

# Social changes of ww1

[War](#), [World War 1](#)



Social Changes Of WW1 “ Ready! aye, ready! “ the soldiers were to say as the call for war came, but were they really that ready? As well, was the rest of the world ready? “ Back by Christmas “ they promised their loved ones who were filled with such pride and watched in awe as their brave boys set off for war. Most including Henri Bourassa, thought that this was an opportunity to unite the Canadians, French, and English. Little did they know the battles they, and the whole world were about to face, would be the beginning of the end. “ Bourassa’s enthusiasm - and those of the soldiers- would soon sour “ 1 Six social changes Canada underwent as a result of World War 1 was women’s roles at the home-front, relationships and life at home, enemy aliens, life in the trenches, and the Christmas Truce. Firstly, Women’s roles at the home-front was a huge change in the duration of World War 1. “ During world war 1, Canadian women began to show a great deal of responsibility. “ 2 They were no longer only mothers, sisters, and wives; but workers as well. Seeing that the men were away fighting at the Western Front, women were obligated to take up their jobs they had left behind. These women became Farmerettes, factory workers, and bus drivers. Some became nurses over seas, treated in hospitals at war bases, and made ammunition in factories back home. “ 30 thousand Canadian women worked in munitions factories and other war industries. “ 3 Although these women were trying as hard as they could to “ do their bit “ unfortunately they were not paid as much as men were, and were rarely acknowledged. “ The dramatic change in women’s roles was not well received by many men, who treated female co-workers with resentment.” 4 Despite all of the animosity, it is without a doubt that the work of the women is what partially helped win

the war. A variety of things women also did back home was run organizations and fundraisers to ship supplies overseas. Women of different race were also an extensive contribution to these organizations. “ Aboriginal people on the Tyendanagan Reserve near Deseronto, Ontario, allowed some of their land to be used for a flying school during the war. ”<sup>5</sup> Circumstances that were put in place to make sure every bit was going to the soldiers was only having small portions of important foods, growing gardens, and buying “ Victory Bonds “. In conclusion, women’s roles at the home-front changed drastically as a result of World War 1. Secondly, relationships and life at home all the while the war was going on changed intensely. Life at home was not only intolerable for women, but also for families, friends, and children. As World War 1 started, it established something called “ Total War “. “ It was ‘ total’ in the sense that it enlisted the efforts, energies, and passions of civilians as well as soldiers. “ <sup>6</sup> Women, children, families, partners, workers, minorities, and elders were greatly effected. Life as the Canadians had known it, has now been totally corrupted. Children focused on “ doing their bit “ by growing small gardens at school, buying thrift stamps, and participating in community organizations. “ Boy Scouts and Girl Guides collected money for the Canadian Patriotic Fund and other social support agencies. “ <sup>7</sup> Workers now had to work twice as hard, and turned their business's into war shops. Everything they did and made was now focused around the war. Women took up the jobs of the men and mostly established organizations or fundraisers with minorities. Life at home was additionally difficult for families. The majority of single mothers at home were now left with working the job her husband had left behind, and taking care of their

children. Seeing their husbands, brothers, and sons go off to war only to be slaughtered was dreadful. Some men who owned businesses, worked on farms, was a single parent, or had physical disabilities were dismissed from entering the war and were often resented by these women at home. To show a woman's disgust, they would drop a white feather at a man's feet once seen on the streets. " The white feather was a symbol of cowardice " 8 These men were seen as cowards because they were not off fighting for their country like the rest of the soldiers. On the whole, life and relationships at home carried on much differently because of World War 1. Additionally, Enemy Aliens was an extensive change during World War 1. An enemy alien is a citizen of a country which is in a state of conflict with the land in which he/she is located. " When the war broke out, there were about 500, 00 German, Austrian, and Hungarian people living in Canada. " 9 Although these people had immigrated into Canada years before the war started and were became successful workers, they were soon seen as spies when war commenced. Suspicion rose within the Canadians and some felt that they were unsafe in their own country. The government at first declared that they should be treated equally, but soon turned on their word. " In response to the pressures, they used the War Measures Act to put restrictions on enemy aliens " 10 This meant that if any immigrants even slightly aroused suspicion, they were thrown into internment camps until the war was over. " 80 000 enemy aliens were registered and 8579 men, 81 women, and 156 children had been interned during the war. " 11 Restrictions put on immigrants, known as " Enemy Aliens", was a big change put in place as a result of World War 1. Without a doubt, life in the trenches was the hardest thing the

soldiers had to bare in World War 1. Living in the trenches, a depression in the ground often out fro defense, was not easy. Some obstacles men had to face while living in the trenches was dysentery, trench foot, and shell shock. As well as rats, body lice, diarrhea, malnutrition, and waterlogged trenches. These trenches were far less comfortable then any soldier had imagined, and were nothing compared to home. To top it off, the troops were always moving trenches. “ In a typical year, a soldier might spend 70 days in the front line, 30 in support, 120 in reserve, and 70 at rest. If he were lucky, he would get about two weeks leave at home in that year .” 12 Disease was a hard thing to take care of because there was no proper health care. As a result of these men not getting proper meals or cooked food, dysentery was a big problem. Dysentery, known as inflammation of the lining of the large intestines, is contacted through the mouth in food or water. Bad sanitation was a root to this problem, seeing as latrines were holes dug four to five feet deep then filled in. Trench foot was a troublesome disease man soldiers experienced. “ This was an infection of the feet caused by cold, wet, unsanitary conditions “ 13 Since men spent all day in cold, wet trenches with poor footwear, trench foot was very common. Another obstacle the soldiers faced was Shell Shock. Shell Shock is caused by constant loud noises. This often cause tiredness, irritability, lack of concentration, and headaches. Generals saw these conditions as fake, and accused the soldiers of making up a fake illness to be able to leave the battlefields. “ The conditions in which the men lived in the trenches were so terrible, they caused as many casualties as did the battles the men fought”14 Aside from the complications in the trenches, the soldiers tried to make the best of it. The brotherhood the

troops had for one another was unbreakable. You were not only fighting for your country, but for your partner fighting right next to you. Beyond doubt, life in the trenches was the hardest change in the duration of World War 1. The Christmas Truce was a memorable moment in World War1. On December 24 & 25, the soldiers on both sides of the war declared a cease-fire. British soldiers could see lights and Christmas trees from the enemy lines. “ Then the singing began- “ Silent Night” and “ O Tannenbaum “ from the Germans, “ Good King Wenceslas “ and soldiers’ songs from the British. “ 15 As one soldiers poked his head above the lines and did not get shot, he proceeded to walk towards No-Man’s-Land. This resulted in every soldier from both sides coming out of their trenches to meet their enemy in a friendly manner. Tension was reduced as gifts, pictures, souvenirs, food, cigarettes, and alcohol were exchanged. “ A soldier of the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders produced a football. Caps and helmets were put down to mark goals, and a soccer match was played against the Germans - the 133rd Saxon Regiment “ 16 The soldiers spent the rest of the day repairing their trenches and burying their dead. “ This truce is seen as a symbolic moment of peace and humanity amidst one of the most violent events modern history. “ 17 Although there was still firing from both ends, there was not nearly as much as usual. The generals saw this as preposterousness, ordering their troops to get back in line and stop their fraternization. “ General Sir Horace Smith Dorrien, Commander of the British II corps, was irate when he heard what was happening, and issued strict orders forbidding friendly communication with the opposing German troops”18 The soldiers were back to killing each other the very next day. No

truce was ever held again as in 1916 poison gas was used soldiers on both sides saw each other as “ less human “. “ The Christmas Truce of 1914 was never repeated, but it remains a bright spot of sanity amid the madness of war “ 19