to have been correct in blaming the problems on administrative failures that took place during the sailing, but intelligent observers would have recognized that a fundamental problem at their own end of things was the separation of dispersal services from the actual location at which soldiers arrived. Members of the welcoming committee interviewed at the chaotic reception on 2 December 1918 suggested that the Exhibition Grounds were a better alternative than the North Toronto Station. Requiring the cooperation of the


8 *Telegram*, 2 December, 1918, 8
9 *Telegram*, 2 December, 1918, 16
railway companies, repatriation schedulers and the city, it took months for this to change, though the scene that verged on panic that night was not repeated.

A new plan for receptions was proposed by Major Gibson of the district's headquarters staff in March 1919 as the CEF began demobilizing the Canadian Corps. Approval by Toronto's Board of Control was done over the objections of Mayor Church. He opposed the use of the grounds and buildings of the Exhibition to centralize the reception and processing of soldiers, arguing that the area did not give women and children ideal access, the railway sidings were difficult for trains to enter, and, more than anything, the scheme precluded the possibility of a parade. "'The men want to come down Yonge street as they did after the Northwest Rebellion'" instead of being isolated in the Exhibition grounds, said the Mayor. Gibson bluntly dismissed these points and expressed skepticism about the city's ability to play a suitable role in postwar receptions. He said there were too many men returning to arrange a parade for all of them, and that the military was involved in official dinner receptions being arranged for recent arrivals that were far better than the "'little bun feed'" he said returned soldiers would receive from the city.10

Food was served to demobilization drafts in the large open space of the Transportation Building on some occasions, but increasingly in 1919, as Major Gibson's remarks indicated, separate events were arranged by officials to perform this function. These were co-ordinated by the local Citizens' Repatriation League, which was part of a postwar network of loosely organized institutions the federal cabinet's Repatriation Committee tried to co-ordinate.11 During the Spring of 1919 the League was behind a series of reception dinners held in the city's Armouries. One of the largest was held on 20 March when women volunteers in "immaculate" white dresses served the food "from the red hot kitchen in the nether regions" of the building and diners were entertained by a "vaudeville program" put on by volunteer performers. About 2,000 people attended this banquet, and more people filled the galleries above the main floor.12 Most of the banquets or dance socials held at the Armouries seem to have attracted crowds of about 1,500.

10 Telegram, 4 March 1919, 21
12 News, 21 March 1919, 6
Many of these official events were held under the auspices of various institutions in the city. This likely meant that they paid a share of its costs but it also provided different groups in society the opportunity to formally demonstrate their gratitude to veterans. The banquet of 20 March was hosted by the Sportsmen's' Patriotic Association, the elite-directed organization active in recruiting and other patriotic efforts during the war, including the founding of Toronto's first club for soldiers and returned soldiers. The association invited the wives and female relatives of veterans to dine with them, while at other dinner receptions women generally snacked on items in the galleries until the dinner was finished. Most of the banquets also included an address by the evening's guest of honour, though the one hosted late in May by ten of the city's publishing houses omitted all but the obligatory toast to the King.

The Repatriation League was hardly the only organizer of receptions for returned soldiers. Along with the countless memorial events held in religious and secular settings throughout 1919 were innumerable receptions offered veterans by sectors of civilian society. Each tried, however modestly, to bridge the gap between men who had been to war and civilians wishing to demonstrate their gratitude for their service and their desire to see them settle into a life back home again. Early in May, for example, fifteen Methodist Churches in Toronto hosted events designed to honour returned soldiers and endear them to the church. Organized by the Men of Methodism Association, about 3,000 veterans and 2,000 civilians were invited to enjoy 'home cooked' food and warm Christian company while listening to speeches from such leading figures as Premier Hearst. On Dominion Day General Gunn traveled to the suburban community of Birchcliff Heights to participate in its annual picnic. Returned soldiers were special guests and the winner of the 'disabled soldiers race' received an award from Gunn. To the north of Toronto at the Markham Fair Grounds a 'record crowd met' that day 'to greet the returned men of the township and welcome them back to civil life.' In addition to organizing entertainments such as a baseball game, the township and village

---

13 The practice appears to have been for hosts to pay for the evening's entertainment, though Toronto MP Edward Bristol's offer to pay for the 3 April affair seems to have meant the entire costs. See: Telegram, 22 March, 1919, 22.
14 See Chapter 2.
15 Globe, 23 May, 1919, 8
16 Telegram, 2 May 1919, 21
authorities cooperated with local patriotic societies to present returned soldiers with gold watches and some enjoyed a 'cold banquet' that evening.17

A few weeks after the meeting between Major Gibson and the Board of Control, demobilization drafts began arriving at the rail station on the grounds of the Canadian National Exhibition, where the Demobilization Depot was located, and they continued to do so until the end of demobilization in Fall 1919.18 Most of these groups were marched the short distance from the train platform into the Exhibition's Transportation Building, where families collected to greet their men. The soldiers formed up one last time in front of officers and usually listened to a brief address before being dismissed. Restrained behind ropes a short distance from them were their family and friends who scanned the faces of the soldiers and often waved as they waited for the formalities to finish. When they did finish the men were free to reunite with loved ones and process their discharge. Occasionally demobilization drafts still arrived at the North Toronto and Union stations, but they tended to be smaller. Finally, there were soldiers in need of further care included in demobilization drafts. They generally arrived in separate groups, and they obviously did no marching.19

The reception of demobilization drafts kept ceremony and fanfare to a minimum, largely in the interest of efficiently processing men through the final stages of repatriation. Compared with the sense of occasion evoked by the return of fighting units to the city, the receptions of demobilization drafts were mundane. Battalion homecomings, however, were celebrations of victory first and foremost and were meant to be memorable events that generated enormous excitement and attracted huge crowds. Across the country between late March and June communities experienced just these sorts of affairs. Journalists regularly found the "pandemonium of joy"20 of homecomings comparable only with the wild celebrations of

17 Telegram, 2 July, 1919, 17
18 Telegram, 19 March 1919, 13
19 LAC, RG24, Box 4408, File 34-7-234 Vol. 1-4, "Procedure for Dealing with Troops in Dispersal Areas"
20 Saint John Globe, 10 May 1919, 1
Armistice Day, the day of greatest collective excitement that virtually any journalists could recall.\textsuperscript{21}

Each of Toronto's six battalion homecoming parades, in which a total of ten units marched, followed a different route along a few kilometers of downtown streets, allowing the largest possible numbers to see the parade. The route of the first two parades began at the North Toronto Station (where they arrived) and traveled down Yonge Street, ending inside the Armouries on University Avenue. Subsequent processions finished in Varsity Stadium at Bloor Street, not far from the legislature in Queen's Park. The switch was made for practical reasons. The stadium offered seats to as many as 12,000, much more than the 4,000 places available in the grandstands built for relatives inside the Armouries, and the field was a larger space for soldiers to enter. These were advantages that authorities appeared to expect would prevent relatives from rushing into the column of men as they arrived at their destination and spoiling the speeches that were planned before a final dismissal was called. This was the way the first two parades ended, that of the 4\textsuperscript{th} CMR held on 20 March and of the 58\textsuperscript{th} Battalion and 2\textsuperscript{nd} CMR on 23 March.\textsuperscript{22}

When on 20 March the crowd interrupted the progress of the column into the Armouries and relatives rushed into the ranks of the men who made it inside, organizers remained determined to carry out the reception's program. They conceded their lost ground and waited an hour, in which refreshments were distributed that were originally planned for after the speeches, and then called soldiers and civilians back to their proper places with bugle calls. Only the 4\textsuperscript{th} CMR's Colonel mounted the platform to give an address, however. The Mayor, Premier and Lieutenant-Governor were supposed to have addressed the men as well, but they declined.\textsuperscript{23} Three days later organizers were better prepared. The platform in the Armouries was set up for an address by megaphone only. There was no row of chairs to accommodate

\textsuperscript{21} Other examples are: Le Devoir (Montréal), 19 Mai 1919, 3; Ottawa Citizen, 19 March 1919, 1; The Winnipeg Evening Tribune, 24 March 1919, 1; The Calgary Daily Herald, 2 June 1919, 1; The Vancouver Sun, 3 April 1919, 1; The Vancouver Sun, 26 April 1919, 1. Unusual was the criticism of government and local citizens by the Regina Leader (25 April 1919, 4) for the lack-lustre reception given a cavalry unit.

\textsuperscript{22} 'CMR' meant 'Canadian Mounted Rifles.' Both units fought as infantry.

\textsuperscript{23} Mail and Empire, 20 March 1919, 1
multiple speakers or flag-draped table signaling formal addresses were planned. Even so, relatives hemmed in behind ropes that stretched the length of the interior of the building and watched by military and civilian police, were told repeatedly not to rush into the approaching battalions until they were dismissed. The warnings were ignored. The moment after the first sections of the battalion had formed up inside the Armouries family members asserted their right to reunite by slipping under the rope and past police to get to their men. It was an act that journalists clearly delighted in describing. After so many years of bad news the happy mayhem was irresistible. Only Mayor Church managed to bellow out a greeting to the returning men in the homecoming's concluding scene.  

Reporters and citizens continued to revel in the spectacle of the other battalion homecomings. The third such event welcomed home the 3\textsuperscript{rd} and 4\textsuperscript{th} Infantry Battalions, CEF on the evening of 23 April. The 3\textsuperscript{rd} had been raised mainly in Toronto and was often referred to as the Toronto Regiment, while the 4\textsuperscript{th} was also closely associated with the city and surrounding region. Their close connection to the city motivated an estimated 150,000 to 100,000 Torontonians to join the celebration of their return. The city practically throbbed with excitement that night. As they had for the earlier homecomings church bells rang, sirens sounded, cars honked their horns and military bands added to the cacophony. Crowds surged around the North Toronto station as the trains pulled in and mounted police were forced to push people back to allow the parade to start. When it reached its destination inside Varsity stadium, where searchlights and torches lit the sky, the barriers separating soldiers and civilians once again broke as family members in the stands pushed past police and navigated other obstacles to get to their men. Respectful of a trend they could not control, the officers quickly dismissed their men – clearly, they belonged to their families now and not to their officers! The speeches organizers planned never happened.

A ceremonial final dismissal of the troops and at least a brief address, if not speeches necessarily, was planned for every homecoming. In the first one they did not come off as planned, but did eventually occur. In all the subsequent homecomings but one a 'swarming sea

\footnotesize{24 \textit{Telegram}, 24 March 1919, 10

25 The following account is based on \textit{The Toronto World}, 23 April 1919, 1,4,6, and 24 April 1919, 1 and 4.}
of happy faces and warming welcome' swept these intentions aside.\textsuperscript{26} The exception was the fourth homecoming event, that of the 15\textsuperscript{th} Battalion, a unit mainly connected to the Toronto-based 48\textsuperscript{th} Highlanders. The trains that brought it back to the city on 9 May arrived within several hours of each other in the afternoon. For this reason it was considered best that the parade wait for the following day, a Saturday, and the unit arrive at the Exhibition in the manner in which demobilization drafts arrived. Soldiers therefore reunited with their kin soon after they detrained and there was no need for family members to surge into the ranks of the returning men as they assembled for the finale of the parade, as they did at every other battalion homecoming.

The fact that a parade did not force families of the 15\textsuperscript{th} to wait even longer to be with their men again did not mean they were any less impatient at the Exhibition grounds while the trains came in over the course of the afternoon of Friday, 9 May. In contrast to the disappointment of reporters who witnessed a subdued parade on 11 May (it was postponed on Saturday because of rain), those present on Friday delighted in the displays of affection that broke through military discipline and common decorum. Some of the men marching to the orders of officers from the rail station towards the Transportation Building were accosted by women relatives who were suppose to remain waiting in that building, but instead ventured out to find their men, laid hold of them, pulled them from their section, and walked them to the group of "friends and loved ones" who greeted the soldier in a "joyous wave."\textsuperscript{27} Though apparently less frequently, men also asserted their right to reunite. One elderly man rushed out of the crowd gathered around the fence gate near the rail platform to embrace Private James Feemey who had been away nearly five years and been wounded four times.\textsuperscript{28}

Reunions were intensely emotional moments for most people and it is easy to understand why. As Sergeant W.H. James kissed his daughter at the end of a reception in late March his wife leaned against his arm 'tears in her eyes, and repeated, "Oh, I'm so happy. I've waited so long for this day. You know, he was reported missing once and was lying out under the wires.'" Elsewhere in the crowd that same day another soldier sobbed on his father's shoulder. The son was the third of four boys to return and though the father was happy he was

\textsuperscript{26} \textit{World}, 24 April 1919, 4
\textsuperscript{27} \textit{Globe}, 10 May 1919, 9
\textsuperscript{28} \textit{Telegram}, 9 May 1919, 17
back he felt enormous grief as well. The son with whom he was reuniting had lost an arm in the war and another of his boys had lost his life. Happiness and sadness, relief and grief, anticipation and anxiety: returning soldiers and their families at post war receptions had a dizzying mix of emotions to deal with.

The other receptions Toronto's returning soldiers experienced after the war could not express the same degree of national and imperial pride, martial glory and general excitement as battalion homecomings generated. The parades were great spectacles, echoing the triumphs of Roman legions returning from successful campaigns abroad. Despite the major differences in the styles of the two forms of official reception, the design trait they shared speaks volumes about the meanings organizers intended the final stage of demobilization to convey. Officials planned for drafts of demobilizing men and returning battalions to march to a designated point, receive a final address or possibly multiple speeches, and then be dismissed. Only then would they be free to reunite with loved ones and seek their discharge. Arranging for this moment of final dismissal – the climactic moment of a liminal event – for both kinds of receptions, one celebratory, the other perfunctory, suggests organizers considered it to be centrally important to the symbolism of repatriation.

They were scarcely needed, after all. Everyone knew what was happening and soldiers were informed ahead of time about how to process their discharge. Was the dismissal act the knee-jerk reaction of an authoritarian institution? Possibly, but they did nothing to make reunions more orderly, as many people complained. What is clear is that marching soldiers as units under the direction of officers and arranging for the moment of dismissal highlighted the military identity of returning men. In the case of battalion homecomings the contrast was dramatic. The disciplined, rhythmic progress of battalions along the route of march clearly distinguished them from the chaotic, cheering crowd assembled to see them. The effect was most spectacular when soldiers paraded wearing steel helmets and swinging rifles with bayonets attached, as the 3rd and 4th Battalions did in late April. This, and the fact that their parade took place in darkening evening light (lit by torch-light when they entered Varsity stadium), discouraged the level of familiarity in evidence at daytime parades in which men marched at ease, such as the arrival of the 58th and 2nd CMR a month earlier. Parading maintained the boundaries between soldiers and civilians for despite infiltration of the ranks

---

29 Telegram, 24 March 1919, 10
these units never failed to reach their destination intact and at least begin to form up one last
time.

The speeches or brief address that were planned for every homecoming make it clear
that organizers of battalion homecomings wished in every case to authorize the moment of
reunion between soldiers and civilians. These were never delivered but many papers printed all
or portions of the patriotically themed addresses the Mayor or the officers commanding the
returning units had prepared (making the newspapers' versions of the homecomings strangely
more official than the events themselves). Organizers also prepared from the beginning for
crowd behaviour that might prevent the planned ceremony from happening. Mounted troops
from the garrison force of the Royal Canadian Dragoons, as well as military police, mounted
police, constables on foot and school cadets wearing easily recognizable red tunics, were all
employed to control crowds at each of the battalion receptions. The evidence also shows that
authorities did not go beyond this to assert their desire for a ceremonial dismissal. Soldiers or
police were not massed in front of the thousands of expectant relatives, and they made no show
of force. Apart from pleas made at the actual parade, the only other warnings against bad
behaviour were made in newspaper articles and announcements that told the public that they
should not press near or enter the procession, and that they must wait for the final dismissal
before seeking out their men.

It seems unlikely that greater attention to enforcement would have been effective. It
was impossible along the whole length of the procession to guard against civilian infiltration of
the passing military column, especially since not simply individuals but crowds in general were
complicit in this behaviour. One policeman holding back a wife from running out to her
husband was called on by the crowd to let her go. He relented under this pressure and her
promise to only briefly join the column. This she did; she kissed her husband and told him she
would see him later and then returned to her spot in the crowd. Many others were less
respectful of the boundaries between marching soldiers and civilians. Numerous articles, and
the occasional photograph, demonstrate that family members, mostly women, joined their men
in the parade. A Globe reporter remarked that a bandsman for the 19th Battalion was

30 See Telegram, 9 June 1919, 13 for an example.
31 For an example see: Globe, 10 May 1919, 7.
32 Telegram, 24 April 1919, 19
"completely put out of action" when "a smiling girl" got beside him so she could cling to one of his arms, leaving him with only one to carry his trombone. The units of the second homecoming parade marched at ease, something that seemed to encourage women to rush into the ranks to embrace their men and others to walk beside friends as they marched. Sometimes the process went further and soldiers were convinced to leave the column all together. Standing where the crowd was thin an elderly woman called out to her son Will as the 4th Battalion marched past her on the night of 23 April. Hearing her, he looked quickly around him before joining her on the curb, and became 'one of the "Fighting Fourth" who did not march into Varsity Stadium with the other members of his battalion.'

Even if they could have stamped out this kind of behaviour, politicians and officers knew better than to try. For public figures the attempt would have made them appear mean-spirited and authoritarian, while experienced army officers understood the necessity of asserting their authority when and in a manner subordinates would tolerate. The excited arrival home was no such occasion, as an incident aboard one of the trains bound for the city made clear. Seeing two of his subalterns with the containers that held the battalion's colours, Colonel Patterson of the 4th CMR informed them that it could not be unfurled after sunset and must therefore remain stowed away during the upcoming parade. According to the newspaper account of the incident the Lieutenants quickly agreed to ignore this information. One said to the other: 'To the devil with rules and regulations [...] They won't affect us much longer.' The story ended with the Colonel finding an excuse to leave the scene as the subalterns began opening the cases, proving himself, concluded the reporter, to be as discrete as his record showed him to be brave.

Hinted at by this story is the way that peacetime demobilization fundamentally shifted the attitudes and expectations of soldiers. The junior officers on the Toronto-bound train were quite right that military rules would not apply to them for much longer and their superior officer and the nearby journalist knew it. This knowledge gave rise to a spirit of willfulness and the common expectation of all those involved in the scene that the operation of authority had

---

33 Globe, 26 May 1919, 8
34 Telegram, 24 March 1919, 10
35 Telegram, 24 April 1919, 19
36 Telegram, 20 March 1919, 11
become more relaxed. Permissiveness rather than duty was in the air as the soldiers raced to their destination in Toronto. In addition to the anticipation of reuniting with loved ones it was a major reason everyone was so excited.

But the shift in attitudes from wartime to peacetime was not always characterized by a live and let live spirit of fun. Postwar receptions of returning soldiers also included evidence that veterans had grievances. Soldiers of the 3rd and 4th Battalions scrawled messages in chalk on the rail cars that carried them into Toronto. 'Officers only, straight from Germany,' seems boastful, while, 'Thank you ladies, for our socks' was grateful. 'We want our beer' and 'Down with the W.C.T.U.' were protest statements and may have been read by some as warnings of action to come.37 The triumphal procession of these units passed a saluting platform in front of the Legislature in Queen's Park. As they passed the platform that held the Lieutenant-Governor, the Premier, and other members of the assembly some soldiers shouted out their opposition to prohibition, which the provincial government had made law during the war and the federal government had extended soon afterwards. 'Do we want our beer?,' shouted some men. 'Yes!' came the reply. 'Do we love the W. C. T. U?' the soldiers asked. 'No!' was the response.38

The receptions themselves were the subject of complaint too. A number of the members of a demobilization draft that marched into the Transportation Building in late March complained that the reception format made it difficult to find their relatives. Some suggested that entering alphabetically would minimize confusion.39 Similar complaints were made by family members at the chaotic finales of battalion homecomings and many of the soldiers they looked for must have agreed with them. Veterans were often also unhappy about parading on their return wearing their full kits, which at sixty pounds or more were burdensome. In a letter to the 'soldiers' friend,' (Toronto's Evening Telegram) a returned soldier claimed that he and his

---

37 The following account is based on The Toronto World, 23 April 1919, 1,4,6, and 24 April 1919, 1 and 4.
39 News, 21 March, 1919, 9
comrades were 'not in favor of marching. We had enough of that "over there" and also on our way into Germany,' explained the man referring to the march made by two divisions of the Corps into Germany after the Armistice. 'Why not let us arrive and receive the one and only welcome we desire, and that is from our own loved and dear ones?'

Another common complaint was shipboard conditions. Among the first group of soldiers to return to Toronto after the ceasefire were some who complained about the bad food they were served aboard their ship home. News like this cropped up during the war but it was rare. During demobilization it proliferated. Shipboard conditions reached scandalous proportions in the case of the Northlands in December 1918, leading to an inquiry. Despite general improvement in the nature of accommodations and food on home-bound ships the fundamental complaint of ordinary soldiers remained: they traveled in the cramped steerage class and were kept from the open upper decks. These circumstances seemed to contradict the democratic ideals for which the war was supposedly fought and the peace was being negotiated. To many men it simply felt insulting: this was how soldier heroes were treated after they won the war? One soldier contrasted the conditions he and his fellow rankers endured with 'the promenade decks,' 'lounge rooms' and 'elegantly appointed dining-rooms' officers enjoyed and claimed that the 'same spirit of distinction was prominently noticeable in France and England in connection with leave.' This former engineer's September letter to the Globe complained that such 'snobbishness' was 'well protected by our Government in Ottawa' and a major cause of veteran unrest.

Some indication of veterans' bad opinion of their experiences of demobilization, including displeasure with sailing in third class accommodations, is provided by the story of D. Worstall. He was one of three Toronto veterans the military asked in early June to return to England to provide evidence in the trial of a soldier accused of participating in the Kinmel Park

---

40 Telegram, 1 May 1919, 22
41 Star, 14 November 1918, 5
42 On the poor conditions aboard some troopships, especially the Northlands, see: Morton, "Kicking and Complaining", 339-340; Morton and Wright, Winning the Second Battle, 110-112.
43 'Views of Veterans on Gratuity Question,' Globe, 11 September 1919, VGL file, Church Fonds
Camp riot of 4 and 5 March 1919. 20,000 members of demobilization drafts were collected in Kinmel Park waiting their turn to depart in early March.\textsuperscript{44} The two days of rioting led to five deaths, dozens of injuries, wrecked canteens, storerooms and civilian shops and, eventually, the conviction of twenty-nine soldiers at military trials.\textsuperscript{45} Before agreeing to re-enlist and go overseas Worstall (referred to in the letters of military officials as 'Pte.' though he was discharged) wanted guarantees that his War Service Gratuity would not be affected. He also insisted on cabin accommodation aboard ship and pay and allowances for the full time that he made himself available to travel and not only for the days that he did travel. Though apparently granted these conditions he found when he reported to take passage on a ship docked in Montreal that the army was only going to give him room in third class. He refused to board and ignored the chain of command by calling General Gunn directly in Toronto to complain.\textsuperscript{46}

Worstall's demands and his actions can be understood in two basic ways. Firstly, it seems that his connection to a comrade accused of rioting was important enough for him to agree to venture overseas again. Secondly, it is clear that his familiarity with the frustrations of army bureaucracy and the life ordinary soldiers endured during demobilization bred in him a determination to make demands of authorities. Worstall spent two months at Kinmel Park apparently because the army could not find his papers, and traveling in steerage on his voyage home worsened the experience of repatriation for him.

The Kinmel Park riot was the most serious incident in a pattern of postwar violence and unrest on the part of Canadian soldiers in England and on the continent that Torontonians began learning about soon after the armistice. In his study of the incidences of riots and violence by Canadian soldiers in England and their protests on the continent after the war, Desmond Morton has argued that the disturbances expressed frustration and protest at conditions and treatment

\textsuperscript{44} Morton, \textit{When Your Number's Up}, 267


\textsuperscript{46} For correspondence in June and July 1919 that sheds light on this episode involving Worstall and on the other returned soldiers requested to testify see: LAC, RG24, Vol 4324, File 34-1-169.
soldiers faced while they waited far too long to be sent home. Lengthy waiting time was caused by strikes and fierce competition for inadequate shipping. Resentment over delays was compounded by the inaccuracy or lack of information about repatriation schedules. Private soldiers were quickly dissatisfied with camp life, especially when they compared the poor food, lack of entertainment, lack of alcohol, shortage of cigarettes, infrequency of passes and leaves from camp that they had to endure with the privileges officers enjoyed. Officers could leave camp every night for dinner and entertainment in town, or gain entry into events and places common soldiers could not. Veteran soldiers were also aggrieved that recent conscripts, men who had served behind the lines or in England and others with shorter terms of service, often ended up being sent home ahead of them. Finally, 'sagging discipline and negligent officers' played key roles.

As did complaints about the voyage home, these grievances about conditions in England became news in Toronto and some overseas soldiers even spoke directly to home front audiences through the media. A letter excerpted by the *Telegram* in March of 1919 provides an example. Its author, 'a private soldier who joined in 1915,' wrote on behalf of 'A Bunch of Boys from Toronto Whose Only Thought is Home.' He explained that if he identified himself he risked punishment for criticizing his superiors and '[t]hen I might never get home.' He and his comrades hoped the paper (which they too called 'the soldiers' friend') would 'raise a kick' for them that would push authorities to re-double their efforts to speed repatriation. And, further demonstrating his media savvy, the letter writer informed the editor he and his mates would be watching the *Telegram's* pages in the next month to see if it did.

---


49 *Telegram*, 1 Mar., 1919, pp. 17. The letter appeared in the *Telegram's*, "The Soldiers' 'Tely'", a section printed every Tuesday from about mid-1918 through most of 1919. It was a single (double-sided) broadsheet that summarized news of the past week, designed to be cut out by readers and sent to soldiers overseas. It clearly reached at least some soldiers in England.
By this stage the restless mood of repatriating soldiers and the encouragement peacetime gave to rough behaviour was well known. News readers in Toronto could have learned of this at least as early as December 1918 when one returning soldier offered a reporter an account of a riot at Witley Camp in England that began moments after the armistice came into effect. Responding at 11:00 on 11 November to a drummer's call, said the unidentified returnee, 'the boys stormed the "wet" canteen,' run by civilians who offered them free beer. Officers insisted that the men had to pay, knowing it was two weeks from payday and few of them had money in their pockets. 'So we said, "Over the top, boys," and we went and rolled the barrels outside, broke them open and dipped out the beer with fire buckets.' Their next stop was the dry canteen with its 'pretty girls serving there' and when they were told they would have to pay for the snacks available they looted the place. In the afternoon some 800 soldiers 'made for Tin Town' with its civilian shops. 'Three days before the signing of the armistice the boys warned the shop keepers to "get out,"
but because they did not heed the warning, explained the veteran, 'we simply went into the shops and grabbed everything in sight. Gee, you ought to have seen me!' said the interview subject, clearly pleased by the memory of the event. 'I was running up the street with half a dozen khaki shirts over this arm, half a dozen undershirts and a handful of socks. Some of the boys took watches and boots and everything.' He called these looters the day's 'millionarie soldiers' and concluded his story of these destructive celebrations of peace by saying that 'we had more fun than enough' on that day.50

Due to the seriousness of the Kinmel Park riot of early March (also called the Rhyl riot after the nearby Welsh town) it received the most attention in Toronto's public sphere. Concern about the extent of disgruntlement within the CEF prompted reporters to ask returnees about the mood of their overseas comrades. The morning after Toronto's first battalion homecoming a demobilization draft of 'Five hundred of the "bloody rioters of Kinmel"' arrived, giving reporters a chance to gauge the mood of the troops. There were many complaints about conditions at Kinmel and the long wait to get home. Several men said accounts of the violence were exaggerated. The News sensed 'a sort of grim triumph' among the returnees too, citing one who said that if 'it hadn't been for wakenng [sic] them up we would be there yet.' These returning soldiers not only felt that violent protest got them results but the moniker 'bloody

50 Telegram, 21 December 1918, 18. Armistice day rioters at the camp in Bramshott also wrecked the 'Tin Town' connected to the camp: Morton, "Kicking and Complaining," 338-9.
rioters' suggested a measure of pride in their riotous action too, for some used the phrase to refer to themselves.51

The message of another of the returnees among this group of 500 seemed calculated to reassure the public about the mood of soldiers. Claiming he had reliable insight into the Kinmel Park riot, Lieutenant Sweet assured the News that it was "some Russians in the Canadian army" who were "the fellows who carried the red flags" during the riot and "were doubtless working secretly and pressuring their views as much as they could on the men." Despite this, said the Lieutenant, the "men were not touched by Bolshevism, but they were merely out for devilment when they wrecked the huts at Kinmel."52 Sweet's message was all the more rich with meaning because he admitted he did not witness the riots. His decision to offer his second-hand knowledge of the event and the editorial decision to print his words suggests the high level of public concern the riot generated, as well as an urgent desire to downplay the seriousness of soldiers' overseas violence. His statement, with its mention of a red flag and of Bolshevism, is also evidence of the intersection of soldier unrest with Red Scare anxiety.

Sweet's views were expressed by other returning officers. At the Armouries reception hosted by the Sportsmen's association that same day, the guest of honour was Lieutenant-Colonel I.W. Patterson, the Officer Commanding the unit that had returned the previous evening in the city's first homecoming parade. In his address to the guests he brought up the issue of the 'Rhyl riots,' saying that the unrest should not be taken seriously because the men 'are endowed with intelligence above the ordinary.' What the Colonel meant was that they were not acting under the malevolent influence of radical agitators. According to him their protest was about the long wait they endured in camp without being provided with any reliable information about when they would be going home.53

Patterson and Sweet may have been correct but their statements clearly betray the anxiety that demobilization conjured up for Canadians during the turbulent year of 1919. Growing as examples of returned soldier violence multiplied from 1916 onwards was the fear that fighting and soldiering had depraved previously respectable civilians, making them rough,
criminally inclined and sexually promiscuous carriers of venereal diseases.\textsuperscript{54} In addition to the threat people feared soldiers posed to social stability and public health was their potential challenge to political stability. Habituated to obedience, soldiers' might be easily swayed by radicals who made problems of scheduling and camp conditions, as unacceptable as they were, into evidence of the oppression of capitalist elites over ordinary working people. And since soldiers were also habituated to violence and experienced in organized fighting, the consequences of political dissent could be disastrous. It was not far-fetched to imagine these possibilities at the end of the Great War. Torontonians were more than familiar with the violent protests of their own veterans at home, learned about the post war riots of CEF soldiers overseas and knew that mass protests by sailors and soldiers precipitated the collapse of imperial power in Russia and more recently in Germany and Austria-Hungary.

The potential threat returning soldiers posed to the country's political stability was addressed most often during and after the Winnipeg General Strike of May and June.\textsuperscript{55} The public declarations of a Colonel returning to Toronto are clear examples. In early June Colonel Harbottle of the 75\textsuperscript{th} Battalion was en route from Halifax with his unit when he sent a telegram to Mayor Church of Toronto. Mindful of arrangement being made for the battalion's homecoming, the telegram informed Church of the unit's departure time from Halifax. The Colonel's message also spoke brightly of the high morale of the unit and said there were no 'Bolshevist sympathizers here.'\textsuperscript{56} The text of the speech Harbottle prepared for the unit's reception (which another chaotic finish prevented the Colonel from delivering) addressed this issue as well. In part it said that soldiers' experiences had 'taught them to beware of unprincipled agitators, and mob violence will never be recognized or indulged in by' his


\textsuperscript{55} The strike in Winnipeg was the most serious of an unprecedented number across the country that year, including in Toronto, where a general strike was debated and then failed to materialize when it was called on 2 June. The best work on this period's working-class unrest and the 'Red Scare' is Craig Heron, ed., \textit{The Workers' Revolt in Canada, 1917-1925} (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1998).

\textsuperscript{56} \textit{Telegram}, 7 June 1919, 12
soldiers. 'If men are treated and considered as men, and not machines, in civil life', good feeling would prevail 'in the factory, workshop and other walks of life', argued the Colonel. At a reception held for the 75th at the Armouries the day after they arrived, the Colonel changed his tactics. Rather than constructing returnees as level-headed and mild-mannered he made a direct appeal to the veterans who attended the reception and listened to his farewell address. He asked the men before him not join the strikes in Winnipeg or anywhere else.

Harbottle's statements clearly reveal that declarations about the loyalty and moderation of returning soldiers during the Red Scare were designed to construct veterans as defenders of constituted authority rather than angry men ready to wrest control from government. They demonstrate that the Red Scare changed the nature of public discourse and indicate one way that veteran identity was made part of this discourse. Whereas in early 1918 Toronto GWVA leaders accused comrades of acting like Bolsheviks or advocating Bolshevik measures, by 1919 it became more important to stress that though unfortunately indulging in outbursts of anger and violence, returning soldiers were not sympathetic to radical ideas. The fear that returning soldiers were Bolsheviks undermined prevailing representations of soldiers as embodiments of the nation's just cause in the war, thereby challenging positive interpretations of victory and the whole war effort. Representing veterans as loyal and respectable citizens committed to constituted authority also made it easier to characterize strikes as misguided and unfair disruptions at a time of difficult transition. After all, if the complaints of men returning from the horrors of war were limited to conditions of travel and long waiting times, then industrial workers' demands seemed unreasonable by comparison.

Distancing veterans from radicalism was important to GWVA leaders as well, but with such a large proportion of their members belonging to the working class they did not want to alienate their organization from labour. The reaction of the Ontario GWVA Command to the Western labour conference held in March 1919 is an example of the position on labour protest the association tried to establish. GWVA executives expressed their sympathy with the objectives of organized labour but denounced the greetings the Western labour delegates sent to Russian Bolsheviks and German Spartacists. For the figures in the higher echelons of the

57 *Telegram*, 9 June 1919, 13
58 *Telegram*, 10 June 1919, 10
59 *Mail and Empire*, 19 March 1919, 1
Chapter 6

GWVA, radicalism was intolerable and they acted to ensure their institution steered clear of being implicated in the Red Scare while also trying to respect the class grievances of so many of their members. When the general strike began in Winnipeg the Dominion GWVA declared the association neutral, and Secretary Grant MacNeil visited the city during the strike to persuade the Winnipeg branch to adopt this position.60

Speaking in Toronto in late May, Ontario GWVA secretary Turley was pleased that the Winnipeg branch had taken MacNeil's advice, but he acknowledged that it was a move taken by 'the administrative end of the association' rather than one representing the attitude of most members.61 Turley was admitting that most veterans in Winnipeg did not endorse the official decision of the GWVA. There was dramatic evidence of this in the following weeks as pro-strike veterans began demonstrations that pushed the strike to its crisis point. Often led by Roger Bray, pro-strike veterans paraded and held mass meetings in defiance of local bans on these practices and against the advice of strike leaders. They also occupied the provincial legislature and municipal council chambers, angrily confronting the Mayor and Premier to demand they intervene to resolve the dispute. Authorities did not change their stance on the strike. Instead, the veterans' interventions convinced them to begin organizing counter demonstrations that included large numbers of anti-strike veterans. Pro-strike veterans had greater success with the GWVA, using the majority they commanded at one meeting to reverse the association's official position by declaring the local branch in support of the Strike Committee.62

The meeting, which also elected pro-strike delegates for the upcoming Dominion convention, spurred the leadership of Winnipeg's GWVA to cast aside their questionable neutrality and forcefully express their opposition to the strike, which they described using the language of the Red Scare.63 Excerpted in the Star, the organ of the Manitoba GWVA reflected this shift. It said the 'rights to organize, to bargain collectively and to a decent living wage'

60 Morton and Wright, Winning the Second Battle, 122
61 Telegram, 26 May 1919, 10
62 Star, 6 June 1919, 7. On Winnipeg veterans and the strike see Harry Gutkin and Mildred Gutkin, Profiles in Dissent: The Shaping of Radical Thought in the Canadian West (Edmonton: NeWest, 1997).: 193-203.
63 Star, 6 June 1919, 7
were 'fundamental in life' and claimed to fully support efforts to attain these goals. But that was not what was going on in Winnipeg, claimed the paper. Instead, 'the industrial upheaval is nothing more or less than veiled revolution designed to overthrow well-proven Canadian institutions.' The Manitoba Veteran underlined the significance of the strike's supposed hidden intentions for veterans in particular when it said that it was for Canadian institutions that 'Canadian patriots died gloriously on the Fields of France and Flanders.'

As Bray and his followers explained on many occasions, they did not disagree with this characterization of the cause they fought for overseas; they pointed out, rather, that the institutions they defended were letting them down.

The situation in Toronto never became as polarized or as violent as it did in Winnipeg. Perhaps as a result there was no similar attempt made by labour militants within the Toronto organization to change the GWVA's official policy of neutrality regarding labour disputes. Ontario and Toronto District officials informed the press of their neutrality in industrial conflicts on May Day, which marked the start of a wave of strikes in which local veterans participated as workers in a range of trades and occupations. Strikes of city workers, as well as strikes in the metal trades and meat-packing industries that began in early May included returned soldiers, for example.

Veterans were also affected by strikes in other ways. For example, the metal trades strike caused the cancellation of vocational training classes for more than 800 returned soldiers, according to one estimate. This may have also cancelled the pay veterans earned as trainees in Department of Soldier Civil Re-establishment courses. Even if it did not, the economic needs of returned soldiers was a growing problem. As more veterans returned home more of them joined the ranks of the unemployed and the slumping economy offered few prospects for new jobs. May also marked the end of the six-month period during which gratuities were paid to peacetime returnees. Significantly, there were no reports of veterans acting as strike leaders.

---

64 Star, 17 June 1919, 22
65 Star, 1 May 1919, 24
66 Star, 5 May 1919, 1; Star, 12 May 1919, 4
67 Star, 1 May 1919, 24
68 Star, 10 May 1919, 10; Star, 12 May 1919, 4
breakers, something at least a few individual returned soldiers did during a wartime strike of street cleaners. 69

Clearly, the expansion of working-class solidarity in Toronto and the explosion of militancy in May included returned men. In addition, as participants in labour protest, Toronto's veterans let the public know that their labour activism was partially based in their experiences as men who fought for the cause overseas. The 5,000-strong parade for the eight-hour day that ended in a mass meeting in Queen's Park included a contingent of veterans who held aloft a banner reading "We Fought for Democracy, Not For Capitalists." As industrial conflict spread and debate about mounting a general strike intensified, veterans responded to claims that they were Bolsheviks, or were following the lead of radical agitators. One of the executive members of the Metal Trades Council for Toronto was a returned soldier, J. Higgins. Speaking in mid-May he characterized the local strike movement as democratic and justly motivated, and he defied anyone to call him a "Red." 71

Veterans' anti-radicalism reflected the conservative attitude of mainstream labour, as well as their assumption that foreign agitators did pose a threat to the (Anglo) Canadian way of life. It was also something virtually all veterans shared. In Winnipeg, where veterans appeared to be the most radical, pro-strike veterans declared themselves to be defenders of law and order, upholders of constituted authority and called for the deportation of aliens and suppression of Bolshevism every bit as loudly as anti-strike veterans did. What differentiated them the most were their opinions about which side was constitutional or, in other words, justified in their stand. Pro-strike veterans felt the Strike Committee was justified in leading a general strike precisely because government was ignoring the demands of its citizens to regulate the behavior of business. Government was the one acting unconstitutionally, at least in part by essentially delegating its authority to the Citizens' Committee of One Thousand.

---

69 Whether it made a difference to them or not, the strike was widely unpopular. Rather than being part of a grassroots movement for economic security, the work stoppage appeared to outside observers to be caused by a petty dispute between a union leader and a Works Department manager.

70 Star, 19 May 1919, 2

71 Star, 17 Mary 1919, 2
Anti-strike veterans, obviously, read the situation differently. An outdoor meeting a large crowd of anti-strike veterans held on their way to the legislature to present Premier Norris with resolutions provides an example of their views. A Captain Thomson and other speakers at the gathering proclaimed that they stood for 'constituted authority,' as well as 'law and order' and 'proper respect for the flag,' implying that pro-strike veterans did not. The speakers also objected to the fact that Bray and his pro-strike followers were passing themselves as representative of all returned soldiers, thereby challenging the loyal identity the group of anti-strike returned men championed at the meeting. The meeting demonstrated that the activism of anti-strike veterans was partly motivated by their perceptions of the effects that pro-strike activism could have on veteran identity.72

Re-establishment and Reparations

Captain Thomson's soap box speech in Winnipeg was another example of conflicts between veterans and of the higher stakes contest over veteran identity that was underway during the Red Scare. Reflecting on the nature of returning soldiers was a general tendency of the end of war period and was not caused simply by concerns about labour unrest. A September 1918 Star editorial, which looked ahead to 'Reconstruction After the War,' provides an example of discussion generated by the knowledge that more than a third of a million soldiers would be demobilized after the war and a quarter of a million munitions workers would lose their jobs.73

After a series of fuzzy statements about how the economy would adjust positively to peacetime change, the piece asked readers to compare the return of the CEF to the arrival of 'several hundred thousand new immigrants of the finest class, industrious, intelligent, and thoroughly acquainted with our institutions.' Well known for advocating immigration as an economic development strategy, the paper told readers what to make of this comparison: 'Instead of being filled with misgiving and anxiety we should rejoice in the hope of expansion and prosperity.'74

72 Star, 6 June 1919, 14
73 Star, 25 September 1918, 6. For these estimates see Desmond Morton and Glenn Wright, 'The Bonus Campaign, 1919-1921: Veterans and the Campaign for Re-establishment,' Canadian Historical Review 64, 2(1983), 148.
74 Star, 25 September 1918, 6
Did anyone scanning the *Star*'s editorial page that day take this seriously? Few Canadians were nearly this optimistic about postwar economic adjustment and it seems doubtful that many would have accepted the metaphor of veterans as economic immigrants either. Certainly, the editorial did not offer them any substantial evidence to persuade them to adopt its sunny attitude.

In arguing that the troops would prove to be industrious and productive civilians after the war the *Star* was articulating a construction of veterans that became more common towards the end of the war and afterwards. Fighting men demonstrated warrior manly qualities ennobled because they were performed in the service of a just cause for the nation, the empire and in defence of innocent victims in Belgium and France. In the context of discussion of reconstruction and re-establishment, other soldierly qualities were emphasized. Regimentation in military life, training and active service were said to have prepared veterans to be orderly civilians always prepared to sacrifice their own interests for the greater good. But they were supposed to be independent and resourceful too, qualities honed by meeting the challenges of battle.

The statements by Colonel Harbottle discussed above constructed veterans in these terms, as did a variety of other interventions in the public sphere during demobilization. One example was contained in a March 1919 advertisement for the Gillette Safety Razor, an item commended to loving family members of soldiers throughout the war as a convenient necessity for clean-shaven army men looking for support from home. 75 Roughly a quarter of a newspaper page in size, the ad appeared the day after Toronto's first battalion homecoming parade brought over a thousand new returnees into the city. Acting as a border to the item were the cap badges of Toronto area CEF units. At the top the words 'Welcome Home Canadians' accompanied an image of uniformed men parading at ease on their return, enjoying the cheers and well wishes of the crowd around them. After praising the veterans and honouring the dead, Gillette advertisers addressed the question of 'the days to come,' and argued that the best way for the men to 'settle down into civilian life' was to rely on 'the experience you gained in the Army.' Officers were reminded that they practiced their authority 'as the means to the attainment of an end,' rather than for selfish reasons, the prose implied. Other soldiers were

---

75 *Globe*, 20 March 1919, 7. British army regulations permitted mustaches only.
promised 'success and happiness' if they brought 'to the industrial world the loyal co-operation
which animated the Canadian armies.'76 The sales pitch followed.

Genuine or not, these views about returned soldiers seriously misjudged the
applicability of war service for the civilian life of most soldiers and of the attitudes of most of
them at the end of the war. Damaged bodies and minds had a hard time fitting into workplaces,
whether they were inflexible industrial environments or potentially more accommodating
spaces. One letter writer did not expect to find a job as a manual worker because he was
missing a leg and could not wear an artificial one because of other wounds. In searching for
other kinds of jobs, however, he had learned that 'employers don't care to have a man on
crutches around on any decent job.' He therefore asked readers for advice on how he 'and the
three who are dependent on me' could live on a pension of forty-three dollars a month.77
However 'industrious,' 'intelligent' and imbued with 'loyal cooperation' this man was did not
seem to matter. What mattered instead was the nature of the labour market and the attitudes of
employers.

Able-bodied returned soldiers complained about their predicament when they came
home too. Few of them had acquired especially marketable job skills as members of the CEF.
Anecdotal evidence does suggest that drivers and motor mechanics benefited from the postwar
growth of the automobile industry but the health of a repatriating soldier and his job expertise
or educational qualifications prior to enlistment were better measures of his chances of
economic re-establishment. Veterans quickly became frustrated by unemployment, insisting
employers give them jobs occupied by non-veterans. Aliens and women were particularly
illegitimate employees in postwar discourse and employers generally appear to have followed a
pattern of dismissing these groups and hiring veterans, or at least other men, as replacements.78
Many companies, smaller businesses and all levels of government adhered to a policy of hiring
returned soldiers on a preferential basis as well as reserving positions for returning employees.

76 Globe, 20 March 1919, 7
77 Telegram, 10 June 1919, 10
78 Joan Sangster, "Mobilizing Women for War," in Canada and the First World War: Essays in
Honour of Robert Craig Brown, ed. David MacKenzie (Toronto: University of Toronto Press,
2005).: 157-193; Star, 30 January 1919, 19; Star, 7 February 1919, 4; Telegram, 8 April 1919,
Veterans could also qualify for government vocational or re-training courses. Begun during the war by the Military Hospitals Commission, these were offered under the auspices of the Department of Soldier Civil Re-establishment when it was created early in 1918. The federal government's Soldier Settlement scheme was designed to assist soldiers become farmers. The program required that interested veterans already have some start-up capital and could demonstrate at least some aptitude for agriculture. Expecting, as everyone did, that the end of war production would cause an economic slump, the federal government also invested in public works, kept shipbuilding contracts in place for one more year and inaugurated the National Employment Service, a job placement service. Finally, Ottawa made funding available to the provinces to alleviate the pressure on housing caused by recent steep rises in rents, the return of soldiers and the lack of new construction that went back to the pre-war recession. These initiatives were begun with veterans in mind but were supposed to be for the benefit of needy Canadians in general.

However successful the transition to civilian life was for Canadian soldiers as a whole it was still difficult and unemployment, economic distress and worries about the future were problems for most returned men. Their situation felt all the more unfair to them because it appeared that so many Canadians had profited during the war years while they were putting their lives on the line, or at least serving a greater cause if they were not frontline soldiers.

Their argument was the same as the one made by anti-alien activists: while patriotic men served the cause of humanity, people on the home front earned high wages as workers or high profits as business people, earnings that at least helped offset rising prices. Starting at $1.10 a day, soldiers' rates of pay were unchanged since 1914. A number of policies adopted in 1918 and during demobilization assisted soldiers defray the costs of returning to Canada and becoming civilians again. By January 1919 demobilizing soldiers could expect government to provide them with a higher clothing allowance than during the war, give them money and vouchers to

---


cover costs of travel in Canada and to bring dependents home from England free of charge. They also received a War Service Gratuity based on length of service. The minimum gratuity was seventy dollars. A single man could earn as much as $420 dollars and a married man $600. The average earned by CEF soldiers was $240.82

These payments did not go nearly far enough in the opinion of many returning men, leading them to support the Calgary Resolution and the campaign it generated for a cash payment much larger than the War Service Gratuity. The bonus proposal was attractive for a variety of reasons. Its simplicity probably appealed to many. Regulations governing veterans' entitlement to pensions, farm settlement, or vocational training were complicated and most soldiers were fed up with bureaucracy and red tape. Ideologically, the bonus also satisfied anti-statist views that seemed appropriate in light of mainstream condemnation of Bolshevik social and economic policies. It also met veterans' insistence that men who had never done any fighting or even been in uniform should not be in charge of their affairs. In short, they felt that cash in hand cut red tape and by-passed bureaucratic middle men, self-serving politicians and safety-first officials.

These were important reasons for the mass support the Calgary Resolution won but to its supporters the most important of all was that it represented fairness. The central argument of bonus supporters was that the payment was compensation for earnings lost while serving in uniform. Hand in hand with this view was the argument that the bonus was the substantial sum necessary to get started in civilian life again. These linked claims fit the terms of postwar discourse about re-establishment. Ever since soldiers began returning to Canada in 1915 it was common for civilian speakers to cast their sacrifices in the language of finance: Canadians owed them a debt, one that could never be fully repaid, to be sure, but that would earn veterans lifelong credit in society. This pattern was reinforced after the war by discussion of war reparations, the compensation Germany was to pay the Allies for their war damages and costs. The 'Big Four Drive,' a major campaign for charitable contributions towards veterans' re-establishment held in Toronto in May, used the slogan 'repay' to encourage residents to give. The campaign collected money over four days and benefited four organizations, but its moniker was adopted largely because 'the Big Four' was widely known as the term for the chief powers,

82 Morton and Wright: *Winning the Second Battle*, 112-3 and 'The Bonus Campaign,' 151
83 *Globe*, 6 May 1919, 8; *Globe*, 10 May 1919, 10; *Star*, 5 May 1919, 5
the US, Britain, France and Italy, who negotiated peace terms in Paris and argued over reparations.

Despite the fact that characterizing the bonus as compensation and discussing dollars in the context of re-establishment was commensurate in important ways to discourses about re-establishing returned men, the bonus faced firm opposition. Government, most media outlets, a wide-range of other public voices, and, crucially, the leadership of the GWVA all opposed the Calgary Resolution and the idea of expanded cash grants to veterans. Ottawa's position was that it was already providing valuable re-establishment assistance to the able-bodied and support to the war-wounded. Furthermore, the government claimed that the scheme proposed in Calgary and supported in countless meetings elsewhere would cost in the order of one billion dollars and was simply not affordable. Bonus opponents outside government, such as the leadership of the GWVA, were often critical of Ottawa for doing too little to help veterans reintegrate into society but agreed that the bonus would bankrupt a nation already indebted by the enormous costs of the war effort.

In their examination of the campaign for the bonus and veterans' re-establishment, Desmond Morton and Glenn Wright show that conflict among veterans over the bonus sapped the strength of the GWVA and ended the dream of a mass veterans' movement in postwar Canada. Their analysis of the debate about the bonus emphasizes the practical arguments made against the Calgary Resolution and tends to re-create contemporary characterizations of bonus seekers as fortune-hunters ignorant of the economic realities that troubled hard-headed GWVA leaders and realistic politicians. Their interpretation does not give a fair enough account of the economic arguments made for the bonus or sufficiently consider the ways that cultural attitudes informed opposition to the bonus movement.

An April editorial in the *Globe* about the opposition of Saskatchewan GWVA convention delegates to the bonus is an example of the way that economic and cultural arguments against the gratuity frequently overlapped. The fact that it was an 'impossible' amount was one reason for the decision of Saskatchewan veterans, but they 'opposed it also on the higher ground of self-respect,' said the *Globe.* A sizeable majority of Ontario GWVA representatives rejected the bonus on the same grounds at their convention a month later. The

---

84 *Globe*, 28 April 1919, 6
85 *Star*, 16 May 1919, 25
implication that the bonus was not respectable, as well as the patronizing tone of some bonus opponents, helped push debate well beyond the sphere of policy and added to bonus discord. For example, as industrial conflict intensified in Toronto in May 1919 W.E. Turley told a meeting that Ontario GWVA members opposed the gratuity because they did not wish to be seen as 'hired murderers' or 'war profiteers.' These provocative comments helped breed the suspicion, mentioned in Chapter 5, that Turley and the GWVA were doing the government's dirty work of undermining support for the bonus.

As for the financial arguments against the bonus, they did not impress advocates of the Calgary Resolution. The leader of the Veterans' Gratuity League formed in September, Harry Flynn, suggested raising government revenue by taxing undeveloped land and Sunday theatres, as well as creating a national lottery, while several others proposed taxing automobiles, a symbol of wartime prosperity. Many supporters of the gratuity questioned the claim that the war had impoverished Canada, including members of the Union government caucus such Major Andrews of Winnipeg and Colonel Currie of North Simcoe. Other veterans who did not favour the gratuity advocated cash payments of other kinds, such as retroactive pay raises to men in the ranks and support for small business plans to complement the government's farm settlement scheme for veterans. The bigger point that bonus advocates made in response to claims that war debt created the need for postwar austerity was that such arguments were only possible because of their efforts. Had Canadians not helped seize victory in 1918 the country would still be paying to fight the war, which would be far costlier than paying the gratuity.

86 Star, 9 May 1919, 28
87 'Flynn Fights Gratuity Case in Very Hostile Arena,' Telegram, 1 October 1919; 'Flynn Flashes Out Against Much Hostility,' Telegram, 2 October 1919; 'Govt. Threatens to Resign Before Giving Gratuities,' Telegram, 6 November 1919, VGL file, Church Fonds
88 'Govt. Threatens to Resign Before Giving Gratuities,' Telegram, 6 November 1919, VGL file, Church Fonds
89 'Views of Veterans on Gratuity Question,' Globe, 11 September 1919; 'Why Greater Gratitude?' Telegram, 1 October 1919, VGL file, Church Fonds
90 For an example of these views see: '15,000 Veterans Ask $2,000 – No Comm.,' Star, 12 September 1919, VGL file, Church Fonds.
Though the bonus campaign never achieved its ultimate objective and exacerbated divisions among veterans, it was remarkably successful at pushing its opponents to revise their own re-establishment schemes. The May convention of the Ontario GWVA may have rejected the gratuity but it supported a motion requesting that government create a committee to review the question of reimbursing veterans for lost earnings while they served.  

The Dominion GWVA dealt with the swelling tide of support for the bonus at its 1919 convention that began late in June in Vancouver. There it adopted a proposed system of what it called bonus payments to be managed by a commission of GWVA officials and Parliamentarians who would determine eligibility and keep to a sound budget.  

Prime Minister Borden's rejection of this plan in late August created the conditions for the emergence of the Veteran's Gratuity League, the success of which was largely responsible for the convening of the government's committee on re-establishment. By the end of October the government's committee rejected both the Calgary Resolution Flynn spoke in favour of and the so-called system of bonuses the GWVA supported. Serving as the basis for modifications in re-establishment policy the Union government adopted days prior to the anniversary of the armistice, the committee's report made a variety of limited recommendations. These included equalizing payments to Canadians who had served in British units and looking into creating life insurance and unemployment insurance programs that would benefit veterans.

By the anniversary of the armistice, then, pro-bonus activism was indirectly responsible for limited but still significant advances in veteran entitlements. Popular support for the Calgary Resolution or some version of a bonus had also severely shaken the GWVA and forced it to adopt the language of the bonus. But the Great War Veterans stopped well short of the embracing view of the United Veterans League and bonus supporters in general. The Calgary Resolution supported by the UVL assumed all veterans were deserving of something while the GWVA's plan of means testing and restriction on the use of payments to specific purposes, such as rent or tuition, limited eligibility for financial assistance. Ontario and Toronto officials of

---

91 Star, 16 May 1919, 25

92 Morton and Wright, 'The Bonus Campaign,' 157; GWVA, G.W.V.A. Soldiers Civil Re-establishment Scheme as Submitted to the Dominion Government October 1919

93 Mail and Empire, 29 October 1919, VGL file, Church Fonds; Morton and Wright, 'The Bonus Campaign,' 156-162
the GWVA also defended their anti-bonus stance from early attacks by arguing that the bonus endangered the chances of improving pensions, which were only granted to the disabled and dependents of the fallen.\(^{94}\)

Not only was the GWVA's approach particularist, but it avoided the very problem the bonus was meant to address, which was the problem of re-establishment in a capitalist economy. The problem the Calgary Resolution was devised for was the problem of lost earnings and unequal access to jobs and other economic opportunities in a swiftly changing economy. At an EarlsCourt GWVA meeting in May a returnee argued for the bonus by declaring it was 'up to the Government to make up in some way for the losses sustained by the men who have served their King and country overseas.'\(^{95}\) Flynn called the 'competition' with men who had stayed behind 'unfair,' for veterans earned too little as soldiers to amass any savings. 'We must have some compensation to meet these conditions,' said Flynn at the Queen's Park rally that kick-started Gratuity League activism in early September.\(^{96}\)

Since service in the CEF was the reason for these problems, bonus supporters reasonably concluded that government was responsible for helping to rectify this injustice. The bonus addressed the issue of sacrifice primarily in terms of the economic sacrifices all men made when they enlisted and only secondarily in terms of the hierarchy of sacrifice commonly invoked during and after the war that placed combat survivors at the top. It was not meant for all Canadians, of course, but the bonus was universalist in the sense that it was devised to benefit all returned soldiers. Importantly, the gratuity idea did not reproduce the paternalism inherent in the Patriotic Fund (which literally cast itself in the role of the father) or that was complained about pension administration and that was apparent in the means testing of the GWVA's plan.

Considering its Tory populist backing and the populist nature of the campaign this is perhaps ironic. However, the bonus idea was for individual payments to be made to former soldiers, calling to mind traditional forms of paternalism. The bonus was also not designed as a permanent social security program. The idea was to dramatically intervene to rectify a problem

\(^{94}\) *Star*, 12 May 1919, 4; *Star*, 13 May 1919, 1; *Star*, 14 May 1919, 1

\(^{95}\) *Star*, 14 May 1919, 1

\(^{96}\) "Let Us Take it By Force!" Bitter Appeal to Soldiers to Insist on Extra Grant,' *Mail and Empire*, 8 September 1919, VGL file, Church Fonds
on behalf of especially deserving citizens, the sort of action congruent with populism.97 Despite its roots in familiar political soil it was a unique idea and campaign in the turmoil of 1919 and the first of its kind in Canadian history, all of which might help explain the shocked reactions it produced.98

The bonus imagined the possibility of positive state action, if perhaps not a positivist state. That is, a state that not only disciplined and made demands of its populous, by denying them drink, censoring them, and by forcing some to war and taxing the incomes of others; but one that enabled and provided for its citizens by attempting to ensure their social welfare and redress fundamental inequalities. The evidence suggests that bonus advocates conceived of their service as soldiers as part of a larger social contract between themselves as citizens and their state. Insinuations that they were acting like Bolsheviks and that their demands were not respectable were rejected on these grounds. The largest sign placed at the corner of Yonge and Queen streets the day before the Queen's Park rally that called the Gratuity League into being provided evidence of these feelings. 'We are not Bolsheviks,' began the placard's message. 'We are democratic Canadians and we demand our rights,' it continued. 'We fought for justice and we want to enjoy what we suffered for. $2,000 for the men who fought in France.'99

In its magazine, convention resolutions, committee reports and pamphlets the GWVA articulated a view of re-establishment within the context of national reconstruction that advocated for a more interventionist state. But the Great War Veterans favoured liberal progressivism over populism. Veteran representation in bureaucratic agencies, for example, would expand pension eligibility and increase pension rates, while more expert management of the economy, or investment in education would benefit returned men by creating more jobs and increasing marketable skills. And rather than citizens' rights in a democratic state, Great War Veterans' officials emphasized the importance of constitutionality. At the committee hearings

98 Historians of social welfare in Canada have not incorporated the Bonus Campaign and debate over this form of government intervention into their works: Christie, Engendering the State, Guest, The Emergence of Social Security in Canada, Struthers, The Limits of Affluence.
99 "'Let Us Take it By Force?' Bitter Appeal to Soldiers to Insist on Extra Grant,' Mail and Empire, 8 September 1919, VGL file, Church Fonds
in October, for example, GWVA Secretary MacNeil read a prepared statement distancing his organization from Flynn, who was recently reported to have accused the government of lying when it said it could not afford the gratuity. These 'statements made by Mr. Flynn,' explained MacNeil, 'seriously reflect upon British institutions and sense of fair play and are not in accord with the ideals for which Canada's citizens' soldiers have served and now seek to maintain.' MacNeil's statement implied that as citizens veterans continued to be duty-bound to serve high ideals embodied by their state. Fulfilling this duty required that they promote 'the welfare of returned soldiers in a reasonable and constitutional manner.' If they ever had been in the past, then bonus adherents were no longer convinced by this reasoning – it was the state that owed them a duty of service and whatever it took to convince the government of this truth seemed more than reasonable.

Conclusion
With their diversity of class backgrounds, differences over politics and their unique connection to the war, as well as varied experiences of the war, veterans are a complex social group that offers rich material for historical analysis. They are more than cultural symbols centrally important to masculinity and the nation state, and they offer more than insight into war experience and memory, though these are clearly rich areas of research. Soldiers and returned soldiers are people with other identities too. Past chapters highlight their identities as citizens and point to the importance of Britishness and class for their activism. In studying veterans as a social group we can learn about more than just this group, though fairly few studies have done so. As this chapter has demonstrated, studying Great War veterans sheds more light on the labour revolt and the Red Scare that climaxed soon after the war.

---

100 'Flynn Flashes Out Against Much Hostility,' *Telegram*, 2 October 1919, VFL file, Church Fonds

Labour historians have not ignored veterans' involvement in militant labour protest, radicalism and in reactions against these movements, but more research is needed to understand their links with labour and with authorities. The same is true for expanding our understanding of the way their war service was a part of their motivations as labour militants and reactionaries. At this stage it is clear that while service in uniform bred grievances in the ranks that many returned men acted on during demobilization and back home, soldiering in the CEF was not a radicalizing experience. Winnipeg Strike Committee member and veteran leader Roger Bray was a socialist before he enlisted.\(^{102}\) When he came home, Toronto's William Varley remained faithful to the AFL-led international unionism he participated in prior to becoming a soldier.\(^{103}\) Both, however, made their veteran identity central to their labour activism.

Not only can focusing on veterans produce insights into the role they played in the Labour Revolt, but as this chapter has shown, it can illuminate the history of the period more generally. For social, political and economic reasons they were centrally important for the family members, churches and service organizations, elites, bureaucrats and politicians who welcomed them home. Symbolically speaking they were the central figures in the confusing problem of what the war meant now that it was won. Finally, they acted on their own as well. With their wartime resentments enflamed by postwar injustices they interjected in the public sphere to demand their country 'waken up' and repatriate them more quickly, treat them more fairly and give them a fairer shot at civilian re-establishment by recognizing that reparations were owed them. Their actions and their arguments as comrades and citizens during the turmoil-filled end of the war showed that constructing returned soldiers' identity was an ongoing and contested process.

---

\(^{102}\) Gutkin and Gutkin, *Profiles in Dissent*, 193-203

In late 1920 the official organ of the Great War Veterans' Association displayed a full-page illustration featuring two men wearing workman's clothes and handling trowels.\(^1\) They stood on a scaffold held aloft by the letters "GWVA" and were at work on the wall of "Re-establishment." One had just finished laying the stone of "Soldiers' Insurance," a reference to the life insurance program recently adopted by the federal government at the association's insistence. It was positioned amid other stones representing the GWVA's role in increasing pensions, winning millions of dollars in claims for veterans and their dependents, and so on. On the ground below were the stones of "Educational Assistance" and "Industrial Loans" that the workers had yet to hoist into position.

The stones and the wall they formed represented the success of the Great War Veterans' constitutional methods. Emphasizing this message was the reaction of one of the workers to "The Red Agitator" dressed in a three-piece suit and wielding a sledge-hammer he meant to swing against the "GWVA" scaffolding. In reply to the agitator's cry of "Tear it all down!!" the worker in overalls confidently said, "Go to it! You can't do any harm."\(^2\) The caption referred to the image as "A Strong Scaffold," focusing attention on the strength of the GWVA and implying that the institution had weathered the gratuity storm and emerged untainted by its brush with radicalism. With the wall of re-establishment unfinished, the image also alluded to the work ahead, implying that hard work and political moderation would pay more dividends for veterans.

The returns were meagre, but investing in constitutional methods and hard work probably won veterans as much as they could get from government in the twenty years after the First World War. The results did not ensure the longevity of the GWVA, however. In 1926 it became part of the new Canadian Legion, which inherited its infrastructure and carried on its legacy of representing the interests of disabled ex-soldiers. There was continuity in other ways.

\(^{1}\) *The Veteran*, December 1920, 12
\(^{2}\) *The Veteran*, December 1920, 12
too. British identity remained fundamentally important to the Legion and to most veterans. In the interwar period, returned men continued to employ the discourse of patriotic masculinity and argue that their service distinguished their citizenship from non-veterans. Comradeship and entitlement never lost their importance either; both worked against divisions among veterans to bring them together in reunions and institutions. Sadly, the problem of re-establishment did not go away and the welfare of First World War soldiers persisted as a social and political issue long after the fight over the bonus.

This history is described by Morton and Wright who stress the importance of veteran unity for making political progress on the related problems of inadequate and narrowly granted pensions, unemployment and assistance for settlers on the land. Taking stock of its failure to win major concessions in 1919, the GWVA adopted a political position the following year that was more in line with its pro-bonus opponents, arguing the current government had long outlived its win-the-war mandate and that an election was in order.3 Elected near the end of 1921, Liberal leader Mackenzie King gave veterans some reason to hope their demands would be met when he appointed a Royal Commission to investigate pensions and re-establishment. It found that by 1921 one-fifth of all returnees were unemployed and most of the disabled among them were without paid work.4 It was becoming clear that Soldier Settlement was failing too. Unable to pay their debts to the Soldier Settlement Board more than a thousand veterans abandoned their farms by the end of 1920. Within two years the figure tripled.5

Before and after the appointment of the Ralston Commission veterans began looking for ways to speak with one official voice, something most believed would give them more influence. Still the country's largest veterans' organization at the end of 1920 (claiming 140,000 members and nearly 900 branches)6 and demonstrating its usefulness to disabled men throughout the Ralston Commission inquiry, the GWVA was losing members, money (members' dues were often unpaid) and political clout all the time. These problems afflicted Canada's other veterans groups and motivated them to unite in the common cause of improving conditions for veterans. Conservative and uninterested in political activism, the Army and

---

3 When Borden stepped down as Prime Minister in mid-1920 Meighen replaced him.
4 Morton, *When Your Number's Up*, 273
5 Morton and Wright, *Winning the Second Battle*, 150-1
6 *Canadian Annual Review*, 21 (1921), 345
Navy Veterans had a strong institutional identity that gave them a reason to stay on the outside of such efforts.

Much of the impetus for unity came from Toronto, where the Grand Army of United Veterans (GAUV) was created from the 1920 amalgamation of the Grand Army of Canada and the United Veterans' League. In June of 1921 the Secretary of the new organization, Fred Marsh, was among the organizers of a mass meeting in Toronto that led to the formation of the Canadian Legion of War Veterans which welcomed all veterans as members.\(^7\) The new organization never amounted to much more than a committee that raised greater interest in unity and some support from prominent veterans. It failed to inspire unity or mass defection to its ranks. Instead it simply added to the population of veterans' institutions in the city, which in December 1920 municipal officials estimated to include 35 local branches of various associations of veterans.\(^8\)

While Toronto veterans sought ways of uniting their comrades into new organizations GWVA Dominion President Robert Maxwell acted on the unity issue by participating in the conference of British Empire veterans held in South Africa in 1921. Under the direction of elites such as South Africa's Prime Minister, General Smuts, and wartime commander of the British forces on the Western Front, Douglas Haig, the meeting resulted in the creation of the British Empire Service League, which, as the name implied, stressed veterans' ongoing role as

---

\(^7\) On its formation see: *Globe*, 10 June, 1921, 7; *Globe*, 17 June 1921, 6; *Globe*, 21 September 1921, 7.

\(^8\) CTA, RG2, B3, (144243) Box 156, 1920 Vol 2, Item 1297; CTA, RG2, B3, (144241) Box 154, 1920 Vol 2, Item 667. Ten were GWVA branches. Twelve were units of the GAUV. Others included the Army and Navy Veterans, His Majesty's Army and Navy Veterans, the Originals Club, the Amputations Association, the Naval Veterans' Association and veterans of the Air Forces. In addition to civilian associations of (or dominated by) Great War Veterans were regimental ones, such as the 74th Battalion Association. Ladies' auxiliaries were frequently attached to civilian and military branches but do not appear to have been included in the city's estimate. The organizations of veterans of 1866, 1885 and of the South African War were.
servants of the high ideals of Empire.\(^9\) This tone suited President Maxwell but not his Secretary-Treasurer, Grant MacNeil, who was more interested in seeing government live up to the high ideals for which veterans fought. MacNeil turned unity interest into the Dominion Veteran Alliance. Launched in February 1922 it was a federal body representing the Great War Veterans, the GAUV, the barely existent Legion, the Tubercular Veterans' Association and the Imperial Veterans in Canada.\(^10\) MacNeil controlled the alliance and used it to promote progressive policies, such as unemployment insurance, while continuing to act as the vigorous head of the GWVA.

In Toronto the GWVA was increasingly cooperating with the GAUV and the atmosphere was more favourable to unity, something that Flynn's departure in 1921 from the GAUV and the veterans' movement must have helped make possible.\(^11\) The coming-together of veterans to give evidence to the Ralston Commission prompted the call for a conference of Ontario veterans. Held in the clubhouse operated by the West End GWVA the early 1923 meeting created the Veterans' Alliance for Ontario and elected an executive that was subsequently expanded when more associations joined.\(^12\) But greater cooperation did not lead to greater progress. A 1924 pamphlet from the Toronto-based office of the provincial alliance explained to Canadians the flaws of the pension system and the shameful fate of the Ralston Commission-inspired reforms at the hands of the Senate. As a result, said the alliance, veterans' associations continued to be preoccupied with "picking up our wounded."\(^13\) It was a duty they would not shirk but one placed on them by government failures. The pamphlet plainly expressed resentment that broader re-establishment had been denied all returnees, claiming that the trust returned soldiers placed in "the serious people that rule our Community" to make up

\(^9\) *Canadian Annual Review*, 21 (1921), 228-9; "The Empire Conference," *The Veteran* (January 1921): 5; 'The British Empire Service League,' *The Veteran* (May 1921): 11

\(^10\) Morton and Wright, *Winning the Second Battle*, 180-7

\(^11\) *Canadian Annual Review*, 21 (1921), 349; *Globe*, 10 June, 1921, 7

\(^12\) AO, PAMPH nd V #3, Library Stacks, *Mr. Citizen, how would you like it?*, [Veterans' Alliance]. (The pamphlet is not paginated.)

\(^13\) AO, PAMPH nd V #3, Library Stacks, *Mr. Citizen, how would you like it?*, [Veterans' Alliance]. The pamphlet is marked as a publication of the Central Ontario Region and its content clearly indicates that it was produced by Torontonians.
for the economic sacrifices of signing up was betrayed. But this was secondary to the main
topic, which was re-establishment for the disabled.

The welfare of the disabled motivated veterans' most urgent political activism and as their funds dwindled it was the issue that rallied the leaders of veterans' associations to the cause of institutional unity. The next opportunity to do so came in 1925 when the GWVA was weakened by critics who presented damning evidence that it was not using the government funding it enjoyed to support its adjustment service for veterans. This was a service available to all ex-servicemen, it was larger than any other association offered and it propped up the GWVA's claims of being the only worthy national organization.¹⁴

With its worthiness compromised, the GWVA participated in unity discussions led by former high-ranking officers of the CEF. They were prompted by the visit of Haig, well known for advocating unity in imperial veterans' affairs as well as in the British veterans' movement. Haig and others urged unity at a conference held in Ottawa during his mid-1925 visit. Another gathering in Winnipeg in November of that year resulted in the Canadian Legion of the British Empire Service League, into which merged most of Canada's veterans' associations, including the Canadian Legion of War Veterans which was not formally related to the new organization.¹⁵

The creation of the Legion brought to an end a decade of wrangling among veterans about institutions. When it held its first national convention in January 1927, membership was announced as 20,000, which was far smaller than the GWVA's postwar peak of more than 200,000.¹⁶ The ANV and the amputees' association would still not join, but the debating of membership rules and methods of political engagement had subsided.¹⁷ All former soldiers of the King were welcome to join and it would advocate for its members as a non-partisan entity that spoke to the public and pressured Parliament.

¹⁴ Morton and Wright, Winning the Second Battle, 188-196
¹⁵ For two other perspectives on the creation of the Legion see: Bowering, Service, 6-28 and Frederick Field House Clark fonds, AO, F788.
¹⁶ Bowering, Service, 54; Morton and Wright, Winning the Second Battle, 181
¹⁷ The ANV exists today as the Army, Navy and Air Force Veterans of Canada (ANAVETS), while The War Amps is the descendent of the Toronto-based Amputees' Association of Canada. See http://www.anavets.ca/ and http://www.waramps.ca/about/history.html.
Veterans' debates during and immediately after the war about the nature of their institutions and the methods they should employ in pursuing their goals reflect the struggles of other sectors of society to organize, engage the public and influence politics. Union government, which superseded partisan identities undisturbed in English Canada since the mid-nineteenth-century, was a clear example of the war's effects on representational structures. As they developed political organizations that ruptured the structure of federal politics and disrupted them in Ontario and other provinces, farmers struggled to determine the nature of their organizations as well as representation in Parliament. Debate over party discipline, definitions of the public interest and the accountability of officials was no less significant than debate over policy.

Unionized and non-unionized workers debated their entry into electoral politics as well, but were preoccupied with the problem of how to organize in the workplace. While it is true that international unions and their centrals defended the order they had created over the past two or three generations against industrial unionism and syndicalism, it is also true that all labour leaders grappled with the challenge of how best to harness increased militancy and institutionalize expanding solidarity. Church leaders and followers as well as women's organizations faced related problems: how should form adapt to new circumstances, cope with tensions and best reflect new priorities? The differences of each case are naturally crucial, each sector of society having its own relationship to the war effort. Among the factors making divisiveness such a problem for returned men was the fact that the members of the CEF represented Canada's class and regional diversity, giving them different interests as civilians. In Toronto the veteran population was dominantly working class, but as this study has shown,

---


19 Naylor emphasizes this point in his work on the period more than other authors. See his: 'Toronto 1919'; *The New Democracy*; 'Striking at the Ballot Box,' in *The Workers' Revolt in Canada, 1917-1925*.

political outlook and differences in experience in uniform led to different perspectives on the
priorities the veterans' movement should pursue and opinions about its methods and character.

As they had during the war, veterans' organizations played key roles in pressuring
legislators and bureaucrats to adapt policy and practice to their interests. Modest changes for
disabled veterans followed the Ralston Commission. Later in the interwar period, veterans'
representatives won ex-servicemen the right to appeal pension board decisions and the right for
'burnt out' old soldiers to apply for a War Veterans' Allowance. The activism of the Legion was
largely responsible for not only saving pensions from Depression-era spending cutbacks, but for
getting expanded access to pensions. As valuable as these results were, pensions (and the
War Veterans' Allowance) continued to be fundamentally shaped by the principle of less
eligibility that informed poor relief. In the context of pension regulations this meant deciding
whether illness or injury was attributable to soldiering and the extent to which disability
affected one's ability to compete in the market for unskilled labour. As Morton and Wright
explain, policy makers and administrators might boast about the high rates Canada paid its
pensioners but the more important reality was that so few were awarded pensions and most who
did "received 20 per cent or less" of the maximum rate. Pensions were never meant as re-
establishment measures. Acquitting the government of its liability for injury and ill-health,
pensions were similar to the provincial workmen's compensation schemes developed in six
provinces by 1918.

The need for more generous pensions was partly fed by the fact that Ottawa quickly
retreated from its re-establishment commitments, a fact reflected in the sharp drop in the cost of
veterans' benefits to government after 1919. The broader reality, however, was that these

---

21 Morton, *When Your Number's Up*, 273-4
22 Morton and Wright, *Winning the Second Battle*, 155. Chapters 3 and 8 focus on pensions.
23 D.A. Smith, "Workers' Compensation," *The Canadian Encyclopedia*, online at:
http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.com/index.cfm?PgNm=TCE&Params=A1ARTA0008707
, accessed 28 July 2010. Known as workers' compensation today, it was initially known as
workmens' compensation. Dennis Guest, "Chapter 4. The First Stage of the Modern Era:
Workmen's Compensation in Ontario," 39-47 in his *The Emergence of Social Security in
Canada* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia, 1987).
24 Morton and Wright, *Winning the Second Battle*, 239
commitments were so limited. The retraining and job placement services that were discontinued before the 1921 election were for men deemed incapable of returning to their line of work, which made most demobilized soldiers ineligible for them. Officials rejected nearly eight out of every ten applications. The only general re-establishment measures were subsidized transportation for the trip home, money for new clothes, the War Service Gratuity and government propaganda reminding Canadians of their duty to help veterans reintegrate.

Public works and the Employment Service of Canada were postwar legacies designed to create jobs and improve placements, but they were available to everyone, not veterans exclusively. This was far from the dramatic intervention in the economy required to counteract the economic deprivation that affected veterans in the depressed early 1920s and during the Great Depression of the 1930s. The 3,000 soldier farmers who abandoned their land by 1923 may have been an acceptably small proportion of the 25,000 the Soldier Settlement Board put on farms by 1921, but few could argue that the program was a long-term success. Economic and environmental disaster left only one-third of soldier settlers on the land in 1939. It was difficult to count the number of veterans who were unemployed but they were clearly victims of unemployment during the inter-war period. During the Depression Ottawa responded to the problem of unemployment among veterans by augmenting the relief it paid deserving former soldiers, the one group of unemployed it decided was not exclusively the responsibility of the provinces.

The fate of returned soldiers powerfully influenced planning for the return of veterans of the next war, as Jeff Keshen has shown. Fears of demobilization unrest, public sympathy for more generous re-establishment than First World War veterans received, a growing acceptance of Keynesianism and increased respect for socio-economic planning all combined to make possible the array of government initiatives for Second World War soldiers that became known as the Veterans' Charter. The fact that many of the most important politicians and bureaucrats who developed the charter were First World War veterans was no small factor either. They

---

25 Keshen, "Getting it Right the Second Time Around," 63
27 Morton and Wright, Winning the Second Battle, 218-9
28 Keshen, "Getting it Right the Second Time Around."
included three former officials of the Dominion GWVA, cabinet member Ian Mackenzie, and bureaucrats Robert England, Walter Woods, and the former head of the Toronto-based Grand Army of Canada, Dougall Carmichael.29 The rights and benefits of discharged soldiers that were first legislated in 1941 included able-bodied returnees and were more comprehensive than any of the proposals made during and immediately after the Great War. By war's end even more programs existed to support veterans and the Department of Veterans' Affairs was in place to coordinate their re-establishment.

The Veterans' Charter redressed the imbalance between the limited liability for veterans' welfare that government maintained in the wake of the Great War and veterans' unlimited vulnerability as soldiers on active service.30 Keshen, Morton and Wright and other historians note that the terrific contrast between these extremes bred bitterness and disillusionment during the interwar period, but only Lara Campbell has given this topic substantial attention in her research on the origins of social welfare, which shows that Ontario veterans' petitions for relief from unemployment during the Depression were based in feelings of entitlement and tinged with anger at the unfairness of their situation.31 Despite continued interest in the First World

29 Keshen, "Getting it Right the Second Time Around," 65.
30 This is not to say that it struck a perfect balance, only that it represented an enormous improvement.
31 Christopher Dummit, The Manly Modern: Masculinity in Postwar Canada (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2007), Humphries, "War's Long Shadow."
War among Canadian historians we know little more about the interwar history of the war's veterans and scarcely anything about their history after the Second World War.

Their history in other countries is not thickly documented by a wealth of studies, but is certainly more substantial and military service in the war is far more integrated into analysis of postwar politics and cultural analysis of the war's meaning. European historians such as Whalen and George Mosse integrate cultural analysis of the meaning of the war with the history of veterans and postwar politics in reflecting on the rise of fascism in Germany, and Susan Kingsley Kent's more recent study asks whether war trauma can help explain the nature of Britain's interwar politics. Their collective findings demonstrate that interpretations of the meaning of the war were vitally important for political activism and the tone of politics. Stephen Ortiz's study of American veterans' politics between the wars is more traditional in its approach but he too complicates the picture that a few have sketched of Bonus politics in America, as well as the adoption of the GI Bill for Second World War veterans. It is usually the case that Canadian history writing lags behind the literature of other more populous countries with longer traditions of historical scholarship in studying comparable topics, but there may be additional reasons for this contrast as well. Canadian historiography has rightly focused on the conflicts the First World War revealed and exacerbated in Canadian society, with historians of labour, gender, race and ethnic relations, of regions and of peace groups quick to underline the significance of the divisions they explain in light of the French and English clash over conscription that dominated home front politics. As important as all these issues are, their treatment has contributed to an emphasis on pro- and anti-war sentiments, or on the coercive forces fostered by wartime regulations and pro-war sentiment. The history of consent about the war is little explored by comparison, an outlook making it impossible to push


understandings of the war's meaning for Canadians very far since mass mobilization would have been impossible without collective consent.

Most of the European literature on the war since the 1980s has explored the broad category of consent and local histories of Canada's experience of the war, as well as the volume edited by David Mackenzie, suggest interest in following this trend in Canada. Naturally, this study reflects such interest. It demonstrates that soldiering was interpreted as a form of citizenship but that service in uniform in the war did not lead to uniform objectives as citizens or interpretations of acceptable forms of citizen participation in politics. In so doing it stresses the importance of seeing soldiers and the returned soldiers most of them became as civilians. In her book on civilians in the First World War Tammy Proctor outlines the consistent efforts made to distinguish between civilian non-combatants and soldier combatants in wartime and postwar discourses, despite the deep involvement of non-soldiers in the world's first modern total war. The passing of men into and out of these identities strengthens her argument about the need to analyze the construction of civilian identity and the reification of soldier identity. Studying veteran identity can be an important part of such efforts, for this too was a constructed identity whose elements were contested by former soldiers and shaped by broader cultural ideals and political objectives. This history of veterans offers citizenship broadly defined as a valuable tool for analyzing their activism and discourse. Citizenship connotes legal rights and responsibilities, but its historical definitions clearly demonstrate its amenability to qualification according to gender and race and to the role of culture and nationalism in shaping its meaning. A history of citizens at war, when citizenship is seen as a form of identity rather than only a bundle of rights and duties, can bridge the gap between combatant and non-combatant without erasing the importance of this distinction and while illuminating the relationship between people and government that was a crucial mediator of the war.

In demonstrating that Toronto's Great War veterans were an influential group during and immediately after the war, and by analyzing the nature of their public identity, Comrades and Citizens tells us about the history of soldiers as citizens. It fills a void in Canadian

34 Winter and Prost, The Great War in History; MacKenzie, ed., Canada and the First World War.; Pitsula, For All We Have and Are, Rutherdale, Hometown Horizons.
35 Proctor, Civilians in a World at War, 1914-1918. According to Proctor, the category of 'civilian' was largely constructed as a result of the First World War.
historiography on the history of veterans and about popular politics and the public sphere during the war. Its methodology suggests that historians must rely largely on thorough readings of newspapers to unearth the socio-political history of First World War veterans during this period, and likely later on as well. Veterans' publications and archival sources provide important insights, and for certain categories of veterans, such as pensioners, government records are essential. However, their collective discourse is incomplete without reference to the daily press and recovering their interventions in the public sphere without substantial newspaper research seems unimaginable.

The evidence from Toronto's daily press clearly demonstrates that the city's veterans contributed substantially to wartime and postwar debates, won important local political support and challenged Ottawa to respond to their demands. After establishing their own associations in 1915 and 1916 and winning notoriety in civil society as living symbols of the cause, veterans emerged in 1917 as major players in local politics. As explained in Chapter 3, Toronto's returned men significantly influenced wartime politics as they pushed for a greater commitment to the war effort. They acted as recruiters and proponents of conscription on city streets, in workplaces, at public meetings and in the pages of the daily press. Their passionate appeals and rough interventions helped close debate on the compulsory draft by discouraging open opposition and demonstrating popular support for total war.

Chapters 1 and 2 showed that veterans gained their political influence partly due to their symbolic importance for the war effort. The uniformly pro-war Toronto press quickly took notice of the arrival of veterans from overseas in 1915 and political leaders recognized their importance in terms of public opinion soon afterwards. Newspaper stories of their return selectively educated the public about veterans' experiences and needs, which were portrayed as sacrifices for the cause and were meant to encourage support for the war effort. As veterans' returns became more newsworthy, elites organized receptions for them, began inviting them into clubhouses and advocated for jobs on their behalf. Partly rooted in their desire to honour soldier heroes and give them needed assistance, the help was also politically motivated, for everyone recognized that treating returned men as heroes reflected positively on the effort to recruit and to define the war as a moral necessity.

As the war progressed veterans were formally and informally employed as recruiters, something that the city's emerging branch of the GWVA identified as among its chief goals.
as the conscription crisis built to its late 1917 climax. Toronto veterans' workplace recruitment 'raid' and campaign for the Great War Veterans' Overseas Company were among the most sensational in the city's rich recruitment history and set the tone for their pro-conscription activism. As proponents of the compulsory draft, returned soldiers' interests once again paralleled those of the governing elite, and most English-Canadians. However, they emphasized the distinctiveness of their views, which grew out of their shared experiences as comrades who had faced death at the front. Their activism during the late 1917 federal election demonstrated distinctiveness and independence. While many Union candidates locally and across the country advertised their links to the war, as returned men or long-time members of the militia, for example, Toronto's returned soldier population pushed forward two candidates who ran as independents. Supporters of the Military Service Act, they argued that party politics and government policy were not serving the interests of common soldiers, whose sacrifices were too often repaid at home with meagre pensions, insufficient re-establishment assistance, and unemployment or poorly paid jobs. The campaigns of these soldier candidates generated widespread interest and the fact that one of them nearly won his riding shows not only that the essentially class-based message he delivered was widely supported but that it threatened the strength (if not the formation) of Union government.

Toronto's veterans were less successful as anti-alien activists, but as Chapter 4 explained they managed to make the so-called problem of aliens a central concern locally and helped push this issue towards the top of the agenda for national government. Their postwar activism concentrated on the problem of re-establishment in civilian life. Flynn's Toronto-centred pro-bonus activism that was discussed in Chapter 6 turned veterans' support for the gratuity into a crisis for the anti-bonus GWVA and a major political problem for Ottawa. With the help of bonus backers Mayor Church and the Telegram, Toronto's veterans pushed the GWVA to reshape its re-establishment proposals to reflect support for cash gratuities and forced government to reconsider its intransigence. The modest additional spending on veterans that was announced as a result of bonus activism in 1919 set the pattern for the inter-war period, during which government's guiding principle of less eligibility was softened by a conciliatory attitude.

Returned soldiers' exercised political clout despite being a fractious community whose public identity was contested from within, challenged by changing historical context and the actions of returned men and demobilizing soldiers. In essential terms, civil society and veterans
participated in constructing and in contesting veteran identity. Early on, the press and local elites played key roles in representing returnees as heroes of a noble cause. Toronto's Great War veterans embraced this identity as they organized the Great War Veterans' Association and as a less formal group articulated mainly economic grievances. Representatives of the GWVA stressed their respectable objectives and level-headed methods of pursuing them, a contrast to the more direct approach of veterans who targeted aliens in workplaces and gathered in angry protest meetings to voice their criticism of government. Both groups, who may have overlapped in terms of membership, constructed themselves in the public sphere as patriotic men and Canada's champions of British ideals and institutions who were entitled to special treatment from government and Canadian society.

Despite common self-perceptions, divisions among veterans persisted during the war and worsened afterwards. Debate about re-establishment and the so-called alien problem went along with debate about the methods returned men should employ to pursue their objectives. Significant numbers continued to engage in rough behaviour which climaxed in Toronto in the August 1918 riots, but executives of the GWVA and a majority of veterans condemned violence and rowdy protest. In 1919 the GWVA further distanced itself from rough tactics, recognizing that the violence of demobilizing soldiers and the resentful attitudes of returned men mirrored the characteristics ascribed to the 'dangerous foreigners' identified in Red Scare discourse as the enemies of law and order and postwar recovery. The restaurant raiders of 1918 and the spirited pro-bonus activists of 1919 were no less scornful of 'Bolshevism' than were GWVA leaders and the public opinion they worried about. They rejected the argument that direct actions were un-British because they were not 'constitutional.' They claimed their approach was warranted because as Canadians and 'British citizens' they had the right to protest unjust government, whose callous inaction was to blame for their plight.

Divisions among veterans went beyond the politics of protest. They included the politics of membership and politics itself. Veterans' wartime debates about membership in the GWVA revealed deeply felt differences among them about the very meaning of the term veteran. Many argued that only men who had experienced combat were true 'veterans' and deserved to be members in the association. Toronto's GWVA representatives, as well as others, favoured an inclusive definition of 'veteran' and hoped that broadening the bonds of comradeship would help create a lasting mass movement that would influence politics.
Compromises were reached during and after the war, but the membership debate within the GWVA was never resolved and it contributed to the emergence of GWVA rivals in Toronto.

While the Great War Veterans struggled to reach agreement about the nature of a veteran, all veterans' representatives struggled to define their identity at the end of the war. Industrial conflict exacerbated class differences among returned men, while the Red Scare cast doubt on the protests of working-class veterans. Soldiers' demobilization riots undermined perceptions of them as humble heroes and revealed the resentments of common soldiers. These resentments partly fuelled nation-wide support for the Calgary resolution that called on government to pay cash gratuities to veterans. Populist agitation for the bonus in Toronto made the city the centre of debate on this issue, with anti-bonus veterans responding to the new wave of mass protests by returned soldiers by criticizing the gratuity seekers as selfish and misguided.

By exploring the public roles veterans played during and after the war, Comrades and Citizens expands our understanding of the Great War home front. It shows that historians of the politics of Canada's mobilization in the Great War should take greater account of the role returned men played in bringing the war home to Canadians, and in pushing the country towards 'total war.' Historians of the period's labour militancy and of the groups transformed into 'enemy aliens' by the war have long recognized veterans as a reactionary and riotous group, but this study demonstrates that there is more to be learned about class and ethnic conflict during this period. Collectively, veterans did not fit neatly into the categories of labour militants or labour conservatives, and neither can their anti-alien activism be simply classified as bigoted extremism. While they shared the views and objectives of others in Canada, this history of Toronto's Great War veterans shows that their experiences as soldiers and circumstances as returned men shaped distinctive interests.

In addition to revealing the significance of veterans for Toronto's wartime and postwar history and the struggle over veteran identity, this dissertation's analysis of veterans' discourse provides important insight into the nature of veteran identity. The too often overlooked published data about the country of origin of CEF soldiers and their pre-enlistment occupations reinforces the discursive evidence of the importance of British identity and working-class identity for the history of Great War Veterans in Toronto, not to mention the fundamental importance of masculinity. The study has stressed the interconnected nature of these forms of identity and the links veterans often made between them. Class, for example, intersected with
veterans' masculinity and ethno-national identity in a variety of ways. Arguments for placements in industrial jobs were clear evidence of the working class identity of so many returnees to Toronto, and they were frequently coupled with veterans' expectations of fulfilling their manly role as breadwinners as well as their complaints that the practice of hiring aliens undermined Canada's British character.

The significance of the class identity of soldiers and veterans is an important addition to the literature on Canada's home front and its transition to peacetime. Not only has the class of First World War soldiers been under-studied by Canadianists, but it is impossible to understand the fractious nature of the veterans' movement or their post-1917 activism without class analysis. The working-class identity of so many veterans shaped the egalitarianism and reformist character of the GWVA and, in Toronto, of other associations, such as the Grand Army of Canada and the Veterans' Gratuity League. It shaped their agendas as well. Most veterans in the city shared the outlook of mainstream labour, which held that a truly free labour market was only possible if immigration was tightly controlled to exclude non-British peoples whose presence depressed wage rates. Organized labour's cultural arguments against European and Asian immigration were also paralleled by veterans, but once again, veterans' perspective and proposed solutions were unique. Many returnees were burdened with the extra challenges of physical rehabilitation and coped with disability or mental stresses. All returning soldiers entered an inflationary economy that reduced the value of their static earnings as soldiers and made the prospect of unemployment more alarming. Making their search for suitable and remunerative work more difficult and pressing, these factors also motivated veterans to advocate drastic measures to resolve the so-called alien problem and put returned men in jobs.

Examining the gender identity of Toronto's returnees provides a link between studies that look at earlier and later periods, such as Moss's work on the education of boys in pre-war Ontario and Dummit's examination of post-1945 masculinity. Attention to this theme also suggests how normalizing going to war as a manly duty made it more difficult for veterans to argue that government owed them greater re-establishment help. Arguing that essential warrior traits in every man made it their duty to enlist undermined veterans' arguments that their government owed returned soldiers more assistance reintegrating in civilian life. This was a contractual characterization of service in uniform that, though present, was not emphasized during the war.
The study also serves as an exploration of British identity in the Canadian context, contributing to an expanding literature on this subject that has yet to include a substantial examination of the First World War. Historians who do take up this challenge will likely find that a variety of factors determined the nature and significance of Britishness in Canada's many communities in the era of the Great War. The findings here clearly demonstrate that it fundamentally shaped veterans' conception of their citizenship, and suggests that at this time Canadians correlated ethno-nationality with citizenship to a significant extent. They also show that veterans conceived of citizenship as a relationship between people and their government, and that greater levels of patriotic service earned citizens greater rights or entitlements. In other words, citizenship existed as a result of belonging to an ethno-national group and citizens' relationship with their state developed in degrees of importance as they served its interests, which ideally represented those of the whole group.

Britishness was important for political identity in another way too. Moderates and conservatives within the veterans' movement characterized the rioting and direct methods of protest some of their comrades pursued as un-British. In some cases they actually used the term 'British' in their criticisms, but often it was implied in warnings that disrespecting authority was unconstitutional and smacked of Bolshevism. The extremists among anti-alien activists and pro-bonus demonstrators who were denounced in these ways passionately rejected these views and the sometimes paternalistic tone in which they were delivered. Emphasizing the seriousness of their grievances they argued that the legitimacy of constituted authority was not limitless and when denied justice British subjects had the right to seek redress.

Further research on First World War veterans, as well as into interpretations of the war they fought and knowledge of veterans' service and their postwar experiences, will add to our understanding of the history of citizenship, broadly conceived to include ethno-nationalism and gender identity as well as the rights of Canadians and the responsibilities of government. As has been noted here, the relatively few studies that explicitly engaged with the topic of civil-military relations are focused on the question of mobilization and on the decades preceding the Great War. Future work on civil-military relations and on veterans will need to recognize the

---

irony that while the subject of veterans provides vital insight into the history of civic identity, as soldiers they were members of a separate society, with its own traditions and customs as well as topics promises more insight into the social and cultural history of the era, along with a better understanding of ideologies that shaped the period. For example, the themes of voluntarism and duty, or, put another way, of service and expectations, were fundamental for mobilization in the First and Second world wars; they underlay perceptions of the military in peacetime and shape the memory of Canada's twentieth-century wars. They are not exclusively military ethics, but examining them within military contexts reminds us of their importance, especially since it was fighting war that most thoroughly challenged these values, as well as liberal rights. Studying voluntarism and duty as ideas and practices should shed light on how contemporaries reconciled individual freedom, the rights of property and the reality of inequality with individual sacrifice, collective identity, social responsibility and the power of the state.

The Great War and its veterans commend themselves to historical analysis for many other reasons too. Historians have not exhausted such topics as the expansion of women's political rights, conscription, working-class protest and enemy aliens. There are many possibilities for new local and regional histories as well as explorations of home front culture and politics, not to mention a new look at the end of the war and transition to peacetime, something that might be approached comparatively. Recent interest on the war and French Canada, Aboriginals and their communities, as well as definitions of the medical fitness and disability of enlistees and pension applicants suggest that fresh perspectives on the history of Canada's Great War are being developed.37


Studying First World War veterans can be part of the ongoing examination of the war years and the decades that followed. The Canadian Legion is a subject worthy of serious attention. It grew in stature during the Depression, enjoyed a productive relationship with the state during the Second World War and expanded dramatically with the addition of another generation of veterans. The official histories of this institution are useful but limited. A fresh scholarly study of the Legion could explain its nature more fully and seems certain to broaden our understanding of conceptions of Canada, British identity, citizenship, masculinity and the contours of liberal democracy. What more might it add to our understanding of politics, local history, war experience and civil-military relations?

Studying veterans will likely also enlighten the history of working-class protest and politics in the interwar period, if not later on too. To what extent were working-class veterans involved in protests against unemployment, in workplace organizing and in political activism? Were their feelings of resentment about the failure of re-establishment and broad change in Canadian society important for inter-war militancy? Were perceptions of the fate of First World War veterans significant for the wave of militancy that began in 1943? Exploring this topic should reveal a great deal more about the reactionary side of working-class protest than the progressive side that has received more attention; but it should also help break down this dichotomy.

Examining the evolution of the memory of the Great War since 1939, when Vance ends his study of the cultural myth and memory of the war, would make a valuable contribution to understanding the current official memory and its resonance in society. Examining the discourse of the GWVA and the Legion would reveal a consistent emphasis on Canada's British identity and role as a partner in the Empire and Commonwealth, rather than the achievement of Canadian independence and international recognition stressed in current memory. Such a study would no doubt uncover a wealth of examples of this official memory but it might find more evidence for perceptions of the complexity of the war itself and its significance for Canada. During the past decade artistic treatments of the First World War have offered more complex interpretations of veterans and their reception by English-Canadian audiences indicates current interest in these themes. Paul Gross's film *Passchendaele* opened the Toronto International Film Festival in 2008 and was produced on the biggest budget any Canadian film has enjoyed to date. Joseph Boyden's novel, *Three Day Road*, was a bestseller and a Governor General
Award nominee in 2005.\textsuperscript{38} Both of these fictional narratives focus on First World War soldiers and consider their experiences in combat and in civilian life.

These cultural treatments of the war and its soldiers are evidence that war and its costs are always compelling and relevant topics, but there are other reasons why expanding historical research on Canada's Great War veterans is appropriate at this time. One is their renewed political significance and role in national memory. When Clare Laking, Canada's last combat veteran of the Great War, died in 2005 there was modest but widespread public interest in the country's last surviving First World War veterans. In recognition of Remembrance Day and on other important anniversaries of the First and Second World War, the media briefly trained its attention on the few remaining veterans of the war, and when they passed away it was also reported on.\textsuperscript{39} Following Laking's death the Dominion Institute, a nationalist public history organization, called on the government to hold a state funeral to honour the final veteran of the war, something that in 2006 Parliament unanimously agreed the government should request of the man's family when the time came.\textsuperscript{40} By 2007 John Babcock, who enlisted under-age and


never saw frontline duty, was the last veteran of the Canadian Expeditionary Force alive and receiving special attention from Ottawa.

In April the Minister of Veterans' Affairs presented him with an award at his home in Spokane, Washington. The meeting prompted the 107 year old Babcock to ask if he could get his Canadian citizenship back, something he had lost after moving to the United States soon after the war and acquiring US citizenship. The Canadian government obliged, granting him a status that did not fully exist when Babcock emigrated south of the border, and flying officials to his home for a ceremony. Next year Babcock was part of another ceremony, a symbolic passing of the torch (via a pre-recorded video) to former and active soldiers participating in Remembrance Day ceremonies at the National Memorial. When Babcock passed away in February of 2010 Prime Minister Stephen Harper expressed his condolences to his family and praised Babcock's service to his country. Harper's press release also interpreted Babcock's historical significance, saying that his death marked "the passing of the generation that asserted our independence on the world stage and established our international reputation as an unwavering champion of freedom, democracy, human rights and the rule of law." The offer of a state funeral being declined, Babcock was officially honoured along with all of Canada's First World War veterans, in the End of an Era commemoration that formed part of Vimy Ridge Day ceremonies on the 9th of April.

44 "Vimy ceremonies salute last WWI vet," CBC News, 9 April 2010. Online at:
Conclusion

Created by Parliament in 2003 as an official day to recognize the battle,45 Vimy Ridge Day is both an example of official interest in the passing of Canada's Great War veterans and of the way that war and its remaining veterans were part of the increasing relevance of military conflict in Canadian life at the start of the twenty-first century. Most directly responsible for this resurgence is Canada's military mission in Afghanistan, begun in 2002 and set within a wider context of the so-called War on Terror that began in the aftermath of the terrorist attacks on the United States in September 2001. The fallen of this conflict, unlike those a century earlier, have returned home for burial, travelling part of their way accompanied by a motorcade along a route re-named in their honour "The Highway of Heroes." Signs for this stretch of the 401 highway are adorned with the poppy, a graphic inheritance from the First World War.

More recent still are signs along the Don Valley Parkway, a major traffic artery through Toronto, which announce the roadway as the "Route of Heroes," and display a poppy along with the phrase "Lest we forget." These signs also mark the city streets the vehicles carrying the fallen take to the coroner’s office, passing on their way many of the locations at which First World War returnees collected nearly a century ago.46


The official memorializing of Babcock, victory at Vimy and the dead of the current mission in Afghanistan are evidence of veterans' continued importance to the state as emblems of patriotic service and embodiments of the nation. The approaching centenary of the outbreak of the war and the significant dates that followed will likely sustain official interest in the war, as well as promote the interpretation of Great War veterans as the heroes, and sacrificial victims, of a nation-making event. More historical research on veterans' motivations for enlisting, their experiences as soldiers and returned men and their own interpretations of the meaning of the conflict they participated in can be part of a wider consideration of the conflict and its complex interaction with Canadian society.

Sources

Archival

Bojm Megelas Interview, Multicultural History Society of Ontario, interviewed by S. Petrolekas, August 1977

(Toronto) City Clerk's Department, Miscellaneous Subject Files, CTA RG5
(Toronto) City Clerk's Department, Series P, Receptions, CTA, RG5
(Toronto) City Clerk's Department, Series K, Scrapbooks, CTA RG5
(Toronto) City Executive Committee Fonds, B3, Communications, Board of Control, CTA RG2
(Correspondence regarding August 1918 riots in Toronto) LAC RG 6, Series H3, Vol. 800, File 2360, p5
(Correspondence and decisions regarding August 1918 riots in Toronto) LAC, RG 7, Series 621, Vol. 642 (File 35018 vol. 1, 1919-1921), p8

'Edmund Code,' The Memory Project Digital Archive,


Frederick Fieldhouse Clark Fonds, AO F788
Larry Becker Fonds, CTA Fonds 70
Legion Fonds, LAC MG28

'Mary Lee Edward,' The Memory Project Digital Archive,


Memoir of Henry Charles Savage, The Canadian Letters and Images Project, online at:


Military District No.2 records, LAC RG24
Soldiers' Aid Commission Administration Records, AO RG29
Soldiers' Aid Commission Canteen Fund Records, AO RG29
Sources

Soldiers' Aid Commission of Ontario, Minute Book, AO RG29
Soldiers of the First World War – CEF, LAC searchable database, online at:
  http://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/databases/cef/001042-100.01-e.php
Thomas Langton Church Fonds, AO F25
Toronto Housing Commission Minutes, CTA RG29
York Township Housing Commission Minutes, CTA Fonds 224

Published

Canada, House of Commons, Debates
GWVA, G.W.V.A. Soldiers Civil Re-establishment Scheme as Submitted to the Dominion Government October 1919
GWVA, What is the G.W.V.A.?
Hopkins, Canadian Annual Review of Public Affairs
Manitoba Free Press
Report of Meeting of Soldiers' Aid Commission of Ontario and Representatives of Fraternal Societies, Toronto, 19 December 1918
Six Bits, 75th Battalion Overseas Association
Toronto City Council, Minutes of Proceedings
Toronto Globe
Toronto Mail and Empire
Toronto News
Toronto Daily Star (Star)
Toronto Evening Telegram (Telegram)
Toronto World
The Veteran
Vancouver Sun
Veterans' Alliance, Mr. Citizen, how would you like it?

Secondary


Bird, Will. *And on We Go*. Toronto: Hunter-Rose, 1930.


Campbell, Lara. "A Barren Cupboard at Home: Ontario Families Confront the Premiers During the Great Depression." In *Ontario since Confederation: A Reader*, edited by Edgar-


Cottrell, Michael. "'St. Patrick's Day Parades in Mid-Nineteenth Century Toronto: A Study of Immigrant Adjustment and Elite Control'." In *A Nation of Immigrants: Women, Workers and Communities in Canadian History, 1840s-1960s*, edited by with Paula
Sources


———. "Fit for Heroes." 2009.


Sources


290


———. *Toronto's 100 Years*. Toronto: The Centennial Committee, 1934.


Sources


Pitsula, James M. *For All We Have and Are: Regina and the Experience of the Great War*. Winnipeg: University of Manitoba, 2008.


Sources


297


Thompson, John H. ""the Beginning of Our Regeneration": The Great War and Western Canadian Movements." Historical Papers (Canadian Historical Association).


