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Hidden Costs, Hidden Labours
Women in Nova Scotia During Two World Wars

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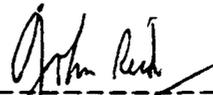
A thesis submitted by Sharon M. H. MacDonald
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the
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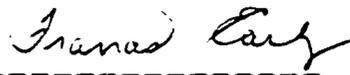
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Abstract

Hidden Costs, Hidden Labours Women in Nova Scotia During Two World Wars

Sharon M. H. MacDonald, 1999

War provides a striking example of gender differentiation, yet, because of the unusual demands in times of war, breakdowns in traditional divisions of labour occur. Historians debate how and whether war has been a springboard for women's greater emancipation. However, less critical attention has been paid to women's traditional roles during wartime. This thesis will explore the territory of women's wartime volunteer participation in Nova Scotia in a qualitative and quantitative way and question the assumption that all women shared the same motivations for doing this work. In order to understand the immensity and diversity of the labour carried out, the thesis will look at women's organizational strength and the documentary evidence of their work. Because women's traditional work has been interpreted as an expression of patriotism, the thesis will also examine the gendered aspects of wartime patriotism and propaganda and look at the alternative voices to the patriotic rhetoric.

Acknowledgements

I wish to thank Colin Howell and John Reid for their patient support and stimulating discussion and direction over the years. More than once, thoughts of their initial and ongoing faith in my work has kept me going. As well, I wish to thank Frances Early, the third member of my committee, for her keen perception, encouragement, and friendship.

I am grateful for the opportunity I had to share classes and discussions with colleagues Jackie Logan, Kimberly Berry, Carolyn Thomas, David States and Jonathan Dembling.

My thanks, as always, to the staff of the Public Archives of Nova Scotia and the various denominational archives in the province. Without the exceptional cooperation of Sandra Hamm, Interlibrary Loans Librarian at Saint Mary's Library, I would not have been able to carry out key parts of my research. Staff at the national and provincial Canadian Red Cross Society and at the Women's Institute office in Truro have allowed me generous access to their records and I wish to thank all the Women's Institute members, as well as women from church and synagogue groups who took the time to respond to my questionnaire and share their wartime volunteer experiences. Thanks to Professor Marc Choko for permission to use the poster images included.

More personal thanks go to my husband, Bill Plaskett, and my children, Joel and Anna, for seeing me through my academic pursuits. My father, Robert MacDonald, died just after I completed the coursework for this program. A special thank you to him and my mother, Katherine, for their unending love and support. Finally, a toast to all the family and friends who have cheered me on.

I dedicate this thesis to the countless women who carry out so much hidden labour during times of war and peace.

Preamble

It will not take long for a reader to recognize where my sympathies lie on questions of women and war. I admit to a biased and less than balanced interpretation of women's conflicted position in war. If, at times, "the lady protests too much, me thinks"¹ it is in order to make a point about a lack of dynamic discussion concerning women in Canada who maintained their traditional, gendered roles during wartime. Their voices and opinions have always been muted, and with time, it becomes even more challenging to uncover the truth of their varied lives. This thesis attempts to peer through the gauze that enshrouds women's wartime work and offer possible alternative interpretations. It is not the whole story; rather it is an attempt at suggesting new avenues of inquiry.

¹With apologies to Shakespeare for appropriating the 'me thinks' for my own personal 'I'.

Introduction

In the Report of the 1908 Convention of Nova Scotia Women's Christian Temperance Union, Mary Russell Chesley, long-standing Superintendent of the Department of Franchise and an active suffragist who had been regularly petitioning the Provincial Legislature since the 1890s, wrote:

At our Convention last year it was decided to take up again the work of the Peace and Arbitration Department, and I was appointed Superintendent. I accepted the appointment with some misgiving, but with the hope that a younger and abler woman would be willing to take charge of the Franchise work.¹ Now I find myself in a similar position to that of a young lady who is undecided between two suitors, and who finds herself compromised, and almost captivated with number two before she is by any means free from number one, the earliest and first love. I trust some solution of this rather difficult position may be found during this present Convention.²

Chesley's difficulty in choosing between the two 'suitors' was never fully resolved, for she continued working on both causes until Nova Scotian women were finally granted the vote in 1918. Even after the vote was granted and the WCTU Department of Franchise was renamed Christian Citizenship, she continued her efforts to inform women of the issues and to encourage them to exercise their voting rights. As for her second love, Chesley carried on with peace promotion up until her death in 1923.

The writer of this thesis finds herself in a similar dilemma, having difficulty choosing between two major themes; and like Chesley, has felt

¹Chesley would have been 60 years old at the time.

²WCTU records, PANS MG 20, Vol 356 #8, p. 67.

obligated to push forward with both. In this case, the first priority established was to take to task the historical accounts that have ignored, sentimentalized, or oversimplified the account of women's wartime volunteer efforts and that have assumed a uniform patriotic response to war. The second and newer 'suitor' has been the discovery of a regional example of early peace and arbitration promotion as embodied in the example of Mary Russell Chesley.

While these two strands of the story move off in different directions, they are interconnected in that they both support the premise that Nova Scotian women's reactions in time of war were more complex and multifaceted than has been thus far accorded.

Women and War

In the broadest generalization, war is considered a male enterprise, while peace is considered a female preoccupation. Like most generalizations, this gendered division seems to resonate with some truth, but it also reflects erroneous and contentious notions. First of all, such a generalization reinforces the idea of fixed positions of male action/aggression versus female passivity/pacifism. This thesis will not attempt to address all the contradictions inherent in such assumptions. Rather, it will focus on studying the records that chronicle the activities of a cross-section of Nova Scotian women who remained in essentially female-gendered traditional roles during wartime and see how their work fits into the larger, global picture of 'women and war'. Through such a study, it is possible to touch upon a number of the pressure points that arise when considering women's relationships to war.

Women in Canada, far removed from the fighting arenas of World War I and World War II, responded in a variety of ways to the

announcements of war. Some went overseas but many worked on the 'home front', in factories, and in offices vacated by men enlisted in the services. These women experienced, at least for the wars' duration, a broadening of opportunities for employment, mobility, and education. However, the largest percentage of women in Canada were not in the paid workforce. While they remained in the home taking care of families and often running farms, they also involved themselves in organizing, fundraising, producing, packing, shipping, and distributing millions of essential supplies, such as clothing, bedding, bandages, and food for overseas comfort and relief. Along with supplies, women provided countless services to the military in the form of hospitality and recreation; they organized salvage collection; they had a major role in domestic food production; and they mobilized and coordinated children's unpaid volunteer contribution to the relief effort. This work was over and above women's regular labours and their continued provision of community services and attendance to local needs and disasters. These women and their work will be a major focus of this study for the following reasons:

1) Women who went overseas with various branches of the services and women who replaced men in industry and war production have been subjects of a number of studies.³ As well, scholarship has been carried out in the study of pacifist women, particularly during World War I.⁴ However, the

³For the numerous British and American studies, see bibliography. The major critical Canadian work on the Second World War is Ruth Roach Pierson's *"They're Still Women After All"* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1986). Nothing comparable has been done on Canadian women during the First World War.

⁴For work on Canadian pacifists during World War I, see Barbara Roberts, *"Why Do Women Do Nothing to End the War?"* (Ottawa: CRIAW/ICREF:1985) and *A Reconstructed World*, (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1993) and Deborah Gorham, "Vera Brittain, Flora MacDonald Denison and WWI" in *Women and Peace*, edited by Ruth Roach Pierson (New York: Croom Helm, 1987). For article on interwar peace movement, see Veronica

wartime work done within the traditional gendered workplace of the home and the volunteer community has been under-represented within critical studies of war or even women's history⁵.

2) This work has also been ignored by economists. By focussing on the more traditional aspects of women's wartime work, this thesis calls into question the adequacy of economic theory that does not take into account the sheer magnitude of the unpaid labour represented by women's (and children's) wartime work. This labour, of course, was above and beyond their ongoing regular load of unpaid work in the family and community, which also remains missing from the national accounting systems.

3) In the modern era, when a country goes to war, it is convenient, expedient, and, indeed, seen as essential for those in power to ensure the minimum of dissent and the maximum of patriotic fervour. Therefore, through its propaganda machine, the state quickly assumes a proprietary interest in women's labours and becomes the vehicle through which all of women's work is transformed into one unified, nationalistic effort. By analyzing the fragmentary and contradictory evidence, this thesis proposes to challenge this appropriation and discuss the diversity of women's motivations, initiatives, and actions in wartime.

4) Women were not the initiators of war (at the opening of World War One they did not have the right to vote and when World War II began, only

Strong-Boag's "Peace-Making Women: Canada 1919-1939", also in *Women and Peace*, edited by Pierson.

⁵Barbara Steinson, in *American Women's Activism in World War I* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1982), discusses women's volunteerism; however, the story is significantly different from the Canadian one on several important counts. M.A. theses by Carol Dennison, "The Women's Institutes in British Columbia 1909-1946: Housewives 'For Home and Country'" (University of Victoria, 1983), and Donna Zwicker, "Alberta Women and World War II" (University of Calgary, 1985), do discuss some aspects of Canadian women's volunteerism, but with very different foci.

one woman was serving as a Member of Parliament in Canada); however, for better or worse, they became active participants in a host of wartime duties and occupations. Looking at women's traditional volunteer efforts within the context of war provides not only the opportunity to discuss the contradictory positions in which women find themselves when faced with war, but also the contradictory ways in which historians interpret or ignore this work.

Organization of thesis material

It has been suggested that attempting to discuss the responses of women in Nova Scotia over the course of two world wars is, if not an impossible task, at least one that holds many pitfalls. There are significant differences in the time periods to be covered, yet one of the key points of this thesis is that, in any historic period, wars present women (and men) with recurring dilemmas. Some have argued that the twentieth century has been in a continuous state of war and that the period between the First and the Second World Wars did not represent peace so much as a temporary stay in armed combat. For women, the fallout from the war continued to require their unpaid labour for relief and comfort work during the interwar and post-World War II periods, whether it was in the form of international relief sent to civilian victims of war or tending to the physical and psychological needs of returned soldiers. Certainly, the extent to which the modern world has been plagued with wars and the resulting catastrophic destruction and loss of lives was hardly deemed imaginable at the turn of the century.

In the decades leading up to the Great War, many women worldwide agitating for suffrage felt quite keenly that their vote could have a decided impact on, among other things, discouraging future wars. Faced with continual resistance to their demands for the franchise, activist women had a

challenging choice to make when war was declared. There is no question that there were highly vocal patriots among the leadership; however, it is possible to surmise from some of the records that within the ranks of women's organizations a mixture of responses prevailed, ranging among horror, resignation, and conflicted opinion.

The decision of the overwhelming majority of suffrage leaders to support their nation's war enterprise must surely have contained some element of the strategic compromise. Unable to undo the declaration of war, women could only hope for a quick end to the conflict. By applying their considerable leadership and organizational skills toward that end, women might finally prove to reactionary forces that they were capable and deserving of the vote. As it turned out, the war was long and protracted; the losses incurred in the struggle to gain the vote were high.

On the eve of the Second World War, the vote was no longer an issue for women in Canada; however, as far as their having a say in political decision-making, women were hardly any further ahead. Of 258 members sitting in Canadian Parliament, only one was a woman.⁶ So, yet again, women were faced with a war not of their own making, but nevertheless one in which their participation was inevitable. In spite of the renewed interest in pacifist ideals that expanded during the interwar years, the majority of Canadians stood, if reluctantly, behind the country when war was declared. Most saw no other alternative to the threat of Hitler's world domination. Women mounted a volunteer campaign that was vast and efficient in the

⁶Teresa Nash's Ph.D. dissertation "Images of Women in the National Film Board of Canada Films During World War II and the Post-War Years (1939-1949)", (McGill, 1982), p.80. Nash states that Dorise Nielson was the only woman in Parliament at the beginning of WWII. In fact, Agnes MacPhail was in the House of Commons when war was declared. She lost her seat in the 1940 election whereas Nielson won a seat at that time, thereby replacing MacPhail as the lone female MP.

hopes of a quick end to the hostilities. Yet again, they were to be proved wrong. The devastation caused by six years of war was unprecedented.

There has been considerable debate in recent years among historians about whether the Great War was a watershed for women's greater emancipation. It was not until the 1960s that the topic of women in wartime gained any attention at all. In Britain, David Mitchell's 1966 publication *Women on the Warpath: The Story of the Women of the Great War* and Arthur Marwick's *Women at War* and *The Deluge: British Society and the First World War*⁷ presented an optimistic view that the Great War brought positive changes for women. Subsequent revisionist analysis, which has been described as "the new Feminist pessimism"⁸ has questioned this assessment. Within recent years, the number of studies on women and their relationship to the Great War has greatly expanded the discussion. Addressing the topic from the diversities of gender, class, nationality, and ethnicity through studies of documentary and literary texts, the interpretations of women's losses and gains during both First and Second World Wars have become ever more diverse and complex. As well, it is useful to keep in mind that viewing women's wartime experience through the lens of late twentieth-century values and expectations also tends significantly to influence the interpretation of events.⁹ In the final analysis, the tallying of women's losses

⁷David Mitchell, *Women on the Warpath: The Story of the Women of the First World War*. (London: Jonathan Cape, 1966); Arthur Marwick, *Women at War 1914-1918* (London: Croom Helm, 1977) and *The Deluge: British Society and the First World War* (London: Bodley Head, 1965).

⁸ Billie Melman, in *Borderlines: Genders and Identities in War and Peace, 1870-1930* (New York: Routledge, 1998), p. 5, 23 and Angela Woollacott, in *On Her Their Lives Depend: Munitions Workers in the Great War* (Berkeley: University of California, 1994), p.14, attribute this expression to Sylvia Walby, *Patriarchy at Work: Patriarchal and Capitalist Relations in Employment* (Cambridge, 1986), p 156.

⁹Angela Woollacott makes this point in referring to her aim in *On Her Lives Depend*, suggesting that "it is not only possible but crucial to study a period on its own terms rather than

and gains must be tempered by the sobering reality of the high cost of war on all humans and other living organisms. Furthermore, the tensions inherent in the war/peace discourse reflect some of the tensions inherent in what some would define as the continued gender 'wars'. The constructions of masculinity and femininity are both reinforced and put to the test in times of war. Among feminists there are those who have stood behind the idea of women's right to participate in armed combat and others who believe that war exacerbates the propensity for violence and that striving to end war altogether is the only viable option. Women, whether feminist or otherwise, are by no means unified in their response to war. One of the questions raised here is, how do women, who by choice or by default remain rooted in their traditional female-gendered roles, view their own situation during wartime?

This thesis offers no conclusive answer; what it attempts to do is question the way war propagandists used women's faithful helpmeet role to create a particularly patriotic, upbeat, pro-war version of their participation. Women's organizational records suggest a more practical and sober response to the contingencies of war. While wartime offered new opportunities for those women already in, or eager to enter the paid workforce, as well as the most ambitious of those in volunteer leadership, the vast majority of women who remained in traditional domestic circumstances during the war had little to gain, other than more work, more belt-tightening, and more anxiety about loved ones serving overseas.

Jean Bethke Elshtain would argue that this helpmeet role, whether patriotically inspired or simply long-suffering still fits into the classic wartime woman's position she has labelled the 'Beautiful Soul' who acts in

in the light of later issues or concerns that subsequent decades might cast backward.", p.14, and footnotes the work of Lizabeth Cohen and E.P. Thompson as in accord with such an approach.

collaboration with the male 'Just Warrior'.¹⁰ This thesis would suggest that while the outcome may be the same, distinctions should be drawn in order to reflect a more complex and broader picture. In times of war and subsequently in the retelling of war stories, the account becomes rather one-dimensional, particularly when valour, glory, sacrifice, and loyalty to the nation become the key notes struck. If women and men are ever to move beyond their standard positions and postures during war, an awareness of a more nuanced history must be present.¹¹ Elshtain says "history does not teach, rather we 'teach' it by making it 'speak' to us in various ways, by remembering this and forgetting that."¹² This thesis hopes to enter into this process of 'teaching' by remembering different parts of the war story.

This study, with its emphasis on women's volunteer participation in Nova Scotia, will look at several themes. Because of the immensity of the volunteer effort, the first chapter will outline the development of women's organizational culture in Nova Scotia. During the Great War, outspoken pacifists in Canada were few in number, but they did try to define a different kind of patriotism in which love of country was not synonymous with militarism. The second chapter of this thesis will discuss Mary Chesley and her peace and arbitration activities within the organizational structure of the WCTU as evidence of an alternative voice to the war rhetoric. Because patriotism has been the assumed motivation for women's desire to participate in wartime volunteer work, Chapter three will look at propaganda and its function, particularly in its gendered dimension within Canadian

¹⁰Jean Bethke Elshtain, *Women and War* (New York, Chicago: University of Chicago, 1995).

¹¹See Elshtain's chapter on the "pacific few" concerning men who do not fit into the male warrior position. See also Frances Early, *A World Without War* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1997).

¹²Elshtain, *Women and War*, p, 149.

society during both World Wars. Chapter four will examine women's volunteer record itself and address the issue of women's substantial economic contributions which are unaccounted for within the national accounting process. This will be followed by a concluding chapter.

Within the context of the specific Nova Scotian story, recurring themes emerge concerning larger issues of gender, national identity, and the impact of international trends and events. While regional in its emphasis, the thesis places its findings within the larger framework of Canadian women's experiences of war as it was lived during both world wars for, in times of war, national identity becomes much more defined, particularly as it is created by propagandists working on a national scale. Furthermore, by comparing the Nova Scotian/Canadian primary documentary evidence with the growing body of international material covering various aspects of the 'women and war' subject, it is possible to identify how the Canadian story relates to, and differs from other narratives.

At the risk of oversimplification, this thesis will attempt to discuss Nova Scotian women's wartime experiences in a broad gestural way, rather than focussing in great detail upon a narrower and more manageable topic. This approach has been chosen, in part, because it reflects and highlights the difficulty of making war itself, or the topic of 'women and war', manageable. While selective quantitative data will be used to illustrate some of the specific work that women undertook, it is important to recognize that it is a mere sampling and in no way accounts for the whole of the work. Rather, it is suggestive of the gaps in our knowledge of and lack of appreciation for the immense impact of women's unpaid labours. While this paper will touch upon the wide range of unpaid production and services that women engaged

in during wartime, for the express purpose of this thesis, greatest emphasis will be given to the consideration of those tasks that were relief-oriented.

Chapter 1

Overview of Women's Organizational History in Nova Scotia

On August 5th, 1914, one day after Britain's declaration of war against Germany, Agnes Dennis, a leading light in the local suffrage movement and President of the Halifax Local Council of Women, brought together a large group of women to discuss how best to organize relief efforts for the anticipated wounded. At this meeting Matron Georgina Pope of the Military Hospital recounted her experience during the South African War, and talked of the importance of the British and Canadian Red Cross in supplying necessary articles for tending those under her nursing care.¹ The assembled women decided to form a Red Cross society and to extend its organization by getting in touch with every women's organization throughout Nova Scotia.

At a subsequent meeting, Roberta MacGregor, wife of the Lieutenant-Governor of the province, was able to report that upon asking women's groups to contribute to a gift of a hospital ship (to be given from the women of Canada to the Imperial Government), the amount raised was over \$15,000, although the allotted amount expected from Nova Scotian women was \$5,000. After due consideration, \$7,000 was given to the hospital ship fund, \$5,000 to the Patriotic Fund (for caring for the wives and families of soldiers), and the rest, \$3070.26, was "to be divided proportionately among the various places from which it came, where the women were willing to organize for Red Cross Relief work; this amount to form the nucleus of a Fund wherewith to purchase materials for work."²

¹*Report of the Nova Scotia Red Cross, 1914-1918*, p. 5. According to M.S. Hunt's *Nova Scotia's Part in the Great War* (Halifax: Nova Scotia Veteran Publishing Co., 1920), Miss Georgina Pope, R.R.C. (Senior Matron in Canada) subsequently served in France during the Great War; Nova Scotia contributed more nursing matrons than any other province to the medical service in France (p.222).

²*Report of the Nova Scotia Red Cross, 1914-1918*, p.6.

This auspicious beginning for volunteer aid was successfully followed up by an astounding record of well-coordinated relief work that spanned the wartime period and beyond. While women were responding in what would be considered a typically 'female' and 'motherly' way to the contingencies of war, what made this situation remarkable, was the swiftness and efficiency of the volunteer response. This was, in part, due to modern systems of communication, but more importantly, it can be attributed to the high level of women's organizational strength already established within communities across the province. Among women, the declaration of war was not a welcome prospect. Among feminists, pacifist sentiment had been high in certain quarters in the pre-war years, so the war inevitably caused considerable angst for those torn between the ideals of the peace and arbitration movement and the desire to remain loyal to the nation. Based on newspaper accounts at the time (focussing on the high-level organizers), one would gather that most women were ultra-patriotic; however, less is known about how the silent majority of women really felt. They responded as could be expected. In the end, most women, whether patriotic, ambivalent or pacifist in sympathies, contributed to the relief needs caused by the devastations of war.

In order to understand how women were able to organize for and respond so expeditiously to the crisis of war, this chapter will outline the development of women's organizational culture in Nova Scotia from its earliest records up until the pre-war period. Without a well-established network of women's organizations throughout the province, it might have been impossible to mobilize and carry out the massive relief effort that grew increasingly more demanding as the war continued. For, indeed, Nova Scotia, because of its military importance and relative proximity to Europe, had the

largest burden of any province in the dominion, especially in the area of volunteer services.

Nova Scotian women's organizational history parallels similar developments elsewhere, particularly across the North American continent among those of European and African descent.³ One can assume that women have always found opportunities and reasons to work together informally in single-sex groupings; to know exactly when they first started organizing in formal ways would be difficult to determine. At a meeting to discuss the initiation of a Local Council of Women in Halifax in 1894, Anna Leonowens, a prominent local leader in women's circles who had spent years in Asia,⁴ spoke to the gathered group, making reference to the organization of a women's council in India that had been founded two thousand years earlier.⁵ The story Leonowens related has a mythical quality; however, it seems likely that her example, absorbed during her working years in the Far East, had some kernel of fact drawn from oral tradition. According to the story, a woman who loses her child to sickness asks for divine guidance and is sent

³For a comprehensive look at the development of American women's organizations from the time of colonization onwards, see Anne Firor Scott's *Natural Allies: Women's Associations in American History* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1991). Scott does not address the history of early Native American women and their possible associations, for too little is known on this topic. For a history of the late 19th and early 20th century beginnings of the National Council of Women of Canada, see Veronica Strong-Boag's *The Parliament of Women: The National Council of Women of Canada 1893-1929* (Ottawa: National Museum of Man, 1976). More general history texts, such as *Canadian Women A History*, edited by Alison Prentice et al (Toronto: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1988), include chapters covering women's organizational development.

⁴Anna Leonowens is most widely known because of her time spent in Siam as a tutor to the children of the King. Her biography became the basis for the musical, *The King and I*. From 1876 to 1897 she lived in Halifax, was an active suffragist, a co-founder of the Victoria School of Art and Design (now the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design) and involved in a host of other social and cultural activities in the city. See Gwendolyn Davies's essay "The Literary 'New Woman' and Social Activism in Maritime Literature, 1880-1920", *Separate Spheres*, eds. Janet Guildford and Suzanne Morton (Fredericton: Acadiensis Press, 1994).

⁵The gathering consisted of representatives from sixty-nine women's organizations already existing in the city. Phyllis R. Blakeley, "Anna of Siam in Canada", *The Atlantic Advocate*, Jan. 1967, p. 43. See also PANS MG20 Vol. 1054, #2, p. 16, Local Council of Women records.

on a search for a 'mustard seed' which is supposed to provide her with some consolation. In her search for the seed, she talks with women everywhere, only to discover that they, too, have lost children to illness. It is finally revealed to her that her discovery of this common bond with so many other mothers is the 'seed'. She initiates an organization of women to work for better health care and prevention of disease in children.

Leonowens's example serves as a reminder of the paucity of early documentary records pertaining to women's history, particularly outside of Western, European-based culture. However, this apocryphal tale rings true in spirit when one considers how, only three years after Leonowens's recounting, an actual historical event occurred in Canada which mirrored this Indian story in a remarkable way.

In 1897, Adelaide Hoodless founded the first Women's Institute in Stoney Creek, Ontario, after losing a child to death caused by consumption of unpasteurized milk. Vowing that other women should not have to suffer the same consequences because of ignorance, she began an educational self-help organization that, over time, spread throughout rural areas in Canada and eventually to countries all across the world. The Women's Institute did not arrive in Nova Scotia until 1913; however, by the end of that year, fourteen branches had been formed and the organization continued to grow rapidly.⁶ By the time the Great War broke out, Women's Institutes in Nova Scotia were well-placed to take an active role in relief activities.

Women's Institute, though new in 1897 and original in some of its features, shared common ground with many earlier women's organizations. Coming together to provide aid for women and children was the most

⁶Women's Institute of Nova Scotia records.

common *raison d'être* for the initiation of women's benevolent societies. As well, women-only organizations often evolved when the organizations established by men excluded women from having a voice or failed to address concerns that were of particular interest to them.⁷

As American historian, Anne Firor Scott, stated in *Natural Allies: Women's Associations in American History*:

[W]omen, constrained by law and custom, and denied access to most of the major institutions by which the society governed itself and created its culture, used voluntary associations to evade some of these constraints and to redefine 'woman's place' by giving the concept a public dimension.⁸

In Nova Scotia, it would appear that the earliest written records of women's organizations go back to the first decades of the nineteenth century. Women began local benevolent societies generally aimed at helping the sick, the poor, the orphaned and the widowed.⁹ Inspired by principles of Christian charity, not surprisingly, many groups were organized within church denominations. However, some organizations were comprised of women from various denominational backgrounds, coming together for like-minded purpose. In the early, fragmented records of such groups in Halifax, one can surmise that the Halifax Methodist Female Benevolent Society was initiated in 1816¹⁰, the Ladies' Benevolent Society formed in 1818, and the St. Andrew's

⁷Estelle Freedman "Separatism as Strategy: Female Institution Building and American Feminism, 1870-1930" in *Women and Power in American History*, eds. Sklar and Dublin (Englewood Cliff, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1991); Scott, *Natural Allies*., and Strong-Boag, *The Parliament of Women*.

⁸Scott, *Natural Allies*, p. 2.

⁹Bettina Bradbury in her article "Widows in 19th-Century Montreal" states that widows found particular sympathy among charity groups, both lay and religious. *Rethinking Canada: The Promise of Women's History*, eds. V. Strong-Boag and A. C. Fellman (Toronto: Copp Clark Pitman, 1991), p. 128.

¹⁰PANS MG 20, Vol. 1016. Mention is made in 1866 of the Society's fiftieth anniversary.

Church Female Benevolent Society in 1829¹¹. One such group outside of Halifax, the Pictou Female Benevolent Society, was founded in 1822.¹²

The 29th Annual Report of the Ladies' Benevolent Society specified that they helped 56 women during the year and enumerated their denominational affiliations: 35 Roman Catholics, 11 Church of England, 6 Baptists, 2 Presbyterians and 2 Methodists. It also registered the women's places of origin, listing Ireland (32), Nova Scotia (19), England (4) and Scotland (1). In 1844, one person helped was from the West Indies. In the 43rd Annual Report, a clearer notion of the society's mandate was articulated:

Food, fuel and clothing are supplied to women of all denominations for one month after their confinement, and a box containing clothing is lent for that period, and when it is returned in good order, a suit is given to the mother for herself and child.¹³

It is safe to assume that such groups would have been comprised of members who could afford in some measure to provide benevolence. In the earlier days of the colonies, with the possibility of quickly changing fortunes, those women who were able to provide charity knew only too well that their own circumstances were susceptible to fluctuation by such calamities as a spouse's financial failure, death or desertion. In all likelihood, women's lack of legal status and dependence on male heads of households enhanced their ability to relate to those affected by the vagaries of fate and misfortune. Even

¹¹PANS HV C, several extant annual reports exist for the years 1844, 1847, 1861 and 1867.

¹²PANS MG 100, Vol. 206, #22. In the constitution it states that funds were "for the relief of the poor destitute females in the town and suburbs of Pictou...for the support and education of female children, as far as the funds will permit."

¹³43rd Annual Report of the Ladies Benevolent Society, 1861, PANS.

within prosperous families, there could be poorer relations; a woman might have a sister who had not fared as well as herself. ¹⁴

Not surprisingly, the records indicate that the earliest formal organizations originated in urban centres. Even in its early days, Halifax, with its military base and shifting population would have had the greatest share of newcomers in need. They would not necessarily have found themselves embraced by their neighbours and helped in the informal ways that operated in smaller communities. Formal organizations, outside of church affiliations, grew more slowly in rural areas, for within the smaller communities, women quite successfully accomplished a number of social, charitable, and cultural functions within such informal gatherings as quiltings and other work parties.

Women's church-affiliated organizations were originally under the direct authority of male-governing bodies, but in some of the Protestant denominations, this gradually changed as the 19th century progressed. The birth of the first women's missionary society occurred in Canso, Nova Scotia in 1870 when Hannah Norris, a Baptist woman who had been working as a teacher among the poor and Mi'kmaq communities, applied to go overseas to carry out mission work. When she was refused by the church's mission board, she turned to the women of the church for sponsorship.¹⁵ Subsequently, women's missionary societies formed and quickly proliferated. Through their fundraising and managing of the monies they collected,

¹⁴Margaret Conrad, in "Sundays Always Make Me Think of Home': Time and Place in Canadian Women's History" discusses how important the bonds of sibling sisterhood were for nineteenth-century women; their support for one another through difficult times being particularly important. *Rethinking Canada: The Promise of Women's History*, pp.108-9.

¹⁵*Canadian Women: A History*, eds. A. Prentice, Bourne et al., p.191.

women in the societies not only raised remarkable sums, but also developed considerable executive and organizational skills.

It was during this period that the number of formal women's organizations grew beyond the limited sphere of church groups. Charitable activities still dominated much of women's organizational time; however, a shift in emphasis was emerging. This shift reflected a rapidly changing society where the cracks in tightly-held notions of gender appropriateness were increasingly more apparent. The nineteenth-century ideology of separate spheres which defined woman's place in the home and man's place in the world might have held sway on a rhetorical level, but in reality, women were pushing the boundaries of their gendered spaces. Janet Guildford, in an essay on the emergence of women as public school teachers in Nova Scotia¹⁶ discusses the way in which women, as school teachers, lived in that cross-over space between public and private spheres, for on one hand these women were in the paid (albeit, low-paid) workforce, but it was highly contested whether they were to be considered professional educators or merely a public extension of nurturing, moral 'mother' figures. In general, the separate sphere ideology failed to stand up under close scrutiny, but it did "ha[ve] a powerful negative and constraining impact on women's lives."¹⁷

Certainly, among middle- and upper-class women, the opportunities to devote more of their time to cultural, social, and political self-development led to an expansion of organizations. One element of the separate sphere ideology which was widely accepted by middle-class women and men was the

¹⁶Janet Guildford, "'Separate Spheres': The Feminization of Public School Teaching in Nova Scotia, 1838-1880" *Separate Spheres*, pp. 119-143.

¹⁷*Separate Spheres*, p.10. See other essays in collection for regional examples of how this tension between reality and ideology played itself out in the lives of women from varied backgrounds of class, religion and ethnicity.

notion of woman's superior moral qualities. Women with experience in benevolent and missionary associations were ready to take on larger roles in the reform movements of the day. As the moral keepers of the family, they felt justified in broadening their mandate by applying housekeeping and maternal skills for the greater public good. As women gained experience and confidence in their own abilities, their own lack of civil rights and opportunities for higher education and employment became more difficult for some to accept. Middle-class women who had been well versed in helping their less fortunate sisters and brothers began to recognize their own poverty in terms of education and civil rights. To a lesser degree, poorer, working-class women were also forming organizations to protect their interests and improve conditions. The latter half of the nineteenth century saw an astounding proliferation of women's associational activity. Not only were women acting within local groups, but the emergence of national and international affiliations began to take place.

Many women were beginning to lobby and fight for a better world for themselves and engage in associations that furthered their own interests; however, most of these same women still maintained connections with associations that supported charitable purposes. Self-betterment itself was conceived as a way of making a better world. If women were better educated and given the chance to contribute more fully in society, they argued that they would be better mothers, wives and civic participants.

Women's activities were fitting in with larger forces in society. The latter part of the nineteenth century was a period of profound social and political change. Industrialization was reordering patterns and relationships in the work force and shifting populations from rural to urban settings. Horrible work conditions and overcrowded housing in city slums became

more evident. Among religious middle-class women and men a belief in bringing together spiritual and secular concerns for the betterment of society emerged as the 'social gospel' movement. As Colin Howell states "... most mainstream churches were turning away from an earlier preoccupation with individual sin and personal salvation and embracing a new gospel that stressed the possibility of social regeneration."¹⁸ Social gospel activists provided leadership in reform and welfare work into the first few decades of the twentieth century, and at times, served as voices of conscience, particularly on issues concerning war and peace.¹⁹

The years leading up to World War I are of particular importance in assessing women's organizational readiness and participation once war was declared. The expansion of the National Council of Women of Canada from the period 1900-1914 gives a representative picture of women's organizational growth across the country. In *The Splendid Vision: Centennial History of the National Council of Women of Canada 1893-1993*, Naomi Griffiths compares these years of growth in the Council with the expansion in Canadian society in general, stating that changes were evolutionary rather than revolutionary. The Council had developed a "clearer understanding of how [it] could marshal its resources most efficiently, and of the role that the National Council should play in informing and directing public opinion."²⁰ The Council had built a considerable public profile and had carried out effective lobbying for particular causes. By 1914, the membership stood at 150,000, with

¹⁸Colin Howell, "The 1900s: Industry, Urbanization, and Reform", *The Atlantic Provinces in Confederation*, eds. E.R. Forbes and D.A. Muise (Toronto, Fredericton: University of Toronto Press, Acadiensis Press, 1993), p.157.

¹⁹Thomas P. Socknat *Witness Against War: Pacifism in Canada 1900-1945* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1987). pp. 21-23. Chapter 2 will address this element in more detail.

²⁰Naomi Griffiths, *The Splendid Vision: Centennial History of the National Council of Women of Canada* (Ottawa: Carleton University Press, 1993), p. 91.

twenty affiliated associations at the national level; in Nova Scotia, there were local councils in Halifax, East Pictou, West Pictou, Truro, Yarmouth and Sydney.²¹ Long-established councils, such as those in urban centres like Halifax could count on having considerable numbers of affiliates within the local area. According to a brief history of the Local Council in Halifax, over fifty groups were represented in its earliest days.²² When war broke out, the work of councils on both the local and national levels expanded tremendously. The example of Nova Scotian women's organizational capacity, as witness in their rallying meeting as soon as the war was declared, serves to illustrate the key importance of women's volunteer experience in mobilizing services and support. Prominent Council members who had been active on many social and political fronts were the logical leaders in the volunteer mobilization. The other large affiliated groups, such as the Women's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU), Women's Institute (WI), and the Imperial Order Daughters of the Empire (IODE) also made use of their effective networking to further the volunteer efforts. These groups did not necessarily respond to the war in a uniform way; nevertheless, all participated in volunteer services.

Within little more than two weeks after Agnes Dennis put out the call to the women of the provinces, responses had been heard from 108 towns and villages, as well as 278 personal letters of enquiry and offers of service.²³ The Local Council not only had excellent organizational capacity, but also it had a large, spacious mansion, which served as a work space for the production of

²¹*Ibid.*, pp. 111-112.

²²Canadian Federation of University Women, Halifax Club, September 1990 Newsletter. The Local Council in Halifax began in 1894. According to the newsletter, there were some periods when the Council had one hundred affiliate groups. It may well have been during the pre-WWI years, for there was considerable activity and growth in the Council at that time.

²³*Annual Reports of the Canadian Red Cross Society, Nova Scotia Division, 1914-18.*

relief supplies as well as functioning as the central clearing house and depot through which the supplies could be channelled.²⁴ The women of the Council were, unquestionably, essential to the organization of every aspect of relief work throughout the war period. The Red Cross became the organizational structure for the wartime cause, but the prime volunteer organizers in the newly-formed Red Cross were active Council leaders.

In the early days, the executive of the newly-initiated Red Cross was entirely female. As the Red Cross became more established and critical in its wartime relief role, men became involved in financial and advisory capacities although the actual volunteer work continued to be done by women.

It is interesting to compare the organizational composition of the local Red Cross and other women-run organizations with a relief organization organized by men during this period. The Massachusetts-Halifax Health Commission which was organized as a result of the 1917 Explosion is a case in point. Suzanne Morton's article on the conflicts that arose between the well-established Victorian Order of Nurses (VON) and the Massachusetts-Halifax Health Commission (MHHC) highlights some of the differences.²⁵ The VON, which grew out of women's volunteer efforts, provided both practical nursing care and public health education on a limited budget, and in its early years struggled against the resistance of the medical elite. The MHHC, with its much larger budget and differing public health philosophy (in which the roles of educator and bedside nurse were separated) threatened to destroy the

²⁴ The Council House was a fortuitous legacy from the estate of a local businessman, George Wright, who willed his home to the Council, on the eve of his departure from Liverpool, England, on the *Titanic*.

²⁵ Suzanne Morton, "Never Handmaidens': The Victorian Order of Nurses and the Massachusetts-Halifax Health Commission", *Ground Zero: A Reassessment of the 1917 Explosion in Halifax Harbour*, eds. Alan Ruffman and Colin Howell (Halifax: Nimbus & Gorsebrook Research Institute, 1994), pp. 195-205.

VON's existence in Halifax. The history of the two organizations in the post-Explosion years is revealing.

As for volunteer women, they were given no leadership in the Explosion crisis, although they provided goods and services, and many of their Red Cross reserve stocks were diverted from going overseas for use locally. Both the volunteer (Red Cross) and professional (VON) women's organizations had far more experience in dealing with relief work on the practical level of delivery of services; the Relief Commission had more money and professional expertise of a certain sort, but they were ill-prepared for the real work required. Undoubtedly the Commission could have benefitted from women's organizational and practical expertise. A study on differences in men's and women's organizations offers some clues as to why.

J. Miller McPherson and Lynn Smith-Lovin in their article "Women and Weak Ties: Differences by Sex in the Size of Voluntary Organizations"²⁶ state that men tend to join core organizations which are large and related to economic institutions (eg. business-related, labor, and veterans' organizations), whereas women are located in peripheral organizations which are smaller and more focussed on domestic or community affairs (eg. social, church, or community groups). Men join groups, in large part, for economic reasons; their larger associations provide them with greater opportunities to network, and thus improve their chances for greater status and power.

Women, with their long history of charitable, community-based groups, have developed strategies for getting much practical work done with

²⁶J. Miller McPherson and Lynn Smith-Lovin. "Women and Weak Ties: Differences by Sex in the Size of Voluntary Organizations." *American Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 87, No. 4, 1982, pp. 883-904.

few resources beyond their own time, labour, and ingenuity. Their groups, particularly when they remain small and localized, tend to be more consensual and less hierarchical in structure and practice. It is possible that the problems that plagued the Massachusetts-Halifax Relief Commission stemmed from the men's lesser experience in dealing with situations that fell outside of the range of their own self-interest.

A tension similar to the one that existed between the local VON and the MHRC is reflected in Alan Price's article "Edith Wharton at War with the American Red Cross: The End of *Noblesse Oblige*"²⁷ and points to the striking differences between the Canadian Red Cross (particularly the Nova Scotia Division) and the American Red Cross. As an American living in Paris, writer Wharton was directly involved with the war long before the United States entered the fray. According to Price:

Within days of the opening of the war in August of 1914, [Wharton] organized a workroom in her district of Paris for women thrown out of their jobs by the general military mobilization....[S]he established the American Hostels for Refugees, a charity that would eventually serve the nutritional, housing, educational, medical, and employment needs of thousands of refugees....When the Belgian government asked if she could find shelter for ninety orphaned and abandoned girls scheduled to arrive in Paris within forty-eight hours, she said yes. In the next two weeks they sent her six hundred more, and the Edith Wharton Children of Flanders charity was under way. All of that and the war was not yet nine months old.²⁸

Price goes on to say that Wharton "set up convalescent homes for refugee women and children, arranged tuberculosis sanitariums for soldiers,

²⁷ Alan Price, "Edith Wharton at War with the American Red Cross: The End of *Noblesse Oblige*," *Women's Studies*, 1991, Vol. 20, pp. 121-131.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 121-2, citing R.W.B. Lewis, *Edith Wharton: A Biography*.

and organized a fund to house the second wave of refugees from the devastated regions of northern France."²⁹ Wharton was just one of a number of Americans in France who were active in relief work.

In 1917, when the United States entered the war, the American Red Cross (ARC) became the officially designated charity of the U.S. Government. Up until that time, the ARC had been run consecutively by two women presidents, the founder, Clara Barton (from 1882-1904)³⁰ and Mabel Boardman (from 1904-1917). The government administration decided to restructure the ARC, creating a War Council made up entirely of men from banking, business and industry. They were able to raise tremendous funds; however, their administration of the funds left much to be desired.

Wharton and the other privately-funded American charities operating in France had, up until this time, relied on donations from people in the United States. When the ARC came into its new powerful position, many of the sources of funding dried up for these private charities. Initially Wharton and fellow relief workers in France looked forward to some financial aid and relief of duties arriving through the Red Cross; however, the ARC organization proved to be dictatorial and insensitive to the existing private charities, quickly eliminating the French volunteers and medical staff (by putting in their own newly-recruited American staff) and reducing the services for the recipients of relief. Conditions in sanitariums seriously deteriorated. Expediency overruled humanitarian practices.

The new head of the American Red Cross was vice-president of J.P. Morgan Company and a former bank president. He secured the volunteer

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p.122.

³⁰For a provocative look at the complexities of one women's response to war through humanitarian works, see Ellen Langenheim Henle's article "Clara Barton, Soldier or Pacifist?" *Civil War History*, Vol. 24, 1978, pp. 152-160.

services of the presidents of Anaconda Copper and the American Tobacco Company, the vice-presidents of American Steel Foundries and the Guaranty Trust Company, the former secretary of the Interior, as well as top executives from AT&T and American Express.³¹ These men were experts at raising money (and making money from the business of war itself); however, they did not have people skills or grass-roots organizational skills. They effectively destroyed the existing, well-functioning charities in France.

The contrast in the American and Canadian Red Cross operations is significant in terms of the way the work was carried out and by whom. Although the Canadian Red Cross in Nova Scotia evolved into an organization with predominantly male figureheads, the work was largely initiated, organized and carried out by women. At the time, it augured well for the maintenance of an efficient and cooperative organization.

Women's organizational work during wartime was not restricted to war relief. Up until the time of the World War I, Canadian women had been prime movers in most social reform, health, and educational causes particularly those directed at women and children, and these areas of concern continued to be pressing. In many ways the war exacerbated the problems of women and children, as men were siphoned off for military services. As Griffiths says about the NCWC:

Voluntary activity of members intensified and expanded into new fields. Council was deeply involved in the development of social policies aimed at supporting the families and dependents of those who enlisted. Such policies required much greater volunteer effort and a much augmented state role in social

³¹Price, "Edith Wharton at War", p.125.

programs. Council also had to concern itself with the broadening participation of women in the labour force.³²

Griffiths goes on to describe the ways in which women's volunteer activities were crucial for the relief of social distress at this time. At the beginning of the war there was no coordinated state structure for the provision of social services; in fact, it was women's volunteer efforts that "contributed significantly to shifting Canada away from reliance on private action for the alleviation of public misery to provision of social services through the machinery of the state."³³

While the war sometimes diverted women's groups away from their pre-war concerns, there was still a considerable groundswell of political agitation. Many women felt that their wartime contributions more than justified their right to the franchise. Ongoing discussion continued on how women would use their vote once suffrage was achieved. By the war's end, franchise at the provincial level was not universal, and where franchise was given, it did not necessarily include the right to stand for public office. Women had gained the vote at the national level, but their position in the public realm still left much to be desired. Following the war and leading up to the Second World War, women made some gains but also suffered considerable losses, particularly in the area of powerful separate-sex political action. Within the women's movement, prior to the vote, there had been discussion about the formation of a women's party and whether women

³²Griffiths, *A Splendid Vision*, p.124. Griffiths points out (citing Ceta Ramkhalawansingh) that "the war did not mark a significant departure from the slow rise in female employment, but it did produce a temporary flux into the work force, changes in occupations and some changed attitudes."

³³*Ibid.*, p. 125

would make better gains through a female bloc approach.³⁴ However, once the vote was available to most Canadian women, integration into the existing political parties was seen by many as the way to gain equality. The women's movement, in general, lost momentum with such fragmentation. In the inter-war years, the peace movement gained considerable support among many church and women's organizations, but once war was declared, actual anti-war resistance was limited. When WWII broke out, there were many women's groups in existence in the country and they were readily mobilized for relief organization. It is difficult to know whether a strong political organization of women, had it existed, would have provided a more powerful and critical voice for women *vis à vis* the war itself.³⁵

The Second World War saw Canadian women joining forces, once again, in aid of the war relief effort. Women's church groups, organizations and service clubs rallied, using their organizational experiences to mount an astounding campaign which was sustained and enlarged during the six long years of the war. The majority of relief supplies were channelled through the local branches and regional divisions of the Canadian Red Cross. During the war, politicians and propagandists were lavish in their praise for women's efforts; however, wartime histories have consistently ignored, or, at best, glossed over the story of women's volunteer work.

³⁴On an international level, the Woman's Peace Party was founded in 1915, and was renamed the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom in 1919. (Barbara Melosh, "'Peace in Demand': Anti-War Drama in the 1930s", *History Workshop*, Vol. 22, Aut. 1986.) A number of Canadian pacifists were members of this group. (Barbara Roberts, "*Why Do Women No Nothing to End the War?*")

³⁵From more recent times, in the United States, election polls in 1980 in the Reagan era showed a considerable gender gap in voting patterns, based on three factors: women's anti-militarism, and economic and feminist issues. Anti-militarism among women accounted for the highest proportion of the gap. (Val Burris, "The Meaning of the Gender Gap: A Comment on Goerztel", *Journal of Political and Military Sociology*. 1984, Vo. 12 (Fall): 335-343. Elshtain (*Women and War*, p. 199) is more circumspect on this matter, pointing to the lack of real follow-through of women voters.

British women's wartime volunteer work has been better recorded.³⁶ In 1948, an official history of the Women's Voluntary Services (WVS) of Britain was published. *Women in Green (The Story of the W.V.S.)*³⁷ recounts the remarkable undertakings of the WVS and its thousands of volunteers. As an official history of the organization, it is a laudatory account, with little critical analysis. Expressing much gratitude to those organizations outside of Britain that channelled their financial aid and relief supplies through the WVS, there is only a slight subtext to indicate that there might have been any dissatisfaction with such aid. The WVS was the official body through which the American Red Cross sent all its aid to Britain. Some of the WVS practices were altered through stipulations made by the ARC. While the writer does not express any direct criticism, the following passage from Appendix A in *Women in Green* is surprising and, seemingly, out of style and context with the tenor of the rest of the book:

- In the course of six years' experience of red tape, leading members of the W.V.S. came to the following conclusions:
1. A CO-ORDINATOR is a man who brings organised chaos out of regimented confusion.
 2. A CONFERENCE is a group of men who individually can do nothing and as a group can meet and decide that nothing can be done.
 3. A STATISTICIAN is a man who draws a mathematically precise line from an unwarranted assumption to a foregone conclusion.
 4. A PROFESSOR is a man whose job it is to tell students how to solve the problem of life which he

³⁶See Arthur Marwick *The Home Front: The British and Second World War* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1976) and Raynes Minns, *Bombers and Mash: The Domestic Front 1939-45* (London: Virago Press, 1980). Minns lists other titles in her select bibliography that cover some of this history.

³⁷Charles Graves, *Women in Green (The Story of the W.V.S.)* (London: William Heinemann Ltd., 1948).

himself has tried to avoid by becoming a professor.

5. AN EFFICIENCY EXPERT is a man who knows less about your business than you do and is paid more for telling you how to run it than you could possibly make out it even if you ran it right, instead of the way he told you to.
6. A CONSULTANT is an ordinary chap who is a long way from home.³⁸

The text that follows appears to be entirely unrelated: "American Red Cross supplies had arrived...." , yet it is difficult to ignore this coupling. The inclusion of this set of definitions, even if it was meant to be humorous, hints at what the volunteers (the majority of whom would have considered themselves ordinary, conservative housewives, not feminists) must have thought of the organizing and administrative capacities of the men with whom they had to deal. It also provides a link to other questions: did women themselves see their work in a different light than was interpreted within the larger politicized sphere? To what extent was women's work coopted by the state and other vested interests?

Women's records of their own work in organizations were very different from the records that bureaucrats, politicians or propagandists created.³⁹ Furthermore, women in their organizations were well-experienced in taking practical action; the wartime crisis simply required more intensified service. In the months preceding the Second World War, a number of leading professional women met with members from seventy-five women's groups across the country to organize the Voluntary Registration of Canadian Women.⁴⁰ This national registry was to serve as a data bank of women's skills

³⁸Graves, *Women in Green*, p. 259.

³⁹This will be discussed in more detail in Chapters Three and Four.

⁴⁰*Chatelaine*, June, 1939, p.10.

and resources in the event of war. However, in *Debates of the House of Commons* during the wartime period, one can see the way women's work was interpreted differently by politicians. The majority of Members would have shared the position taken by Prime Minister Mackenzie King, who, with a patronizing attitude, appropriated women's initiatives by establishing in 1941 the Department of National War Services to take charge of the work they were already doing:

[The Department] will be entrusted with the duty of directing and mobilizing the activities of thousands of our citizens who are seeking practical and useful outlets for their enthusiasm and patriotism...The object... is to help Canadians to help Canada by their free-will offerings, which have been so generously made and will be so generously continued.⁴¹

Another Member, Joseph Harris, who felt that the government could take advantage of women's 'enthusiasm', made similar patronizing remarks:

Hon. members must remember that the women who do this work...want to get credit for it. Give them that credit. It is a small concession to make in return for the work they will do. They do not want money: They simply want some recognition of the energy and enthusiasm they are putting into this work.⁴²

Gordon Graydon, one of the more progressive members was undoubtedly a minority voice when he said that he would "always hold it against this government that they contributed nothing by way of money or otherwise to... the women for that registration; they did it voluntarily, and throughout the length and breadth of Canada."⁴³ A comparable registration

⁴¹W.L.M.King, *Debates of the House of Commons*, 1941, p.1404. Quoted in Teresa Nash's Ph.D. dissertation "Images of women in the National Film Board of Canada Films during World War II and the post-war years" (McGill, 1982), p. 87.

⁴²*Debates*, 1941, Nash, p.88.

⁴³*Debates*, 1940, Nash, p.86.

carried out by the WVS in Britain was initiated by and had the full financial support of the government.⁴⁴

Canadian women's organizational history shares common ground with women's organizational culture in other countries. During both world wars, however, Canadian women played a larger part in initiating and organizing their own agenda for relief efforts. The work of Britain's women was monumental in its efforts and scope, but because of the closer affiliations with and financial support of the government, and because there was so much 'on the ground' dealing with direct emergency services, their work has been cast in a different light. The lateness of the American arrival into both wars created a dissimilar situation in the United States. Some American women did not wait until American entry to participate in relief work, as is witnessed by the example of Edith Wharton and other like-minded individuals during W.W.I and by the example of women's group who sewed and sent supplies through both the American and Canadian Red Cross prior to American entry into World War II.⁴⁵ As already discussed, the American Red Cross, with its leadership and direction in the hands of high-powered political men, was quite different from its Canadian counterpart. Barbara Steinson, in discussing the other volunteer efforts leading up to and during American involvement in World War I, corroborates this story of women's lesser role in guiding the relief movement. Women participated but did not make the big decisions; they were "to do the 'foot work', [but] were to take their orders from men".⁴⁶

⁴⁴Chatelaine, June 1939, p.11.

⁴⁵Graves, *Women in Green*, and Canadian Red Cross records.

⁴⁶Barbara Steinson, *American Women's Activism in World War I* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1982), p. 312.

Curiously, Canadian women's wartime organizational history seems to share more common ground with that of American women's efforts during the Civil War. Although there are significant differences between the situations, one can draw many parallels between the Canadian story and historian Anne Firor Scott's account of U. S. women's organizational mobilization in the first days of the war (and throughout its duration).⁴⁷ During the Civil War, responding with immediacy to the crisis, American women had a more important role in the initiating and carrying out of relief efforts than in later conflicts. The delayed entry of the U.S. into both world wars meant that the government played a larger part in defining women's efforts.

Scott goes so far as to suggest that women's superior organizational skills and willingness to provide humanitarian aid prolonged the Civil War in the United States. So too, it may well be that Canadian women helped to prolong both world wars. It is difficult to know for certain, but this possibility is one that women might consider in the event of future war. When women, with their excellent organizational skills, volunteer their services, even for humanitarian reasons, do they unwittingly contribute to ongoing war-making? If women *en masse* refused to cooperate in times of war, would it make a significant difference?⁴⁸

While one element of this thesis is to interrogate the idea of women's unconflicted patriotic support of the two world wars, there is no doubt that the majority of women in Canada, both as individuals and in groups,

⁴⁷Scott, *Natural Allies*, pp.58-77, see Chapter 3, "We are now very busy: Women and War".

⁴⁸This issue has long been debated among pacifist women. Noted World War I pacifist Jane Addams felt that humanitarian aid must not be withheld from those suffering in war. However, some absolute pacifists, particularly socialist pacifists, felt that any aid was only abetting the war cause.

supported relief efforts, no matter what their personal feelings were about war. Their gendered response was predictable and consistent with women's widespread tendency to nurture and provide succour. Governments did not have to conscript women into the volunteer sector. Women were already there, organized and ready to work, work, and then some.

Chapter 2

Alternative Voices - Peace as a Feminist Issue

The pre-World War I peace and arbitration movement and the crisis faced by pacifists once the war was declared has been discussed in numerous works, particularly in relation to women in Europe and the United States.¹ From the 1890s onward, leading feminists throughout the world were engaged in the analysis of war and its root causes. For the most part, maternal rhetoric predominated, although not all feminists believed in biological essentialism. However, even the most ardent believers in equal rights began to take to a more gendered approach, as the struggle for the franchise was repeatedly stonewalled by politicians. Maternal feminists argued that women's skill as nurturers and peace-lovers (whether biologically or socially constructed) should be used at the negotiation table when conflicts between nations arose. Among peace advocates, campaigning against the military training of young boys was a major initiative. Many women believed that such training encouraged war-like behavior and emulation of the heroic ideal.

As early as 1895, Nova Scotia had a WCTU Superintendent of Peace and Arbitration. Margaret B. McKay, of Pictou gave her first report at the 13th Annual Maritime WCTU Convention, in which she urged groups to study the available peace literature, particularly as it pertained to the education of children. Late twentieth-century peace activists would surely find resonance

¹For example, see Frances Early, *A World Without War: How U.S. Feminists and Pacifists Resisted World War I* (Syracuse, New York: Syracuse University Press, 1997), Sybil Oldfield, *Women Against the Iron Fist: Alternatives to Militarism 1900-1989* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1989), Barbara J. Steinson, *American Women's Activism in World War I* (Garland Publishing, Inc.: New York, 1982), Jill Liddington, *The Road to Greenham Common: Feminism and Anti-Militarism in Britain since 1812* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1989), Jo Vellacott, "A Place for Pacifism and Transnationalism in Feminist Theory: the Early Work of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom" *Women's History Review*, Vol. 2, No. 1, 1993.

in McKay's modern-like statement concerning the "impropriety of [mothers] giving their children toy guns and swords to play with".²

In 1896, McKay's report came from the newly constituted Nova Scotia WCTU (up to this time, the organization had been organized on a collective Maritime basis rather than by province), in which she continued to stress the importance of educating the young in ways alternative to militarism. She quoted the National Superintendent of Physical Culture:

The increasing popular demand among boys for the introduction of military training in schools is to be deplored. Its tendency is to displace physical discipline of a more comprehensive character, it is a detriment to the progress of the work, and an unfortunate influence in favor of war. Children should be trained to believe that the interests of the nation can be better served by settling difficulties as far as possible by arbitration.³

McKay also reported on the success of an alternative form of useful training, the Fire Brigade, which was being instigated in some places and included both girls and boys.

In the pre-war period, pacifist feeling in Canada was high among some of the most vocal feminists of the day. However, very few of the leaders maintained a pacifist stance throughout the duration of the war. As with feminists elsewhere, the decision of the majority was to go with a nationalist allegiance rather than maintain the international solidarity that had been developing among women in the pre-war period. As sons and brothers enlisted, it was extremely difficult to maintain an absolute pacifist position. To cite the most obvious examples of this change of heart among vocal pre-war pacifists in Canada, one has only to look at the examples of Florence Macdonald Denison and Nellie McClung who had both written pacifist

²Minutes of the 13th Annual Maritime WCTU Convention 1895. PANS MG 20 Vol. 357, p. 69.

³1st Annual N.S. WCTU Convention, 1896. PANS MG 20 Vo. 357.

manifestos prior to or early in the wartime period. Both women gave up their positions in favour of national support for the war 'to end all wars'. Denison's anti-war essay *War and Women* was published in 1914. In 1916, her absolute pacifism was eroded by her son's enlistment in the services.⁴ McClung also shifted her position; between the time of writing *In Times Like These* in 1915 and *The Next of Kin: Those Who Wait and Wonder* in 1917, her position on war was altered by the enlistment of her son.⁵

Four outspoken Canadian women pacifists who remained true to their convictions have been ably discussed by historian Barbara Roberts.⁶ As well, Thomas Socknat's *Witness Against War: Pacifism in Canada 1900-1945*⁷ provides an overview of pacifist thought and action in Canada during this time. Both writers concentrate on Central and Western Canadians where, indeed, stronger opposition to war was voiced. The traditional pacifist sects had no presence in Nova Scotia; there were no Mennonite or Doukhabor communities, no Quaker meetings or Jehovah's Witness congregations. Few members of the radical left who were anti-war (although not necessarily pacifist) resided in the province. The tendency among other pre-war pacifists, once war was called, was to hope that it would be short and that the rules of settlement and arbitration would be worked out to ensure that another war could not happen in future.

⁴The Canadian Suffrage Association published *War and Women* in pamphlet form. University of Toronto Library Microfilm. See Deborah Gorham's essay "Vera Brittain, Flora MacDonald Denison and the Great War: The Failure of Non-Violence", pp 137-148, in *Women and Peace*, ed. by Ruth Roach Pierson (London: Croom Helm, 1987).

⁵See R.R. Warne's "Nellie McClung and Peace", pp 35-47, *Up and Doing*, ed. by Janice Williamson and Deborah Gorham (Toronto: The Women's Press, 1989).

⁶Barbara Roberts, "'Why Do Women Do Nothing to End the War?': Canadian Feminists-Pacifists and the Great War. (Ottawa: CRIAW/ICREF, 1985). See also by Roberts, "Women's Peace Activism in Canada", in *Beyond the Vote: Canadian Women and Politics*, eds. Linda Kealey and Joan Sangster (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1989).

⁷Thomas Socknat, *Witness Against War: Pacifism in Canada 1900-1945* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1987).

Individuals opposed to the war on the basis of pacifist belief are difficult to uncover from this remove of time, particularly if they were not vocal in their stance or did not leave some written record. Of the more prominent feminists in Nova Scotia at the time, two stand out as vocal critics of military training, seen by pacifists to be one of the contributors to building a war-like society. Francis Marion Beynon, a Western journalist and outspoken pacifist, mentions in a 1917 article reporting on the national convention of the National Council of Women that only a small minority of those present held an opinion against war, present or future, and in an ensuing debate about the merits of military training of school children, that "only Mrs. Murray from Halifax, suggested the possibility of future peace, and protested against the militaristic ideal and the subservience to authority which went with military training of young boys."⁸

One Nova Scotian feminist who wrote and campaigned extensively against military training of boys was Mary Russell Chesley. Making the briefest of appearances (usually in footnotes) in a number of Canadian studies⁹, Mary Chesley was the most persevering advocate in the province for peace and arbitration. From the 1890s until her death in 1923, she worked for the promotion of peace, on the provincial and national levels, through the Women's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU). A woman who kept well-informed on international war and peace issues, she consistently brought these issues to the attention of her constituents in the WCTU. As a woman of

⁸From the *Grain Growers' Guide*, 20 June 1917, cited in Barbara Roberts, "Why Do Women Do Nothing to End the War?", p. 13.

⁹Catherine Cleverdon, *The Woman Suffrage Movement in Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1950), p.165n, 169n, 172n, 174n, Socknat, *Witness Against War* p. 305, n. 98, Roberts, "Why Do Women..."p. 18, and also by Barbara Roberts, *A Reconstructed World: A Feminist Biography of Gertrude Richardson*. (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1996), p. 211.

strong Christian faith, she asked women across the province to put pressure to bear within their communities, particularly on clergy, to advocate for peace from the pulpits and to protest military training. Chesley's pacifist message, like those of others who spoke of peace at the time, may have failed to make a significant impact; nevertheless it is important to remember that such voices were present and did provide a counterpoint to the overriding nationalistic rhetoric of the day.

As one of the aims of this thesis is to seek out the alternative voices that have been dulled or silenced by time and exclusionary historical practices, it is useful to look more closely at what evidence does exist of Mary Chesley's work concerning the issues of war and peace. Thus far, no personal papers have been found; however, within the national and provincial WCTU records, Chesley's letters and reports provide a glimpse of her world view and the actions she advocated for her fellow WCTU sisters. Other fragmentary evidence helps to piece together a partial biographical sketch.

Mary Russell was born in Dartmouth in 1847 and was "of Quaker and French Huguenot descent".¹⁰ This Quaker descent must have held some importance for Chesley, for in the limited references to her life, it is mentioned¹¹. Although she grew up within the Methodist church and married a man who was very active within that denomination, it would appear that Chesley maintained some independence in her religious thought. Labelled a 'controversialist' in Morgan's 1898 *Canadian Men and Women of the Time*, Chesley is thus described as:

¹⁰Henry James Morgan, *The Canadian Men and Women of the Time* (Toronto: William Briggs, 1898), p.183.

¹¹*Ibid.*, and Chesley's obituary, *Lunenburg Progress-Enterprise*, 26 December 1923, p. 4.

... an adherent of the Meth[odist] Ch[urch], but in the matter of belief holds herself free. She believes that 'righteousness exalteth a nation,' but that no nation or state has its foundations in righteousness which excludes the best half of its citizens from a voice in its Govt. She also believes in the 'single tax,' the legal prohibition of the liquor trade and kindred abominations, the settlement of national difficulties by arbitration, and in co-operation as opposed to competition.¹²

Mary Russell married Samuel A. Chesley, a barrister who eventually became a judge, and throughout their married life they lived in Lunenburg. According to Morgan, Chesley joined the WCTU around 1893-94. She immediately plunged into public suffrage work, and from 1895-1900 she held the position of provincial president of the WCTU as well as provincial superintendent for the Franchise Department, petitioning the Legislature for the enfranchisement of N.S. women, every year, with the exception of 1896.¹³ Following her five-year stint as Provincial President, she carried on as Corresponding Secretary, as well as Superintendent of Franchise. Chesley added the Department of Peace and Arbitration to her portfolio of volunteer positions in 1907, maintaining her involvement in this work until her death in 1923.

Mary Russell Chesley must have enjoyed a compatible and egalitarian relationship with her husband, Samuel A. Chesley. Through his active involvement in the Methodist Church and other associations, he petitioned for the same causes as his wife. The *WCTU Minutes of Convention*, for 1895 attest to his interest in equal rights:

¹²Morgan, *Canadian Men and Women* p.183.

¹³*Ibid.*, p. 183. This absence in 1896 may have been due to the fact that in 1895, the Chesleys suffered personal tragedy, losing a son and daughter to drowning when their boat capsized in a storm. Newspaper account "The Lunenburg Drowning Tragedy", *The Halifax Herald*, 12 October 1895.

It was unanimously resolved...that the members of this Convention desire to express their sincere appreciation of Judge Chesley's efforts at the last General Conference of Methodist Church in Canada in behalf of the ecclesiastical enfranchisement of Women.¹⁴

As well, according to Socknat, Samuel Chesley served as vice-president of the Canadian Peace and Arbitration Society during the early years of the century¹⁵. In the January 13, 1926 editorial of the *New Outlook*, a United Church publication, Judge Chesley is mentioned for his resolution put forward proposing that the church take a stance against military training in schools, indicating that he continued to crusade on similar issues throughout his life.¹⁶ Mary and Samuel Chesley's only surviving daughter Mary Albee Chesley (also known as Polly) followed in her parents' footsteps. She formally became a Quaker while living in Britain and publicly campaigned and lectured on peace and disarmament in the post-war years, both in Canada and Britain. Samuel Chesley outlived his wife by almost seven years. According to his obituary, Samuel eventually joined his daughter Polly in England, and remained active until his death, at age 80, in 1930.¹⁷

In the period leading up to and during the Great War, the WCTU records, both provincial and national, provide a view of the conflicting positions within the organization concerning militarism. Nationally, within the pages of the *White Ribbon Bulletin*, Mary Russell Chesley, Dominion Superintendent of the Dept. of Peace and Arbitration, and Ida Powell Starr, the Dominion Superintendent of Militia, provided opposing views on the issue of military training for boys. In 1913, Colonel Sam Hughes took a clever

¹⁴PANS MG20 Vol. 357, 13th Annual Maritime Convention of WCTU, 1895.

¹⁵Socknat, *Witness Against War*, p.305, n98.

¹⁶PANS B9.5 UN3 N42, Vol 1-3.

¹⁷*Lunenburg Progress Enterprise*, July 30, 1930, p. 1

step to garner support for the military when he invited the WCTU and the IODE to send representatives to a conference to discuss two subjects, the cadet movement and the issue of wet or dry canteens. The April issue of the WCTU bulletin printed an article written by Lieut.-Colonel Charles D. Winter, Military Secretary entitled "Will the W.C.T.U. Join in Helping the Militia Department Make Good Men Out of Our Boys?", followed in May with Ida Powell Starr's endorsement of the plan. She carefully steps around "Our worthy Superintendent of Peace and Arbitration" by suggesting that she [Chesley] "has no stronger supporters than the honored generals, who have led, in time of need, 'the defence.'"¹⁸

Mary Chesley's response in the June issue makes it very clear that she opposes Winter's and Starr's arguments completely:

... let us not be too credulous. As far as physical culture is concerned, equally good results can be attained in other and safer ways, and uniforms and fire-arms are no necessary part of such culture, nor is there any reason to suppose that the Militia Department is particularly interested in the physical development of our boys apart from their military instruction. But we are told that the boys are taught 'obedience, discipline, cleanliness, manliness.' Are we then at such a straightened [*sic*] pass that we must hand over our young boys ...to be taught these virtues, and, if so, on what grounds do we make this particular choice of instructors?¹⁹

Chesley goes on to make more points against military training, urging WCTU members to order and read a British pamphlet on military drill in schools, available through the American Peace Society. She reminds her readers "to remember that this whole question of militarism is largely one of

¹⁸WCTU records, Archives of Ontario, MV 8464.

¹⁹*Ibid.*

sordid self-interest –of mere money considerations" and concludes her article with an anti-war poem "The God of War", by Israel Zangwill which comments on war's boon to business interests.

This tension between pro- and anti-military support continues in subsequent issues of the *White Ribbon*. In the October 1914 issue, an article titled "Women and War", written by Frances S. Hallowes, a woman living in India, is quite radical in its condemnation of the horrors of war, particularly as they affect women. She criticizes governments, military men, and clergy for perpetuating the carnage, commenting on women's lack of vote and voice in the decision to wage war. Hallowes encourages women to rid themselves of ignorance and indifference and follow the lead of pacifists. She takes advantage of the rhetoric of maternal pacifism:

The symbolic figure of peace is a woman. Is this fact not a call to women of all nations to take up this great crusade? Shall not the symbolism be made a fact? ...Let [women] join their National Peace Societies and avail themselves of the pacifist literature now in circulation.

In the same issue, the editorial and other news items provide a more standard response to the war, praising and encouraging women in their volunteer war work.

The article by Hallowes has all the earmarks of a piece that would have been printed at the instigation of Mary Russell Chesley. She kept abreast of what women were doing internationally within the peace movement and passed on the information to her fellow WCTU members through articles, circulars, letters, and reports.

It is interesting to note that Chesley's own writing is devoid of maternalist arguments. Her devout Christianity and sense that humans were capable of negotiation with words rather than weapons guided her

commitment to the peace movement. In her 1912 report to the Nova Scotia WCTU Convention, she shows her colours when discussing her pleasure at the gains made in Germany by the Socialists. Her approval of socialist strategy as discussed at a Peace Conference in Copenhagen in 1910 is apparent:

It was seriously proposed and finally submitted for study to the bodies of Socialists in different countries, that, in case of a declaration of war between two nations, a general strike of all workers in the government shops should be declared in order to make war impossible. This would be a far more effective measure than that which Ruskin proposed many years since – the adopting of mourning by all the women of any country upon the declaration of war.²⁰

In the same report, she urges all the Unions to return signed peace petitions that she had circulated, to be presented at the next Hague Conference.

That Hague Conference, in 1915, in which women from both neutral and belligerent countries met to discuss peace, was given full notice in Chesley's 1915 report:

It is significant of the awakening of women to their responsibilities that, in the midst of this conflict, an international congress of women, over which Jane Adams [sic] presided, was called to meet ...to discuss ways and means by which war shall become an impossibility in the future. Notwithstanding the slurs cast upon this congress by irresponsible press correspondents, it has been said of the resolutions adopted 'that they were the most fundamental and most constructive yet formulated by a body of pacifists.' ... Let us hope that, when this [next] conference meets... the W.C.T.U. will have an honorable place in it. We of the little Nova Scotia W.C.T.U. may not have a part in peace conferences but let us not forget that we are followers of the Prince of Peace... And let us try to remember that it is not by the slaughter of Germans or Austrians war will be ended, but by the dethronement of military ideals – whether they be German, Russian, French or British.²¹

²⁰WCTU Convention 1912, p. 75. PANS MG 20 Vol. 356 #12.

²¹WCTU Convention 1915, p. 62. PANS MG 20 Vol. 356 #15.

Feminist pacifist Violet McNaughton, in her column for *The Saturday Press and Prairie Farm*, quotes extensively from Chesley's Hague Conference report to the Dominion W.C.T.U. Convention which was held in Regina in 1916. Chesley was apparently not present in person, but her paper was read at the national meeting. Her report is not identical to her provincial report, but similar in spirit:

We rejoice that, even under these hard conditions [of war], women of *seven* of the belligerent and *five* of the neutral countries of Europe have made their voice heard....A permanent result ...was the organisation of the 'Women's International League,' the object of which is 'to establish the principles of right rather than might, and of co-operation rather than conflict in national and international affairs.'²²

Chesley never explicitly calls herself a pacifist in her writings, yet her position is always in sympathy with the pacifist cause. In the 1916 report, with the thought that, as Kitchener was predicting, it would be a three-year war, she began to anticipate the problems of settlement:

And what of the outcome? It has been the observation of pacifists that war settles nothing, that rather, by giving rein to all the baser passions, it increases the spirit of enmity and jealousy. Is the 'settlement' after the present war to be but the resolving of Europe into two hostile camps...each preparing during a period of armed truce for another and more gigantic conflict? ...Are we praying...that wise counsels may prevail, that in the terms of peace which are decided upon no seed of future discord may be sown – that the present savage conflict may not be succeeded by an economic war which will but perpetuate the spirit of enmity among the nations and prove fatal to all hopes of permanent peace.²³

²²*The Saturday Press and Prairie Farm*, July 1, 1916, "Our Welfare Page". Column is under the name, Mrs. John McNaughtan. I have used the spelling McNaughton because it appears in all other references. See Roberts and Socknat.

²³WCTU Convention 1916, p. 62. PANS MG 20 Vol. 356 #16.

As history would play itself out, Chesley's concerns were well-founded. Although the war lasted even longer than she or anyone else would have imagined, in the final analysis, the 'war to end all wars' failed to bring about real peace. The price exacted from the defeated did sow 'seeds of future discord'.

Chesley's close following of international affairs was undoubtedly aided by news from her daughter in England. Polly Chesley was a declared pacifist who, during the war years, was a member of the newly formed Union for the Democratic Control of Foreign Policy (UDC) in Britain²⁴. According to Sybil Oldfield:

The UDC was a group of left-wing pacifist intellectuals who wanted the nations to learn from their past blunders of secret diplomacy and heavily armed rival bloc-thinking and to negotiate a just peace which would prevent global war in future.²⁵

Polly was also a charter member of the Women's International League²⁶ and belonged to the pacifist wing of the labour movement, the Independent Labour Party²⁷. Whereas her mother's advocacy for peace was largely confined to her work within the WCTU, Polly stepped into the broader political arena. Living in Britain, she was able to connect with many more like-minded souls than had she lived in Nova Scotia at the time.

What kind of toll the war took on the senior Mary Chesley as she experienced the dashing of her personal hopes for a peace without retribution is unknown. Her report in 1917 is brief; "I greatly regret that I have been prevented by untoward circumstances from sending out a call for reports...."

²⁴Based on information gleaned from article in *The Berwick Register*, June 20, 1923.

²⁵Sybil Oldfield, *Women Against the Iron Fist* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell Ltd., 1989), p. 35.

²⁶*Berwick Register*, June 20, 1923.

²⁷It is uncertain when she joined. In one of her wills, she left money to the ILP. PANS Micro Reel #19837, p. 495.

In her 1918 national report, her utter discouragement concerning the ongoing war is reflected in her comment: "In concluding this meagre and discouraging report I may say that I am very uncertain as to the utility of trying to conduct this department under present adverse and difficult circumstances."²⁸ Not until 1922 is there another report. That and the following report in 1923 are the last reports to come from Chesley, for she died in 1923 at the age of 76.

Chesley's silence during the early post-war period remains a mystery. Was it personal circumstances or a withdrawal from the 'battlefield' of peace advocacy as a result of sheer exhaustion and disappointment? Certainly, the strain on pacifists in maintaining their stance has been documented elsewhere.²⁹ According to a memorial notice on the event of her death, mention was made of a serious, life-threatening accident visited upon Chesley's husband in 1920, requiring her attention and care for some time.³⁰ Whatever forces conspired to keep Chesley in withdrawal did not create a permanent disengagement. Her 1922 and 1923 reports indicate a continuing commitment to the message of peace and advocacy for universal disarmament. She refers to a branch of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom in Lunenburg, of which she and "most of the members... are W.C.T.U. members" during these two years.³¹ Thus far, no records of this group have been unearthed. It is likely that when Mary Russell Chesley died, the local organization dissolved without her committed leadership.³²

²⁸quoted in Barbara Roberts's *A Reconstructed World*, p. 211.

²⁹Barbara Roberts, "*Why Do Women Do Nothing to End the War?*".

³⁰*The Wesleyan*, 20 February 1924, p. 14.

³¹NS WCTU Conference Reports, MG 20, Vol. 356, # 22, 23, PANS.

³²The American WILPF papers include some information on other Canadian branches, but nothing about Lunenburg. The recent discovery of Polly Chesley's early involvement in Britain suggests the possibility of affiliation through British channels.

Mary Russell Chesley has largely been forgotten. However, is it possible to see her life and works as having made any difference? Judging by the number of wars in this century, one could say that pacifism as a guiding principle has failed to take root in any substantial way. Nevertheless, the very existence of alternative voices has provided a voice of conscience in the midst of periods of high propaganda and moral confusion. Women, in particular, often find themselves torn in their loyalties.

Chesley, with her broad embrace of international concerns, was an unlikely and unassuming radical voice coming out of small town Nova Scotia³³. While the WILPF chapter in Lunenburg did not survive after her death, she did inspire a number of her fellow WCTU members to take on the task of peace advocacy. There is the obvious example of her own daughter who took a public role in giving speeches and lectures on peace and disarmament, both in Canada and in Great Britain. In the year following her mother's death, the younger Chesley carried on the work of her mother as the acting national Superintendent of Peace and Arbitration within the WCTU. However, in 1925 Polly Chesley left Canada permanently, returning to England where she had previously done some of her university studies. Although she was faithful to the cause, the WCTU could not provide a broad enough canvas for the younger Chesley's ambitions. As well as her political affiliations, Chesley committed herself to issues of pacifism and social justice through her religious connections. Joining the Society of Friends in Britain and for a number of years teaching in a Quaker private school which she co-founded, Chesley renewed connections with her ancestral roots. Eventually

³³Leila Rupp, in her book *Worlds of Women: The Making of an International Women's Movement* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997) states that of the three largest and most important international women's organizations, the WILPF was the most radical (p. 33).

her commitment to pacifist ideals took her to India where she worked in cooperation with Mahatma Gandhi in his village projects until her untimely death in 1936, a couple of months short of her forty-fifth birthday.

After Mary Chesley's death and her daughter's departure from Canada, those who led the Peace and Arbitration work within the Nova Scotia WCTU ranks were a couple of women from the Annapolis Valley, Lulu DeBlois Porter and Eunice Buchanan. Records are sporadic, but in 1926, Eunice Buchanan was Superintendent not only of her local union, but also provincially and nationally. In her annual report, she mentions having given a talk on "Why I am a Pacifist" to her local group. Her report includes news of Mary (Polly) Chesley:

Perhaps it will interest many of you to know that my predecessor in the Canadian National W.C.T.U., Miss Chesley, is devoting much of her time to peace work in England, speaking before audiences in Hyde Park, or on other London platforms once a week. When she wrote last she and Judge Chesley were attending the Sixth International Democratic Peace Conference a few miles outside of Paris.³⁴

Eunice Buchanan and her husband, John Buchanan, had an apple tree farm in the Berwick area. Little is known of them; however, it would appear that they were kindred souls to Polly Chesley. Both the Buchanans and Chesley campaigned vigorously on behalf of child victims of war in Europe. In 1921, both Eunice and John wrote letters to the editor of *The Morning Chronicle*, petitioning readers to donate money for Russian Family Relief. They were channeling the funds through the Friends (Quakers) in London, England.³⁵ Various records indicate Polly Chesley's fundraising activities in support of Russian and German victims of war.³⁶

³⁴Nova Scotia WCTU Convention Report, 1926, p. 74.

³⁵*The Morning Chronicle*, Oct. 5, 1921, p. 4, Oct. 12, 1921, p.?

³⁶WCTU reports, 1924, 1925. Quaker newsletter, *The Friend*, June 26, 1936.

From the perspective of the late twentieth century, it is difficult to think of the WCTU as a radical organization; however, within this body of women there were some remarkably astute and original-thinking individuals. It would appear that the WCTU provided Nova Scotia with its only truly vocal critics of militarism. As well, WCTU members were in the forefront of other feminist causes.

Ernest Forbes, in his review essay of *Liberation Deferred? The Ideas of the English Canadian Suffragists 1877-1918* by Carol Bacchi,³⁷ provides an excellent glimpse of the feminist movement in Halifax and the key players who provided leadership for concerns ranging far beyond suffrage. He takes issue with Bacchi's central-Canadian bias and almost total dismissal of suffrage activity in Nova Scotia, citing Catherine Cleverdon's earlier history on the Canadian suffrage movement as dated, but at least giving a more comprehensive picture of regional activity.³⁸ Forbes brings up several salient points in his critique of Bacchi's book which are worth reviewing, for they might be kept in mind when considering women's wartime experiences.

In attempts to interpret the social activism of first-wave feminists through the lens of a late twentieth-century perspective, it is easy to misread events and overlook the complexities of the period. Forbes observes that Bacchi's dismissal of the Halifax suffrage movement was based on the absence of a long-standing organization devoted entirely to suffrage and does not take into account the fact that many women worked on the cause through other organizations, most notably the Woman's Christian Temperance Union.

³⁷ Ernest Forbes, "The Ideas of Carol Bacchi and The Suffragists of Halifax", *Atlantis*, V.10, N. 2, Spring 1985, pp119-26.

³⁸ Cleverdon, *The Woman Suffrage Movement in Canada*.

Forbes focusses his attention primarily on the work of Halifax feminists, some of whom were members of WCTU while others were not; he claims that in some instances, the suffragist with temperance connections was the more daring feminist.³⁹ Forbes briefly mentions the emergence of the women's peace and arbitration movement within the organization during the 1890s. It is here that it is necessary to extend beyond the boundaries of the capital city and look at the WCTU as a provincial organization with national and international affiliations.⁴⁰

Mary Chesley, her predecessor, Margaret B. McKay, of Pictou, and the subsequent inheritors of the peace and arbitration mantle all kept abreast of international women's peace initiatives. Thus far, it is unknown to what extent Mary Chesley exchanged communications with the better-known Canadian pacifist women. In the months following her death, her daughter's report on Peace and Arbitration for the WCTU (in her role as Acting Superintendent) makes mention of a request from the British Columbia WCTU, asking the senior Chesley to write to the National Regent of the IODE to protest the patriotic society's presentation of war pictures to schools "calculated to glorify war in the minds of the children and nourish, rather than destroy, the spirit of hate". The protest in B.C. was a joint initiative of the WCTU, the Parent Teachers' Associates and the University Women's Club and others.⁴¹ Chesley complied, but what impact her words might have

³⁹Forbes, "The Ideas of Carol Bacchi" p.121. Forbes cites WCTU member, Edith Archibald as a more outspoken feminist when comparing her with university-educated, 'straight suffragist' Eliza Ritchie (as opposed to being a 'temperance suffragist' according to Bacchi's categorization).

⁴⁰It is relevant to note that even in recent years, women's organizations, particularly outside of the metropolitan area of Halifax, tend not be single-issue groups. They take up interest in a number of causes that reflect the diverse interests of the group. Individuals may work on particular issues and rely on the support of the group, but because of lack of numbers, their cause would not be furthered by forming a single-issue group.

⁴¹1925 Annual Report WCTU, PANS MG20, Vol 367, p.135.

had on the IODE Regent, one can only speculate. As well, it is uncertain whether Mary Chesley was well-known in peace circles beyond the WCTU network.

The information Chesley regularly passed on to her sister members in the WCTU was derived from American and British sources more than from Canadian ones. It is possible that her age placed her more firmly in the camp of an earlier generation of American feminists; she was much closer in age to Frances Willard, founder of the WCTU, than some of her Canadian counterparts. The outspoken pacifists highlighted in Barbara Roberts' account were all thirty or more years younger than Chesley. Like Willard, Mary Russell Chesley's radicalism was based on a belief in Christ's teachings. In 1917, *The Canadian Forward*, published an article on Frances Willard's views of socialism. To Willard, socialism was "Christianity applied".⁴² Judging by the limited evidence, it would seem that Chesley held a similar view. Living in Lunenburg, out of the mainstream of things, it may have been more difficult for Chesley to act as forcefully on her convictions. Tempered by her age and possible health considerations, she restricted her activities to the WCTU. Had her daughter Polly remained in Canada and had she lived longer, more information might have been preserved about this mother and daughter with socialist, pacifist ideals. Nova Scotia may have lost its most promising alternative voice for that period in Polly Chesley's departure from the province. Certainly, Gandhi was so impressed with Polly Chesley's intellect and commitment to social change that he wrote about her on a number of occasions, including a particularly moving memorial upon her death, in his weekly paper *Harijan*.⁴³

⁴²*The Canadian Forward*, August 10, 1917, p. 6.

⁴³*Harijan*, Saturday, May 23, 1936, p.1.

In the years following Polly Chesley's departure from Canada and leading up to the Second World War, there was a considerable broadening of interest in peace issues among many women's groups. Veronica Strong-Boag in her article "Peace-Making Women: Canada 1919-1939" outlines the initiatives and challenges faced by women in the inter-war period. Ultimately, women seeking ways to promote peace relied on educational and moral rather than coercive suasion, for they were still excluded from the corridors of power where real political decisions were made.⁴⁴ Strong-Boag describes the range of women's groups involved in discussions and proposals for peace activism. The desire for international cooperation was strong and many educational programs, lobbying efforts and forging of international friendships occurred. In Nova Scotia, women, through their church groups, especially within the newly formed United Church, participated in the national efforts towards encouragement of racial tolerance and reassessment of foreign mission agenda. As well, the Women's Institute of Nova Scotia records show that peace initiatives were being promoted within the national organization. There was a national convener for a League of Nations Committee and published in the March 1932 edition of the WINS newsletter *Home and Country* is an outline for peace programs put forward by the Manitoba Women's Institute and adopted by the Federal Women's Institute in Canada⁴⁵.

In spite of an almost universal desire for peace, women were not in agreement about the most effective ways to ensure peace. While the more traditional organizations of women were pinning their hopes on the League of Nations as a viable instrument for the settlement of international affairs, a

⁴⁴Strong-Boag, "Peace-Making Women" in *Women and Peace*, ed. R. R. Pierson, pp. 170-191.

⁴⁵WINS records, Truro.

group such as the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF) was far less optimistic. As the threat of Hitler loomed ever closer, even within the pacifist WILPF, opinions were divided. Absolute pacifism had gained some new supporters in the post-World War I period; however, in the final analysis, this position still remained too radical a stance for most women to take.

On the eve of the Second World War, it is difficult to discern a pacifist woman's voice in Nova Scotia. Always a minority position, pacifism may have had its followers, but unless the position was articulated in a public way, it remained invisible. In Socknat's account of pacifism, the Fellowship of Reconciliation, an organization which played a key role in promotion of pacifist principles during the war, does not appear to have an active group in Nova Scotia.⁴⁶ Again, the lack of presence of any of the traditional pacifist sects in the province ensured that individual pacifists remained isolated in their convictions.

Pacifism as a viable alternative has never been chosen by many. Rooted as it is in envisioning profound change in the political, moral and economic structure of society, it is not surprising that those in power who wish to maintain the *status quo* do their utmost to silence such voices of radicalism. In spite of pacifism's lack of public support, the profound impact of what the few do for the many cannot be underestimated. Even those who cannot fully embrace the extreme principles of pacifism have benefitted knowingly or unknowingly from the work of this minority. Pacifists have not succeeded in stopping wars, but they have managed to bring to the attention of the public issues with which ordinary people can identify. Pacifists have been in the

⁴⁶Socknat, *Witness Against War*, p.277.

forefront of struggles to protect and reinstate civil liberties, one of the first casualties in times of conflict. Without the tireless work of pacifists, many issues would never have found a public voice. Membership in such a group as the WILPF was never huge in Canada. However, in 1930, according to the editor of the WILPF magazine, *Pax International*, Canada ranked third in the number of paid subscriptions. Women may not have joined the organization, but they were interested in the ideas disseminated. As Strong-Boag said of the WILPF:

In the hands of its dedicated membership, WILPF had an impact out of all proportion to its size. Perhaps more than any other peace-minded group, it kept Canadians thinking.⁴⁷

Absolute pacifism in Canada has never attracted a mass following. Nevertheless, pacifists have provided a voice of conscience and often engaged in providing medical and relief efforts in war-torn countries. Because women were not required to serve in the military, their positions, if pacifist, have been less easily discerned. Their relief efforts have always been linked with patriotic support of war. To what degree some women disguised their own pacifist sentiments within the acceptable traditional relief efforts may never be fully known.

⁴⁷Strong-Boag "Peace-Making Women...", in *Women and Peace*, ed. Ruth Roach Pierson, p.185. According to one report in 1932, 480,000 Canadians signed a peace petition sponsored by the League of Nations Society and the WILPF, and placed fifth in the world in number of names per country. "When the petition was presented to Premier Bennett, it required eight stalwart members of the staff...to carry it to the Senate Chamber. This was the largest petition ever presented." *Chatelaine*, April 1932, "Women in the World".

Chapter 3

Patriotism and Propaganda in their Gendered Dimensions

In Canada the use of propaganda and its related cousins, censorship, advertising, and hate-mongering was significant during both wars. There is a considerable historiography on wartime propaganda, dealing with both the First and Second World Wars, particularly in Britain, the United States and Germany. However, apart from a number of theses and articles that look at the related topics of censorship and recruitment during this period,¹ Jeffrey Keshen's *Propaganda and Censorship During Canada's Great War* is the only text to focus on Canadian propaganda during World War I.² For World War II, the most notable Canadian title is *John Grierson and the National Film Board: The Politics of Wartime Propaganda 1939-1945* by Gary Evans.³ Keshen deals with one aspect of gendered propaganda in his attention to manliness as a theme in propaganda.⁴ The task of analyzing the gendered

¹For example, see Paul Maroney, "'The Great Adventure': The Context and Ideology of Recruiting in Ontario, 1914-17", *The Canadian Historical Review* 77, 1, March 1996. See also, Jeff Keshen's Ph.D. dissertation "The Great War at Home and Abroad: information management in Canada vs. life in Flanders' Field." (York University, 1992).

²Jeffrey Keshen, *Propaganda and Censorship During Canada's Great War* (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 1996). See p. 220 for a list of censorship-related material. For a sampling of titles on British and American propaganda, see Peter Buitenhuis, *The Great War of Words: British, American and Canadian Propaganda and Fiction, 1914-1933* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1987); (Jeffrey Keshen rightly states that Buitenhuis does not deal with Canadian propaganda; the Canadian connections are Max Aitken, who worked in Britain on information management and also Sir Gilbert Parker, an ex-patriate writer who mobilized British writers in the patriotic campaign); Nicholas John Cull, *Selling War: The British Propaganda Campaign against American "Neutrality" in World War II* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995); M.L. Sanders and Philip M. Taylor, *British Propaganda during the First World War 1914-1918* (London: MacMillan, 1982). Apart from Leila Rupp's *Mobilizing Women for War* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978) which studies both American and German propaganda, and Claudia Koonz's article "Mothers in the Fatherland: Women in Nazi Germany", in *Becoming Visible: Women in European History* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1977), there has been no attempt to look at the body of work on German propaganda for this thesis.

³Gary Evans, *John Grierson and the National Film Board: The Politics of Wartime Propaganda 1939-1945* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1984). William R. Young also addresses issues of wartime information management in an unpublished thesis and in his published articles "'A Highly Intelligent and Unselfish Approach': Public Information and the Canadian West, 1939-45", *Canadian Historical Review*, LXII, 4, 1981, and "Building Citizenship: English Canada and Propaganda during the Second War", *Journal of Canadian Studies*, Vol. 16, Nos. 3&4, Fall-Winter 1981. More titles concerning propaganda posters appear later in chapter.

⁴See Keshen, *Propaganda and Censorship...*, Chapter 5, pp. 127-149.

aspects of propaganda as they relate to women has largely fallen to feminist historians.⁵

The conventional literature on both world wars has largely attributed women's responses to wartime demands (whether it be to join the industrial workforce, the military or to become better homemakers and volunteers) as being motivated by patriotism. More critical studies have come to different conclusions, particularly when analyzing women's reasons for joining the paid workforce. For those women who carried on in the domestic sphere as volunteers who kept the 'home fires burning', more thorough inquiry and reevaluation is needed to ascertain whether all women knitted socks and made bandages from the same motivation. Behind the usual story of universal patriotic support for the war lies contradictory evidence to indicate a more complex set of motivations.

This chapter will explore the ways in which propaganda used images of women to evoke certain responses from the whole population but it will also look at how propaganda was selectively targeted at women for a number of purposes. Because propaganda and patriotism are interconnected, other aspects to consider are the ways women were encouraged to be agents of propaganda, as well as explore how 'Woman' was used symbolically in propaganda promoting patriotism. By eliciting the aid of women in the project of war, propagandists sometimes gave women the opportunity to have greater agency in the larger world. However, it was an agency which further supported the existing patriarchal order and inevitably caused a

⁵A notable exception is Dominic David Alessio who looks at the female-gendered dimensions of imperialist propaganda for a period that spans a broader time frame than the war in his article "Domesticating 'the Heart of the Wild': female personifications of the colonies, 1886-1940", *Women's History Review*, Vol. 6, No. 2, 1997. I would, however, take issue with some of his conclusions.

backlash. When the wars were over and their use as agents was no longer needed, women, at best, were expected to disappear back into the domestic sphere and resume more passive roles again. At worst, women were blamed for being too aggressive in their patriotism. They became easy targets for the resentment of returned and disillusioned soldiers who saw women, for whom they had fought to protect (one of the necessary illusions encouraged in the propaganda campaign), as the chief beneficiaries of war.

For the women who recognized such manipulation and resisted joining the patriotic bandwagon, there were exacting consequences for taking a public position of resistance to the prevailing order. Between the extremes of vocal patriotic women and vocal war resisters lay the vast majority of women who neither spoke out for nor against but did what they had to do to help themselves, their families, neighbours, and even strangers survive the crises of war. The notion that women's patriotism was direct and uncomplicated served the purposes of the propagandists and, subsequently, the memorialists of war, but hardly reflected reality.

The word 'patriotism', like the word 'propaganda', was not necessarily used in the same way by everyone. These words were laden with positive or negative meaning, depending on circumstances and political ideology. The standard understanding was that patriotism referred to the sentiment generally held to be indicative of loyalty to one's country coupled with a willingness to adhere to the ruling order, even, or especially, in times of war. Not all people defined patriotism in this way.

During the First World War, there were peace advocates who urged a different kind of patriotism. Canadian pacifists Ada Mary Brown Courtice and her husband, Andrew Cory Courtice, believed that to educate the public towards pacifism, "the negative forces of nationalism and militarism [had to

be replaced] with the positive virtues of patriotism and humanitarianism."⁶ Laura Hughes, a pacifist and labour activist, in writing to fellow pacifist, Violet McNaughton, with regard to reading material on international arms, secret diplomacy and war profiteering declared, "If you can get a group of readers studying these books you will be doing good patriotic work, for the truth is always patriotic."⁷ According to historian Barbara Roberts, McNaughton herself maintained that "women's participation in decisions about starting and stopping [the] war were just as patriotic as urging men off to fight, caring for returned soldiers and volunteering for the Red Cross."⁸

Patriotism also was defined in a particularized way in the socialist press. According to the writer of an editorial article in *The Canadian Forward*, entitled *The Double Meaning of Patriotism*: "Patriotism, to the ruling class, is the declaration to protect the property of robbers — and to the working class the taking of capitalist property for the use of the common people".⁹ Although the language of this particular article shows clearly that socialists were not above using their own propaganda, throughout the war, *The Canadian Forward* was probably one of the few voices of dissent left to address the more controversial issues of wartime and the erosion of civil liberties. Socialists saw capitalism as a root cause of war and did not support Canada's entry into an imperialist undertaking. Although some socialists were pacifists, not all were; pacifist socialists tended to insist that the key prerequisite for a warless world was socialism.¹⁰

⁶Quoted from Terry Crowley's paper on Ada Mary Brown Cortice in Thomas P. Socknat, *Witness Against War*, p. 35.

⁷Roberts, "Why Do Women Do Nothing To End the War?", p.6.

⁸*Ibid.*, p. 19

⁹*The Canadian Forward*, April 10, 1917.

¹⁰*Ibid.* This belief was embodied in a brief catch phrase "Pacifism without Socialism is like an automobile without gasoline." which appeared in the Jan. 13, 1917 edition. In spite of the lack

For the most part, patriotism was paired with nationalism and militarism in public discourse, a discourse created by political, military and corporate leadership. The social democrats were vocal in their disdain for this pairing, as witnessed in the slogans "Militarism will destroy the People" and "The People will destroy Militarism" that appeared on opposite corners of the masthead of the July 24th, 1917 edition of the *Canadian Forward*. Lewis G. Horning, a classics professor at Victoria College in Toronto who was a liberal pacifist¹¹ involved with the Canadian Peace and Arbitration Society, also felt that the 'old' patriotism was too closely allied to militarism and stated that "The New Patriotism calls for life and opportunity for life, not death and destruction and vandalism and horrors."¹²

Francis Beynon, in one of her *Grain Growers' Guide* columns, reported on a convention of the National Council of Women held in 1917, in which she decried the more vocal support for military training of school children. She gives credit to Mrs. (Ella M.) Murray from Halifax, who "suggested the possibility of future peace, and protested against the militaristic ideal and the subservience to authority which went with military training of young boys."¹³ Among men and women who did not remain absolute pacifists during the war were those who objected to further militarization of their children. The revived interest among women's groups in promoting

of full endorsement for pacifism, the *Canadian Forward* regularly printed articles and letters on the pacifist cause.

¹¹ Socknat, in *Witness Against War*, p. 7, defines "two distinct but complementary traditions that formed the basis of pacifism in Canada". "Separational pacifism" as practiced by groups such as Mennonites and Hutterites stresses absolute non-resistance and non-participation in the worldly state, whereas liberal pacifism or "integrational pacifism" is "associated first with the Quakers, later with Protestant social gospel and the progressive reform movement, and ultimately with social radicalism."

¹² *Ibid.*, pp. 38, 44, 47.

¹³ *Grain Growers' Guide*, June 20, 1917.

peace and disarmament in the post-Great War period indicates that militarism was not an essential ingredient in their patriotism.

For the most part, Canadian women probably saw themselves as patriotic (even if they were pacifists and their patriotism did not take a nationalist or militarist form). However, what of those women for whom patriotism might have meant little or nothing, women who may have been doubly or triply disadvantaged by poverty or discrimination based on ethnic origins? What did patriotism mean for poor, working-class women who could barely feed their children? Or for Finnish women who had lost their right of franchise by moving to Canada? Or possibly for African-Canadian women who cleaned the houses of the middle-class women who were busy Red Cross volunteers?

An illustration from Italian historian, Anna Bravo, offers a compelling record of wartime as experienced by a group rarely considered or documented. "Italian Peasant Women and the First World War"¹⁴ was based on an oral research project carried out by Bravo and a colleague within a community of elderly Piedmontese peasant women. The women worked very hard just to survive and provide for their families while their men were off to war. Their testimonies reveal that they tolerated, felt least threatened by, and even protected from authorities, deserters and draft-dodgers. These women felt no love for the war, and in their own way, by providing safe havens and sharing their meagre supplies, took an active, though secret role in defying the state's position. Deserters and draft-dodgers, as men who rejected 'marliness' (that is, a willingness to participate as warriors), became 'other' (more like the

¹⁴Anna Bravo, "Italian Peasant Women and the First World War", *War, Peace and Social Change in Twentieth-Century Europe*, a reader edited by Clive Emsley, Arthur Marwick and Wendy Simpson (Milton Keynes: Open University Press, 1989), pp. 102-115.

women themselves) and, thus, presented less of a threat to such women than their own husbands and sons.¹⁵

The circumstances of those Italian peasants were very different from those of Canadian women who were far removed from the battlefields. However, Bravo's account raises interesting questions about the assumed loyalties and patriotism of women. Women, particularly disenfranchised, poor women are rarely asked about what they think and feel, and their actions escape notice. For their own part, few women would wish to draw attention to their actions, particularly if there is danger of censure or repercussions.

In Canada, those individuals, men or women, who spoke out against the war, did so at their own peril, often losing jobs, friends and public standing. Some went to prison. Even those who were attempting to portray a realistic picture of the war were censored. Ian McKay refers to the negative reaction that one journalist received for a newspaper account written in early 1915 about the horrible conditions in the British training camps.¹⁶ A front-page editorial in the *Sault Express*, on 23 June 1916 entitled "No more Canadians For Overseas Service. This Young Dominion has Sacrificed Enough" resulted in the seizure of the paper's printing press and plant, and confiscation and destruction of all copies of the offending issue.¹⁷ When an editorial in *L'Évangéline* on 27 April 1916 printed the following words, "[W]e are formally opposed to any participation in foreign wars, being convinced that these overseas quarrels do not concern us in any way.", this

¹⁵This idea (arising in a discussion about this article) must be credited to Frances Early.

¹⁶*Halifax Chronicle*, 18 May 1915, referred to in Ian McKay's essay "The 1910s: The Stillborn Triumph of Progressive Reform", *The Atlantic Provinces in Confederation*, eds. Forbes and Muise (Toronto & Fredericton: University of Toronto Press & Acadiensis Press, 1993), p. 214.

¹⁷Barbara Wilson, *Ontario and the First World War* (Toronto: Champlain Society, 1977), pp. xlix, 36, 37.

inflammatory remark was quickly retracted in the next issue, with the statement that this opinion was not to be considered an expression of the newspaper's board of directors.¹⁸ Whether the retraction was due to pressure from external sources is unstated.

McKay says that at the beginning of the Great War, "Apart from a few eccentrics, almost everybody - workers, employers, Acadians, Blacks, Catholics, Protestants, Liberals, Conservatives, men, and women - supported the Empire in its struggle against the Germans. Certainly, in August 1914 there were no *important* dissenters"¹⁹ .[my italics]. McKay later states that "Progressive women joined with workers, ministers, and professors in this war of the imagination."²⁰ This was true in Nova Scotia; at a public meeting one year after the beginning of the war, Halifax woman's movement leaders such as Agnes Dennis, Edith Archibald, Dr. Eliza Ritchie and Mrs. F.H. Sexton joined with military and recruiting officers to urge women not to stand in the way of sons and husbands going to war.²¹ However, in an atmosphere which did not allow any questioning of the war, it is not surprising that any potential (and unimportant) dissenters remained silent. Both McKay's article and J.M. Bliss' article "The Methodist Church and World War I"²² reveal the extent to which the leaders within institutions and organizations articulated a position of patriotism for their constituencies and it became increasingly difficult for even the more able-voiced of their membership to express alternative viewpoints. According to Keshen, newspaper editors across the

¹⁸Philippe Doucet's essay "Politics and the Acadians", in *The Acadians of the Maritimes*, ed. by Jean Daigle (Moncton: Centre d' études acadiennes, 1982), p. 254.

¹⁹McKay, "The 1910s...", p. 203.

²⁰*Ibid.*, p.207.

²¹"What Women Can Do and Are Doing to Help in War", *The Halifax Herald*, August 13, 1915, p.1.

²²J.M. Bliss, "The Methodist Church and World War I, *Canadian Historical Review*, Vol 49, 1968, pp.213-233.

country were almost uniformly cooperative in promoting the official, and upbeat version of war activities.²³

McKay and Bliss refer to the reluctance of certain segments of the male population to enlist (e.g. farmers, fishermen, Methodists, New Brunswickers). Letters written to the "Dear Prim Rose" column in *The Family Herald and Weekly Star* attest to the challenges that faced farm families with regard to what was the more patriotic decision, staying and working on the farms or signing up for military service. The overtly patriotic editor of the column printed only the rare letter from those reluctant to part with sons, brothers and friends, and not without some editorial comment.²⁴ It took courage to speak one's mind, even to "Dear Prim Rose".

Patriotism was built on an adherence to gendered division of labour and responsibilities. It was sustained by a belief in the notion of manliness being defined by a man's willingness to fight. A woman, on the other hand, most appropriately expressed her patriotism by encouraging men to fight, and by giving up her sons to the cause.²⁵ The following passage from Barbara Wilson's *Ontario and the First World War* is worth quoting in order to give some sense of the conflicting strains of thought that recur even in the recording of wartime history. Again, certain words have been italicized to highlight the difficulties in interpreting the information given:

Although *most* women supported their country's war effort wholeheartedly, *some* hung back, either because of deep pacifist convictions or from fear of the fate which might befall their husbands and sons. *Many* refused to give their written consent to enlistment of their men, a condition required by the military

²³See Keshen's Introduction in *Propaganda and Censorship*.

²⁴*Family Herald and Weekly Star*, Aug. 25, 1915, April 26, 1916.

²⁵This idea was succinctly expressed and promoted in the famous British war poster "Women of Britain say 'Go'".

authorities before recruits could be accepted. As a result *many* men declared themselves to be single, or used false names on the attestation papers, thereby depriving their wives and families of the separation allowances and pay allotments to which they would otherwise have been entitled. *So many* women refused consent that as early as August 1914 one senior officer was prompted to remark, 'If Canada is to maintain her independence the Canadian soldier must do his duty and his wife should not restrain him from selfish motives.'²⁶

Wilson sees no contradiction in the opening and closing sentences of the paragraph, for she continues on in her chapter titled "Women" to speak primarily of women's patriotism. She mentions that even after the regulation requiring women's consent for enlistment was abolished in August 1915, that women still "were accused of wielding too strong an influence on their loved ones."²⁷ In contrast, she talks of those women who persisted in shaming and scolding men not in uniform. Both she and McKay refer to the practice of women engaging in the 'white feather' campaign²⁸ and this activity is often noted by historians as illustration of women's ultra-patriotism²⁹. Nicoletta F. Gullace, in an article "White Feathers and Wounded Men: Females Patriotism and the Memory of the Great War" suggests that the white feather campaign in Britain has received only passing attention from historians and that feminist scholars have tended to dismiss this practice because of "the shameful meaning such practice acquired after the war [rather] than... any absence of convincing sources"³⁰. The practice was initiated by British Admiral Charles Penrose Fitzgerald who, on August 30,

²⁶Wilson, *Ontario and the First World War*, pp. lxxxv-vi.

²⁷*Ibid.*, p.xci.

²⁸McKay, "The 1910s..."p. 208.

²⁹Keshen, *Propaganda and Censorship...*, p.42.

³⁰Nicoletta F. Gullace, "White Feathers and Wounded Men: Female Patriotism and the Memory of the Great War." *Journal of British Studies* 36 (April 1997), pp.178-206.

1914, "deputized thirty women in Folkstone to hand out white feathers to men not in uniform."³¹

In her research among the records of the BBC Great War Oral History Series housed at the Imperial War Museum, Gullace was able to uncover over 200 accounts of white-feather giving. She states that "the campaign originated within a system of voluntary recruiting that vociferously called on women to send their men to war."³² However, as the war carried on and conscription was enacted, the practice ceased to hold the same rationale. She maintains that in the minds of men, the memory of this practice held a bitter grip, for, as some feminist historians have noted, after the war, as the noncombatants and apparent beneficiaries of the war, women often became objects of particular hostility from returned soldiers. As these men claimed the exclusive authority "to interpret the war, its stories, and its evasive moral for themselves and their communities"³³, the white feather stories were used to declaim against those women who so brazenly sent men off to war while they remained safe at home. The purported reason for men going off to war in the first place was to protect women and children, so there is a curious irony in such resentment on the part of soldiers.

Whether white feathering actually occurred in Canada is unclear. Keshen and Wilson do not footnote their references and McKay's footnotes do not provide actual examples of women giving white feathers, so it may be that the practice simply became an easily-targeted *symbol* of female recruiting.³⁴ One point is clear; recognizing that women could be powerful

³¹*Ibid.*, p.178.

³²*Ibid.*, p. 182.

³³*Ibid.*, p.205

³⁴McKay, "The 1910s...", p. 208. McKay's footnotes refer to newspaper accounts using the term 'white feather' metaphorically. The *Family Herald and Weekly Star* ran a serial story in

tools of propaganda in the war effort, government, military and church actively enlisted women in the campaign to encourage or coerce men to join the services. A December 1915 recruiting leaflet for the 123rd Battalion addressed "To the Women of Canada"³⁵ (see Appendix 1) gives an indication of the difficulties the military were having in recruiting 'patriotic' young men as well as the lengths they were prepared to go in using women's influence to shame men into enlistment. Not only women but the public in general were invited to submit names of 'slackers' in a 'Give Us His Name' scheme publicized in newspapers in 1916.³⁶ How effective these tactics were is debatable; recruitment continued to be a big problem. Heavy casualties from the warfront did not encourage men to enlist and after the failure of further voluntary registration, conscription was finally enacted in May 1917.

It is difficult to measure accurately Canadian women's support for the war. The general assumption that women carried on their wartime work primarily out of patriotic zeal is too simplistic a perspective, for gathering all women under the same banner of patriotism ignores the differences of religion, ethnicity and class.

Mennonites, Quakers, Hutterites, Jehovah's Witnesses³⁷, and other religious sects that were strongly pacifist or resistant to government dictates³⁸ may not have made up a large percentage of the population, but they were a real presence in some parts of the country. Mennonites, with their pacifist

1915 entitled "The White Feather". In the newspapers scanned, I was unable to find any actual news stories of the practice; all accounts were referential.

³⁵Wilson, *Ontario, and the First World War*, pp.19-21.

³⁶*Ibid.*, Introduction, pp. l-li.

³⁷known as Russellites in Canada up until 1931.

³⁸Thomas Socknat, in his book *Witness Against War: Pacifism in Canada 1900-1945*, includes the Doukhobors in the pacifist tradition, yet also states that they were a variant group, perhaps more committed to civil disobedience in the face of conscription rather than pacifist from strictly moral principles, pp. 15-18.

and German roots, gave relief aid to both sides of the conflict.³⁹ This action demonstrates that, in some cases, relief work was not necessarily motivated so much by patriotism as by humanitarianism. Among the many sock-knitters and bandage-rollers in Canada, there were surely those who felt that providing relief was the only ethical position left to them once the war was declared.

For aboriginals and Canadians of African descent, there may have been mixed reasons for participating in the Great War. In a country that was so blatantly discriminatory towards them, it would seem that patriotic zeal for Britain's fight would be low on a list of motivations. Native men volunteered in high numbers⁴⁰, purportedly out of loyalty to the King; however, the fact that military service was the only way in which they could become eligible for the franchise might have been a significant factor.⁴¹ African Canadians had far more difficulty in trying to enlist, and ultimately had to settle for non-combatant roles in construction battalions⁴²; nevertheless, it would seem that such discriminated groups had less reason for patriotic fervor, but much more reason to hope that their participation would help prove their worth and thereby improve their status in the country. Women from Black and Native communities participated in Red Cross relief work and other wartime support activities.⁴³ Again, it would stand to reason that women were operating from a more complex set of

³⁹Based on interview with Jean Hammond, quilt researcher in England, who was told this by Mennonites in Ontario communities.

⁴⁰Wilson, *Ontario and the First World War*, pp. 169-170, and Summerby, Janice. *Native Soldiers Foreign Battlefield* (Ottawa: Veterans Affairs, 1993).

⁴¹Wilson, *Ontario*, p. cxiii.

⁴² See Ruck, Calvin *The Black Battalion 1916—1920 Canada's Best Kept Secret* (Halifax: Nimbus, 1987).

⁴³Canadian Red Cross Society - Nova Scotia Division Annual Reports, 1915-1918, and Wilson, pp. cxiii, 171.

motivations than strictly patriotic fervour. The same could be said for newer, non-British immigrant groups who also suffered from racist practices in the country. Leading up to, and during World War II, when Jewish people in Europe were suffering mass annihilation, Canada's role in assisting refugees was not stellar. Jewish women, within their own organizations and also in non-denominational societies were active in volunteer war work.⁴⁴ Their own experience of discrimination did not deter them from involvement; however, one wonders what their definition of patriotism might have been. Likely it had more to do with their hopes for a more tolerant Canada in the future. Another perspective on patriotism might be revealed if one was able to interview Italian women from communities such as Sydney, N.S., whose husbands were interned during the Second World War.

Claire Tylee points to the challenges faced by African Americans in the U.S. during the First World War.⁴⁵ The irony of American citizens who lacked civil rights in their own country going off to fight a war to save Europeans from tyranny was not lost on African-American communities. There were those who hoped that involvement in the war effort would improve their status at home and made the pragmatic (and necessary) decision to support the government. In a world where lynching was still common practice, taking any stand against the war was dangerous. While the American situation differed in important respects from the Canadian one, more research and critical analysis of African-Canadian history during the wartime periods would undoubtedly be worthwhile in expanding the picture.

⁴⁴Based on discussions with Sara Yablon, local historian in the Halifax Jewish community; Jewish Historical Society papers, PANS; Nina Cohen papers, NAC, MG 30 C152.

⁴⁵Claire Tylee, "Womanist Propaganda, African-American Great War Experience, and Cultural Strategies of the Harlem Renaissance: Plays by Alice Dunbar-Nelson and Mary P. Burrill". *Women's Studies International Forum* Vol. 20, No. 1, 1997, pp. 153-163.

For, as Tylee states, " in 1918 neither patriotism nor public objection as conventionally conceived by white Americans was an option available to Black Americans."⁴⁶

When the issue of class is entered into the analysis, motivation for women's participation in various facets of wartime work cannot be attributed solely to patriotism. Working-class women were already in the labour market; wartime production needs helped some women to move out of the lowest paid jobs into better paying positions. The war itself put many families under financial stress, as men were pulled out of the labour pool to serve in the military. Cynthia Enloe states that, traditionally, an ordinary soldier's pay was meager and not suitable to support a family.⁴⁷ Women active in the socialist movement in Canada argued that working-class families suffered the most from war, for their men made up the largest majority of the military (particularly in lower ranks). Furthermore, even the supplementary aid given by the Canadian Patriotic Fund to wives and widows of those in the services was vastly inadequate and the very process of obtaining financial assistance was often demeaning for recipients.⁴⁸ Those women forced by poverty to go out and find work would hardly have considered patriotism as a prime motivator.⁴⁹ One correspondent amazed "Prim Rose" when she wrote,

⁴⁶*Ibid.*, p. 154.

⁴⁷Cynthia Enloe, *Does Khaki Become You? The Militarisation of Women's Lives* (Boston: South End Press, 1983).

⁴⁸See Chapter 6 of Linda Kealey's *Enlisting Women for the Cause: Women, Labour, and the Left in Canada, 1890-1920* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1998) for discussion of socialist women in wartime, pp. 192-218.

⁴⁹An entirely different twist on women's supposed motivation for entering WWI munitions work is presented in Claire Culleton's article "Gender-charged Munitions: the Language of World War I Munitions Reports". *Women's Studies Int. Forum*, Vol 11, No. 2, 1988, pp. 109-116. Culleton looks at reports of the period which suggested that women were drawn to munitions work to appease their maternal instincts. She cites popular writer, Sir Caine Hall, who in writing *Our Girls: Their Work for the War* (1917) made this remarkable connection, suggesting that "the lure of money [was] not the sole or yet the chief magnet that [drew] women to work

"Patriotism is all right in its place, but it blinds the eyes of the majority of people so that they are not able to see anything else in a right minded manner."⁵⁰ Obviously not everyone was gung-ho.

Disturbing the paradigm

During both the First and Second World War, there was a dramatic redistribution of 'manpower' whereby able-bodied men were needed for military service, leaving a labour shortage in the paid workforce that had to be filled by women. This crisis created a challenge to the predominating middle-class ideology that defined woman's place as in the home. On the eve of The Great War, in reality, many working-class women were out earning a living to support families and middle-class feminists were agitating for larger participation in the public sphere; however, the operating logic of the times dictated that women were at their best in the home and that they were incapable of handling the physical or intellectual work of men.

Wartime upended this neat and tidy paradigm. As the war progressed, women's labour became essential, so the task of the propagandists was to convince women to enter the paid workforce in unprecedented numbers, while at the same time, maintain the sex role ideology. While there were contradictory messages, by and large, the propagandists were able to promote the temporary nature of the crisis, reassuring the public that this was only a war measures act and that life would go back to normal after peace was declared.

for the war...." A number of cartoons and postcards from the period use blatant imagery to suggest women's sexual attraction to the phallus-shaped ammunition and cannons.

⁵⁰*Family Herald & Weekly Star*, April 26, 1916.

Propaganda played a large part in creating and sustaining patriotism and the interplay between propaganda and women's real and imagined patriotism is significant. Such a connection was sometime blatant (as in the recruitment pamphlet, Appendix 1) but generally more effective propaganda was subtler and appealed more to emotions and closely-held beliefs, rather than reason or obvious 'patriotic tub-thumping'⁵¹.

Michele Shover in her article "Roles and Images of Women in World War I Propaganda"⁵² focuses on how images of women on posters were used to further the war cause. She defines two categories of appropriate war roles assigned to women; one, service to the war effort in several areas which required direct participation by women, and, two, women as essential symbolic figures.⁵³ Some posters speak directly to women and other posters use the image of 'Woman' to evoke emotions and patriotic response. Woman might be seen as a victim, or as representation of all that is sacred about home and hearth and worth fighting for. As a symbol, 'Woman' represented ideals of Justice, Humanity, Liberty, and Nationhood. During World War I, there was limited representation of woman as evil or the enemy (there are some instances; the most prevalent concerning woman as a carrier of venereal disease, but their display would have been restricted to all-male domains such as soldiers' barracks). Shover comments that 'positive images of women were infinitely more useful to facilitate the war effort.'

⁵¹John Grierson and his staff at NFB in the 1940s shared Goebbel's belief that "propaganda [was] never effective unless it release[d] and reinforce[d] already-existing attitudes." according to William R. Young, *Canadian Historical Review*, Vol 62, no. 4, 1981.

⁵²Michele Shover, "Roles and Images of Women in World War I Propaganda" *Politics and Society*, Vol 5, 1975, pp. 469-486.

⁵³*Ibid.*, p. 473.

In Marc Choko's book of *Canadian War Posters, 1914-1918, 1939-1945*,⁵⁴ of the twelve posters from W.W.I using images of women; five use the image of the larger-than-life symbolic woman (for example, see Fig. 1); two images represent woman as victim with one also including the symbolic woman, *Humanité* (Fig. 2); two posters appeal to women's sense of practicality and self-sacrifice, admonishing them to 'waste not want not' and urging women 'to eat fish and save the meat for soldiers and allies'. Some posters promoting Victory bonds appeal to both men and women, urging them not to hoard or be extravagant. The last poster that portrays a woman is directed at men who could not serve in active service (Fig. 3). This image appeals to male gallantry; the woman in the poster symbolizes women's (and children's) perceived need for male protection and is yet another version of female as helpless victim.

During the First World War, posters were perhaps the most accessible visual propaganda, where a strong image accompanied by a few words had to be capable of eliciting an immediate response. Shover mentions that the Great War has also been called 'the poster war'⁵⁵ and Choko says that when the war broke out, Canada's main means of communication up to that point had been the newspaper; posters had been used for commercial advertising.⁵⁶ Europe had a longer and stronger tradition of poster-making for more varied purposes, and undoubtedly, Canadian efforts were modeled strongly on styles and techniques from Europe.

At the same time, another newer visual medium, film, was coming into its own and Canada was in the vanguard for seeing its potential as a tool of propaganda. According to Gary Evans, as early as 1900, Canada was

⁵⁴Marc Choko, *Canadian War Posters, 1914-1918, 1939-1945* (Ottawa: Méridien Canada Communication Group, 1994).

⁵⁵Shover, "Roles and Images..." p. 469.

⁵⁶Choko, *Canadian War Posters*, p. 15.

Erratum — Paragraph linking p. 77 and p. 84 should read:

At the same time, another newer visual medium, film, was coming into its own and Canada was in the vanguard for seeing its potential as a tool of propaganda. According to Gary Evans, as early as 1900, Canada was producing promotional films to encourage homesteading and settlement of the West.⁵⁷ During the war, Canada and Britain began producing film propaganda, initially in response to the work coming out of Austro-Hungarian and German film propagandists. War coverage (censored versions) gave people at home an image of what was supposedly happening at the front.

⁵⁷Gary Evans, *John Grierson and the National Film Board*, pp. 16-18.

Fig. 1

From *Canadian War Posters: 1914-1918, 1939-1935*
reproduced with permission
from author, Marc H. Choko

Colour Figure XXIV, p. 135

J.E.H. MacDonald, 1914
Lithograph
Rolph and Clark, Toronto
(Robert Stacey Coll.)

Fig. 2

From *Canadian War Posters: 1914-1918, 1939-1935*
reproduced with permission
from author, Marc H. Choko

Colour Figure VII, p. 101

Anonymous, c1915
Lithograph 70 x 106
The Mortimer Co. Ltd., Ottawa, Montreal
(N.A.C. C-95378)

Fig. 3

From *Canadian War Posters: 1914-1918, 1939-1935*
reproduced with permission
from author, Marc H. Choko

B&W illustration 36, p. 48

Anonymous, 1915-18
Lithograph 69 x 105
(McGill NMC 7310615)

versions) gave people at home an image of what was supposedly happening at the front. The two pieces of film propaganda from the Great War era that Evans describes in detail both happen to use women as victims in order to vilify the enemy and to promote a message. 'Film tags' accompanied the viewing of regular films, and one example for Canadian audiences was a pitch for Victory Bonds. Lillian Gish plays the beautiful Canadian nurse who dies trying to protect her soldier patient from further harm. In the other film, two German soldiers strike down a French woman and her baby, only to be discovered in post-war England by a perceptive woman who notices a 'Made in Germany' trademark on some wares they are trying to sell. The Germans are reported and thrown out of the country, the message being that Britons were to be discouraged from purchasing German products, even at war's end.⁵⁸

Film tags and newsreels served as propaganda, but entertainment films also served up strongly patriotic messages. By the time of the Second World War, this trend was even more marked as film reached a high point in production and in viewer population.

Use of women as agents of persuasion and sacrifice and as symbols of innocence and decency were the touchstones of World War I propaganda. Perhaps because war, with its horrors, was quite the reverse, people needed to believe that innocence and decency (symbolized by women and children) still existed in *their* world. Evil could be more easily relegated to the world of the enemy.

Looking back from a late twentieth-century perspective, the propaganda of the First World War seems remarkably simplistic and

⁵⁸*Ibid.*, pp.22-23.

romantic. Barring a few perceptive feminists, the irony of using poster images of larger-than-life, mythological 'Woman as Symbol' figures when real women were not entitled to vote, undoubtedly, was lost on most citizens. The heroic ideal still had currency. If Canadians were, by and large, willing to enter into the First World War because they regarded it as their 'natural' duty to follow Britain's lead, by the time that the Second World War began, Canadians had a less romantic view. The threat of world domination by Hitler and fascism dragged many war-weary into the fray again. The propagandists may have started with the model of the Great War as their guide, but soon discovered that different approaches would have to be taken to gain and maintain support for this new war.

With advanced technology and consumerism, World War II saw even greater opportunities for the dissemination of propaganda through more widespread media. Radio and magazines joined newspapers, posters and film as widely-used vehicles of propaganda. The immediacy and intimacy of radio with its potential to reach into homes allowed exposure of ideas to both literate and illiterate. Magazine formats had changed quite significantly in the decades following The Great War and were targeted to a wider range of audiences. American historian, Maureen Honey in her work *Creating Rosie the Riveter: Class, Gender, and Propaganda during World War II* studied wartime fiction directed at women, analyzing the themes and messages as they appeared in *Saturday Evening Post* and *True Story*, the most popular of their respective genres, the one catering to a middle-class audience and one to working-class. Leila Rupp, in her book *Mobilizing Women for War: German and American Propaganda, 1939-1945*⁵⁹ focuses on popular or public images

⁵⁹Maureen Honey, *Creating Rosie the Riveter: Class, Gender, and Propaganda during World War II* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1984), Leila J. Rupp, *Mobilizing Women*

of women and the propaganda that was directed at women, specifically concerned with mobilizing women for entering industry. Joyce Baker's *Images of Women in Film, 1941-1945*⁶⁰ looks at Hollywood's participation in using women and images of women for propaganda purposes through feature-length films. These books each address different aspects of propaganda and its relationship to female-gendered imagery or audience. There are numerous other books that, though not specifically analyzing propaganda or gendered aspects, nevertheless provide many examples, particularly visual, to study, with such a focus in mind.⁶¹

Although Canadians at war shared much in common with Britons on one side and Americans on the other, factors of distance from the battlefield and timing of entry into the war created differences in how and when people were mobilized for wartime. Examining Canadian studies and sources provides a more relevant picture of how propaganda operated in this country. This section of the chapter will look at particular studies that address wartime imagery of women, followed by an investigation of propaganda directed at women through Canadian magazines of the period, with particular emphasis on *Chatelaine*.

Teresa Nash provides a detailed look at how the NFB, one of Canada's most powerful government-sponsored tools for the production of propaganda, addressed the challenge of mobilizing women, while at the same

for War: *German and American Propaganda, 1939-1945* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1978).

⁶⁰Joyce Baker, *Images of Women in Film, 1941-1945* (Ann Arbor, MI: UMI Research Press, 1978).

⁶¹See bibliography for titles of war poster collections by Rhodes; Paret, Lewis and Paret; Cantwell; and Rickards. As well, books by Lang; Yass; Minns; and Roeder are strongly visual, including posters, ads and other forms of propaganda. These are British and American publications; for sources of Canadian propaganda images, see Choko; Bruce; Lennon and Charendoff; and Franklin. See also article by Bonita Bray.

time, maintaining traditional gender ideology. Susan Bland explores propaganda through advertising, looking at the range of messages directed at women by business interests.⁶² The Canadian government also placed ads in magazines, and a look at a broader range of contemporary magazine copy than is offered in the Bland article will reveal how closely government and business collaborated in propaganda that both promoted patriotism and brand product identification.

Leila Rupp makes the distinction between the ideas held on proper sex roles and the public images of such. Ideas change slowly, whereas public images can be transformed quite suddenly to fit the needs of the economy.⁶³ While neither the held beliefs nor the public images necessarily reflect the reality of men or women, public images are not concerned with portraying the diversity of real people who have such varied life experiences based upon more than gender differences. Class, race, religion, age and other factors are obliterated in the public image. During wartime, what women shared across all these other differences was a common public image that did not reflect even themselves unless they were white and middle-class (or 'Aryan', in the case of German imagery).⁶⁴

Rupp's observation on the monochromatic American and German images could as readily apply to Canadian (or British) examples. In fact, throughout all of the material studied, only two images (other than the derogatory, racist material portraying the enemy) stand out as illustrations of

⁶²Teresa M. Nash, "Images of women in the National Film Board of Canada Films during World War II and the post-war years." (PhD. dissertation, McGill University, 1982), M. Susan Bland, "Henrietta the Homemaker, and 'Rosie the Riveter': Images of Women in Advertising in *Maclean's Magazine* 1939-50", *Atlantis*, Vol 8, No. 2, Spring 1983, pp. 61-86.

⁶³Rupp, *Mobilizing Women for War*, p. 4.

⁶⁴*Ibid.*, p.5.

Fig. 4

From *Canadian War Posters: 1914-1918, 1939-1935*
reproduced with permission
from author, Marc H. Choko

Colour Figure XXI, p. 129

Anonymous, 1916
Lithograph 69 x 101
Howell Lith. Ltd., Hamilton
(N.A.C. C-9870)

Fig. 5

From *Canadian War Posters: 1914-1918, 1939-1935*
reproduced with permission
from author, Marc H. Choko

B&W illustration 89, p. 193

John Adams, 1941-45
Lithograph 47 x 62
(McGill NMC- 722780)

non-white allies; in both cases the images are highly stereotypical (See Figs. 4 and 5).

So how did women read these images that were not necessarily reflections of themselves? The literature reveals more about the strategies of propagandists (who worked for government) than how much women were actually swayed by their output. As several historians have pointed out, financial necessity and/or economic and social freedom, rather than patriotism were the operating motives for many women who went out into the labour force.⁶⁵ One American woman writing in a letter to the head of the Correspondence Panels Section of the Office of War Information reports:

The financial incentive has been the strongest influence among most economic groups but especially among those families who were on relief for many years. Patriotic motivation is sometimes present but sometimes it really is a front for the financial one. A few women work to keep their minds from worrying about sons or husbands in the service...

Many women thoroughly enjoy working & getting away from the home. They seem to get much more satisfaction out of it than out of housework or bringing up children. Those who quit have done so because of lack of good care for their children, or of inability to do the housework & the job.⁶⁶

The results of a questionnaire on married female applicants over thirty-five years of age, run by the Women's Division of the Toronto Employment and Selective Service Office in 1943, reveal that only 9 per cent

⁶⁵Rupp, *Mobilizing Women*, pp. 167-168, See also Paddy Quick's article "Rosie the Riveter: Myths and Realities", *Radical America*, Vol. 9, 1975, pp. 115-131. In a *Journal of Economic History* article by Mary M. Schweitzer ("World War II and Female Labor Force Participation Rates" Vol. 40, Mar. 1980, pp. 89-95), patriotism is not even mentioned as a factor. Schweitzer uses "household production theory to explore the behavior of different segments of the female labor force as they responded to the radical changes in demand brought by World War II." (p.89).

⁶⁶Letter from Mrs. Norma Yerger Queen to Clyde Hart, 1944, *Women of America A History*, eds. Carol Ruth Berkin and Mary Beth Norton, (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1979), p. 358.

of the women said they were motivated by patriotic motives. Fifty-nine per cent wanted 'to supplement family income', and 32 per cent stated 'personal needs'.⁶⁷ Another report from Québec that cites 'economic necessity - no other source of revenue' as a motivating factor for 31.4 per cent from a pool of 700 women questioned.⁶⁸

One report more favourable to the notion of women's patriotic response was written by Nova Scotia's Dr. F. H. Sexton, Director of Technical Education, to the National Selective Service. Speaking of the women munitions workers in Nova Scotia, he said, "Their general attitude showed that they felt their effort was directly connected with war activity and based on a keen feeling of patriotism."⁶⁹ One might question how sensitive Sexton would have been to women's real motivations. Both he and his wife (one of the leading wartime volunteer organizers during the Great War) were vocal patriots. As well, in reading other reports written by Sexton in the *Journal of Education*, one can perceive a man who was used to making broad assumptions based on his privileged position as a white, middle-class, educated male.

Perhaps a more realistic picture is offered from Aida McAnn, the Public Relations Officer with the Unemployment Commission in Moncton during the Second World War who wrote:

It must always be borne in mind that a large percentage of our women workers are not just emergency workers helping out as a patriotic duty. Many of the women now working in war plants were working before the war and from necessity. Many more will have to work after the war because (1) there are not enough men to allow a husband and home for every woman. (2)

⁶⁷Pierson, *They're Still Women After All: The Second World War and Canadian Womanhood* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1986), p. 47.

⁶⁸*Ibid.*, pp.47-48.

⁶⁹*Ibid.*, p. 48.

many women whose husbands have been killed, will have to become breadwinners for the family. And (3) as a result of this war, many women will have to help support either partially or totally disabled dependents.

Even while the war is still being fought, many workers are being laid off in the Maritime Provinces and elsewhere. Already large numbers of women who found war work in other Provinces are coming home jobless. If they are between the ages of 18 and 45, and if they have no restricting home ties, women now being laid off can join the Armed Forces. 'Joining-up' enables a woman to render patriotic service and at the same time offers an opportunity to learn a new skill, trade or profession. Generous provision is being made for both ex-service men and ex-service women to continue their education and train themselves for jobs at the close of the war.⁷⁰

McAnn's observations highlight several interesting points. Her view was that necessity, rather than patriotism moved women to paid labour. Furthermore, she speaks to the post-war era as a time when women were going to continue to have to work because of the casualties among men. Finally, she suggests that women, in joining the services, were making pragmatic choices; extending their paid employment after other work opportunities were declining, as well as thinking ahead to their post-war future by furthering their opportunities for education and training.

McAnn states that in a survey among Maritime employers in such industries as aircraft, shipyards, steel mills, fruit and vegetable dehydrating, textiles, veneer work, ammunitions case manufacture, and paper products, that "approximately 70 per cent of the women interviewed [by the employers] stated that they wanted to remain in industry when the war was over"⁷¹.

⁷⁰ Aida McAnn, "Maritime Women at Work in War and Peace", *Public Affairs*, Vol. 7, No. 2, Winter 1944, p. 121.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, p. 120. Some of McAnn's remarks must have been considered controversial for in the editor's note introducing the writer of the article, it states: "The views expressed in this article are those of the author." It is unclear whether the editor is distancing himself and the journal from McAnn's views, or whether this is to distinguish McAnn's remarks from the opinions of her employer, the Unemployment Insurance Commission.

In all likelihood, many women would have entered (and did enter) the workplace without the propagandists' urgings, although, without the propaganda, it might have been more difficult to get women to go back home after the war ended.⁷² Rupp makes the comment that the relationship between propaganda and mobilization is not as simple as the results of the increased female entry into the World War II workplace might suggest. She also posits that propaganda sometimes served to make more acceptable changes that were already happening.⁷³ By creating images of women *temporarily* sacrificing their homemaking life for the war effort, the propaganda helped convince men to accept the evil necessity of women entering the labour market.

Canadian propaganda producers

Nash, in her study of the NFB, took a close look at House of Commons debates during the war in order to gauge policy and propaganda that directly related to women. At the beginning of the war, there was only one woman among 258 Members of Parliament. Considering how little representation women had, it is not surprising to discover that women were rarely referred to at all in House of Common debates. Nash charted the number of references to women in the debates over the ten-year period 1939-1949 and the results of her study show that in 1939 there were fewer than five references to women, with the number climbing over the next few years to peak in 1942 and 1943 with just under forty references in each year; in 1945, it again dropped down

⁷²Certainly not all women went happily and quietly home after the war. Maureen Honey in *Creating Rosie the Riveter* cites American government surveys done in 1944 which chart the resistance of women to give up their wartime jobs in industry, pp. 11, 224. Pierson also discusses the mixed reactions of Canadian women to the post-war drive to send women home, pp. 215-219.

⁷³Rupp, *Mobilizing Women*, p. 167.

to five instances. Thematically, she found the subject matter broke down into four major areas concerning women's participation in the war effort: patriotism, sexual division of labour, femininity, and primacy of the home. Nash's thesis analyzes how these areas of concern were debated in the House of Commons and also shows how these themes took shape in the propaganda produced by the NFB during the war years.

Women were both praised and sentimentalized for their patriotism in the House of Commons debates and that this promoting of devotion to duty served to neutralize any thoughts that women might be motivated by economic reasons.⁷⁴ Nash quotes Maureen Honey who noted that "By casting war work into patriotic molds, the potentially threatening image of women invading male territory was presented as a normal response to an emergency."⁷⁵ The emphasis on patriotism served to present and affirm what was considered the proper norm to which women should aspire, making the link between duty to one's home and duty to one's country. Finally, promotion of the patriotic ideal in women confirmed the notion that "while women may have a *duty* to work when it is required of them in times of national emergency, the *right* to work is still the sole prerogative of men."⁷⁶

Wartime conditions undoubtedly threatened the normal sexual divisions of labour. Melissa Dabakis, in studying Norman Rockwell's illustration of 'Rosie the Riveter' on the cover of *Saturday Evening Post* on 29 May 1943 observes that there were multiple and contradictory messages

⁷⁴Nash, "Images of Women", pp. 86, 88-89.

⁷⁵*Ibid.*, p. 89, Nash is quoting from Honey's article "The 'Womanpower' Campaign: Advertising and Recruitment Propaganda During World War II", *Frontiers*, Vol. 6, no. 1, 1981, p. 52.

⁷⁶Nash, "Images of Women", pp.90-91.

embodied in the image.⁷⁷ On one hand, the image is commanding and affirming of the strength of the worker ('Rosie' has large, muscled arms), but on the other, Dabakis notes that "embedded in this image are representational strategies that contain and undermine women's power as workers."⁷⁸

To some extent, Rockwell's image of 'Rosie' is more conflicted than other more conventional images of women produced during the war. The muscular body implied working-class and masculine, yet *Saturday Evening Post* was addressed to a middle-class readership and the object of the image was to lure middle-class and female readers into the labour force. For the most part, femininity in the face of changing work roles was more aggressively pushed, with advertisers and propagandists assuring their female audience that they need not fear a loss of femininity. Even in overalls, a woman could look glamorous, if she continued to use the right soap, makeup, or deodorant.

As for Nash's reference to the Canadian legislators' concerns about women--patriotism, sexual division of labour, femininity and the primacy of the home--it could be said that the latter three areas were all used in the service of patriotism, for it was understood that if women truly loved their country, they would remember their proper roles and place. For as Dabakis remarks: "The common slogan 'The woman behind the man behind the gun' adequately expressed a wartime hierarchy that remained prominently in view even as some women crossed traditional gender boundaries at work."⁷⁹

Women need not abandon femininity; in fact, it was essential and patriotic to

⁷⁷Melissa Dabakis, "Gendered Labor: Norman Rockwell's *Rosie the Riveter* and the discourses of wartime womanhood", pp.182-204, *Gender and American History Since 1890*, edited by Barbara Melosh (London: Routledge, 1993).

⁷⁸*Ibid.*, p. 185.

⁷⁹*Ibid.*, p. 187.

maintain it, for men's spirits were lifted by seeing 'their' women still being feminine and making themselves attractive for men. Those who remained in the home were doing patriotic duty, maintaining the safe haven to which men would return after the fight. "A man's home is his castle" aptly described the appropriate norm. After fighting in the wars, the man (in shining or tarnished armour) should be able to expect that he could come home to his domain, where his woman had faithfully kept "the home fires burning".

The above slogans of war were used so often that they became considered the real thing. Propaganda could be transmitted instantly by simply voicing a recognizable saying that had been elevated to truism by constant usage. The National Film Board mined this territory, and over the course of the war years produced ten films that directly focused on women and used titles that were closely allied to common slogans.

The NFB is an interesting study, both for what propaganda it produced and as a study of *who* produced the propaganda for *whom*. While there were a few women who worked for NFB, Nash states that "those who exercised the overall control in choosing, romanticizing and dramatizing 'the issues of life' ...were men."⁸⁰ Of the ten films discussed, four out of the six wartime films and all of the post-war films were made by men.⁸¹ One of the questions raised in the study is whether the aforementioned four dominating interpretive strategies were as prevalent in the films made by women. The analysis showed that the women "did not have the same need to reinforce the patriarchal ideology and that their two films do not, in fact, make significant use of the four sets of ideological values...."⁸²The focus in these two films was

⁸⁰Nash, "Images of Women", p. 272.

⁸¹*Ibid.* p. 276. Nash includes post-war films in her study, for these films were part of the program to reaffirm traditional gendered roles after the ceasefire.

⁸²*Ibid.*, p. 278.

more concerned with the challenges presented by the wartime situation and how women were approaching them. (*Before They Are Six* was a study of working women and their needs for proper daycare, and *Women are Warriors* looked at wartime work being carried out by women in Canada, Britain and the USSR. *Women are Warriors* was, incidentally, not the title chosen by director, Jane March. Her working title was *Women at Work*.)

The four films concerning women made by men during the war years were all recruitment films. The first, *Home Front*, made in 1941, relates the work of women (both inside and outside of the home) to patriotism. The three other films, *The Proudest Girl in the World* (1942), *Wings On Her Shoulders* (1943), and *Proudly She Marches* (1943) were all in aid of recruiting women to various branches of the forces. According to Nash, these films, while encouraging women to enlist, underscored that it was 'for the duration', not for permanent employment. The film *Sixteen to Twenty-Six*, produced at the end of the war, made it clear that a job was only something a woman held until she married.⁸³ In the next group of post-war films, the 'march' back to the kitchen and motherhood was in earnest.

Nash gives a clear and cutting analysis of how images and words are juxtaposed to create contradictory messages. Overall, the main theme that filters through the films is that women's part in the war effort is secondary to the participation of men – again the notion of the 'woman behind the man behind the gun'.

Other significant disseminators of propaganda

⁸³*Ibid.*, p. 287.

After film, possibly the most powerful and flexible media for the offering of visual propaganda were the poster and magazine. Bonita Bray, in an article on propaganda posters during the Second World War suggests that posters provided the government with a relatively inexpensive, easily produced and distributed form of propaganda that "communicated complex, highly emotional messages 'in the blink of an eye'" at a time when on average "only 10% of the workers read a daily paper".⁸⁴ Over the course of the war, the Wartime Information Board produced approximately 700 propaganda posters, ranging in size from billboards to matchbox covers; they could be accommodated almost anywhere.⁸⁵ Bray outlines the changing thrust of messages as the war progressed. The earliest posters relied heavily on appeal to notions of the heroic, romantic, and sports-like nature of the great adventure. As the war proceeded, the chivalric myth lost its power. Fear-mongering became more prevalent; posters appealed to a patriotism "cast in terms of protecting defenseless women and children" from the threat of fascism.⁸⁶ In the latter stages of the war, the posters "abandoned sentimental appeals to patriotism", and began to emphasize 'self-interest'; the goal was to encourage thinking to the future post-war period of peace and prosperity. Instead of buying war bonds out of patriotic duty, it became an investment in the future. Bray says, "patriotism began to shade into consumerism".⁸⁷ This idea finds further corroboration when one looks at magazines over the course of the wartime period.

⁸⁴Bonita Bray, "From Flag-Waving to Pragmatism: Images of Patriotism, Heroes and War in Canadian World War II Propaganda Posters", *Material History Review* 42 (Fall 1995), pp.75-86.

⁸⁵*Ibid.* p 77.

⁸⁶*Ibid.* p. 79.

⁸⁷*Ibid.* p.83.

Newspapers were able to offer a steady stream of information and imagery to help shape people's opinions and impressions of the world but magazines had a wider scope, in that propaganda could be served up in more diverse and insidious forms. Feature articles, fiction, poetry, and advertising could all be used in the service of propaganda and they were. In studying several national magazines (*Canadian Geographical Journal*, *Maclean's*, *Saturday Night*, *Canadian Forum* and *Chatelaine*), one can trace the different or similar ways in which the war story was handled and how it changed over the course of the war years. Of the above magazines, only *Chatelaine* was exclusively aimed at a female readership. *Canadian Forum* stood out from the other magazines in several significant ways. More leftist and intellectual in its content, it was the least commercial of the journals, containing only ads for book publishers, up until June 1942, when the first National War Finance Committee ad for War Saving Stamps appeared. Furthermore, up until that time, a regular column entitled "Civil Liberties" reported incidents of civil liberties violation under the administration of the Defense of Canada Regulations. *Canadian Forum* published poetry of leading and upcoming writers in the country and when one compares its war poetry with that of other magazines, there is considerable difference in attitude. Poet Earle Birney wrote a wonderfully irreverent article for the February 1940 issue of *Canadian Forum* which critiques the government in its civil liberties policies and wonders when poets will be next victims of censure. He cites examples of poetry that questioned war, at the same time as calling attention to those poets who were actively serving the romantic, patriotic cause through their verse.⁸⁸ *Canadian Forum*, while not necessarily opposed to the country's

⁸⁸Earle Birney, "To Arms With Canadian Poetry", *Canadian Forum*, Jan. 1940, pp. 322-23.

position in the war, provided the most critical thinking of all the magazines surveyed.

Susan Bland's article on images of women in advertising during the war and early post-war period examines whether advertising reflected the changes that women were experiencing in the 1940s.⁸⁹ Using quantitative and content analysis, she classified the ways women were depicted by advertisers into four distinct roles: housewife, working woman, single woman and 'any woman'. The housewife role could be broken down into subcategories of homemaker, wife and mother. The working woman reflected three types: war worker, clerical worker, and career woman. The single woman category focused on 'catching a man' and the 'any woman' included those ads directed at all women, regardless of age, role or marital status.⁹⁰ One of her conclusions was that although there were shifts in the roles portrayed by women in the ads over the war years, the traditional themes of the pre-war period remained the same. Advertisers exploited the theme of patriotism, so that no matter what type of woman they were attempting to reach, the tasks of the women were set within the framework of patriotic duty. It was the homemaker's duty to use cleaning products that would free up her time for more volunteer war work. It was the working woman's duty to use the proper products to ensure her femininity, even when she was doing a 'man's' job. Even properly feeding one's family was patriotic.

Bland's study, with its quantitative proof reveals a pattern consistent with other forms of propaganda directed at women (by far the most ubiquitous ads throughout the period were directed at the

⁸⁹Susan Bland, "Henrietta the Homemaker and 'Rosie the Riveter': Images of Women in Advertising in *Maclean's Magazine*, 1939-1950, *Atlantis*, Vol 8, No. 2 Spring 1983, pp. 61-86.

⁹⁰*Ibid.*, p. 65.

housewife/homemaker. The fewest ads were directed at the working woman (and only for the limited period of 1942-44, at the height of the war-work recruitment). Bland chose *Maclean's* for her analysis, in part, because it was a general news magazine rather than strictly devoted to women.⁹¹ While it does not appear that she set out with an agenda to find patriotic themes in the material surveyed, Bland notes its emerging presence in the advertisements from 1941 onwards. She explains this by two factors: first, the American entry into the war in December 1941 (much of the advertising had American origins), and second: in 1942 the allied war effort gained momentum and women's paid labour became a source of increasing interest.⁹²

Building on Bland's research, it seemed useful to inquire whether a magazine for a strictly female readership would offer the same or different messages in its advertising and whether a broader picture would be revealed by looking at the whole content of a magazine and not just its advertising.

A study of *Chatelaine* for the wartime period reveals that the very same advertisements found in *Maclean's* (plus others carrying similar messages) are present in the women's magazine. Considering the fact that *Chatelaine* was owned by the Maclean Publishing Company, this is not surprising. What is notable is the extent to which *Chatelaine* enlarges upon and amplifies the patriotic message through every type of material - through its editorials, reports, feature articles, fiction, filler pieces and even its section on handicrafts, and this promotion comes into play long before the advertisers jump onto the patriotic bandwagon in 1941-42.

Chatelaine was well ahead of the game in its patriotic campaign. In the months preceding the declaration of war, two articles alerted its readers to the

⁹¹*Ibid.*, p. 65.

⁹²*Ibid.*, p.81.

potential call to service. In the April 1939 issue, a two-pronged article "If the Worst Happens - ...What has England done? What is Canada doing?" outlines the emergence of the Women's Auxiliary Territorial Service (WATS) for non-combatant duties in England (formed in September 1938, but having its origins in the women's corps of the First World War) and also the beginning of the Victoria Women's Service Club in British Columbia, which modeled itself on the British WATS.⁹³ A second article in June, "Prepared for Service" outlines the initiatives and purposes of the Voluntary Registration of Canadian Women (VRCW) which was getting underway. The image introducing the article is a drawing of four women marching, each wearing a different outfit to represent different types of service. Above the women, as though in a far off place, are soldiers at the battlefield. This image thematically reflects the underlying positioning of women within the wartime scenario. On one hand, the four women are striding purposefully into the future and towards whatever will be demanded of them. On the other, by placing the image of the fighting men above their heads, it conveys the message that the men are always in their thoughts and that their strength and purpose are derived from their desire to serve the men. The men hold the higher ground and are doing the real work of war.

Chatelaine in its overall content over the war years served as a grand cheerleader for the allied efforts, and urged its team members - Canadian white, middle-class women - to play with enthusiasm and spunk. The editor of *Chatelaine*, Byrne Hope Sanders, was well suited to the job of chief cheerleader, and through reading her editorials, much is revealed about how the subject of war is to be interwoven with every facet of women's lives. In

⁹³*Chatelaine*, April 1939, pp. 10-11, 19.

the September 1941 issue, her column entitled "This Month With Our Advertisers" signals the shift in advertising, alerting the reader to what was to become much more common in the years to follow:

War and Advertising

A number of very interesting aspects of the war as it affects Canadian life and industry are shown this month. Page the story of the Canadian lobster industry, on page 54....Turn to the English Huntley and Palmers ad on page 60, with its flag flying, and business as usual. . . Then look at the appeal for gasoline economy on page 71. . . and the message of the Royal Bank of Canada on page 50, that your savings mean equipment for the men who fight for us. All of these are advertisements we'll look at one day, in happier times of peace, with crowding memories.⁹⁴

Sanders was not going to leave it to chance that the reader notice the signs of wartime patriotism in the advertising. She was directing people even to the subliminal messages (the Huntley and Palmers flag went unnoticed by this reader until the editor's nudge).

Sanders was so good at patriotic work that in March of 1942, the editorial, written by Sanders' replacement, Mary-Etta Macpherson, announced Sanders' assumption of the Directorship of the Wartime Prices and Trade Board. Her services were contributed to the Government by The Maclean Publishing Company. In describing Sanders' attributes, Macpherson states: "Unhampered by any affiliations with organizations or political party, she has been in the position of an alert, sympathetic, yet impartial observer, one whose judgment has gained respect because it was known to be based on a true understanding of the Canadian way of life."⁹⁵

⁹⁴*Chatelaine*, September 1941, p. 70.

⁹⁵*Chatelaine*, March 1942, p. 76.

A closer look at the major players and orchestrators of propaganda reveals the strong connections between government, business and the propaganda makers. Sanders' appointment speaks to the strong collaboration of the publishing company with the government. Furthermore, it is interesting to note that this 'impartial observer' had above her, as her Editorial Director, H. Napier Moore. As a literary reviewer for *Maclean's*, Moore had at one time during the interwar years advised the Canadian Authors' Association that "citizens were not interested in 'gloom' but continued to desire 'stories of romance and adventure'.⁹⁶ His agenda for stories of wartime is strongly reflected in the tone of all the writings for *Chatelaine*.

Further indications of the strong interconnections between different media are revealed in other ways. There were wartime writers who produced copy for a variety of magazines and radio; several of the women profiled in the NFB film *Home Front*, are also profiled in *Chatelaine*. If a thorough study was made of all forms of propaganda and editorial writing produced in Canada during war, it would likely reveal many more connections than has been discovered by chance in looking at a sampling of material.

Chatelaine's underlying editorial policy was imbued with the same attitudes prevalent in the House of Commons debates and the propaganda films of the NFB. In spite of the upbeat profiles of women doing things, in the final analysis they were not encouraged to be agents in the world with their own agenda; they existed to serve their men, their children and their country. Serving any and all of these constituted patriotism.

⁹⁶Jeff Keshen, "The Great War at Home and Abroad: Information Management in Canada vs. Life in 'Flanders' Field'" (Ph.D. Thesis, York University, 1992), p. 355.

The significance of assigning women's participation on all fronts within a framework of patriotism by those in power and in control of media cannot be underestimated when one considers the underlying desire of the political elite to maintain the *status quo* in the face of tremendous change. The propagandists' campaign seems to have been made all the easier by the lack of resistance from women to such an interpretation. A woman was not likely to broadcast the fact, if economic necessity, independence or adventure was the real motive for wanting to enter the workplace. Such motivations, in a woman, would have been considered subversive or selfish— in other words, unpatriotic. For women who remained at home and worked in the volunteer sector, making relief comforts was entirely in keeping with the kind of work that women were expected to perform; propagandists would not have considered it necessary or desirable to make any possible distinctions between humanitarian and patriotic principles at work. Women's humanitarianism fit into their maternal, gendered role which could be used very well to serve the patriotic cause.

Undoubtedly, women did see their work as serving the country and its efforts during war, but the rhetoric of propaganda found in posters, film and print media is not reflected to any degree in the internal records of organizations that provided relief aid. The Canadian Red Cross (CRC), as the largest relief organization in the country, did produce inspirational material to fund-raise and cheerlead people (mostly women) into continuing their work⁹⁷. Their propaganda was aimed at touching a wellspring of 'Christian' charity⁹⁸, so their appeals reached both the patriots and the humanitarians. As

⁹⁷ The national CRC newsletter *Despatch* often published letters from grateful recipients of aid in Great Britain and had articles about the work being done overseas by the Red Cross.

⁹⁸In the 1942 Canadian Red Cross inspirational film *There, Too, Go I* the parable of the Good Samaritan is used as a touchstone.

has been suggested earlier in the chapter, it is possible that women's notions of patriotism were not the same as those who were propagating the propaganda.

As part of thesis research, a questionnaire (see Appendix II) focussing on wartime volunteer work was distributed to members of Women's Institutes and church groups in the province. When given a list of possible motivations for why they contributed to the war relief effort, almost all the respondents⁹⁹ to the survey listed the fact of family members or friends serving overseas as a critical factor. It was given the most priority, although a large number of respondents gave equal weight to several reasons, most commonly rating family in the services, humanitarian concern and patriotism with the same importance. Keeping in mind that the survey results have their limitations (after 50 years, memories can be altered) and the confusion that some respondents may have had in filling out the form, there is still a strong impression of women's multi-layered loyalties. Additional remarks on some of the surveys indicate more clearly the conflicting feelings and reactions. The unhappiness and worry of those with sons, brothers and husbands in the services was generally subsumed in volunteer relief work and by putting on a brave face for the children. As one respondent stated, in referring to her mother's and her own reaction to the war, "[Mother was] very concerned, (felt it was men and government thinking!) very willing to knit socks and do sewing etc." The respondent further stated that she "felt exactly the same way as I do now – war is devastating especially to women and children, who are not consulted!" Another survey brought forth the following:

⁹⁹78 out of 85 forms (92%).

I think fear was uppermost in the minds of people. My mother-in-law disliked listening to the war news. As for me, I had to know what was going on. I may say that I had a nervous breakdown during the first war years.¹⁰⁰

The survey results provide an impressionistic view only, but do give some notion of a different reality than that painted by the propagandists. In the final analysis, nagging questions remain about women's relationship to war, propaganda and patriotism. All women were targets of various forms of propaganda. 'Woman' as symbol or mythic figure was used in propaganda. Some women acted as agents of propaganda. However, they rarely created the propaganda. To what degree women responded to the patriotism defined by the propagandists is uncertain. Women did not need encouragement to participate in relief efforts; historically they have initiated these activities themselves. Based on reports and surveys among women in the workforce during the period, it is unlikely that women really needed to be lured into better-paying, more challenging jobs through appealing to their patriotism. Perhaps the most powerful influence propaganda held over women was convincing many of them that war was unavoidable. War held their male relatives as ransom; women paid the extortion.

¹⁰⁰Survey respondent, answering question 16 on questionnaire, Appendix II.

Chapter 4

Women's Unpaid Labour

In theory, war is a masculine pursuit. General Robert H. Barrow, a former Commandant of the U.S. Marine Corps was quoted by one writer as saying: "War is man's work....[Women in combat positions] trample the male ego. When you get right down to it, you have to protect the manliness of war."¹

In theory, men fight for, among other things, the honour and protection of their wives and families who are supposed to be shielded from the horrors of manly warfare. However, at the same time as the military has shunned women's direct involvement in fighting, it has depended heavily upon women and their labours in the successful execution of war. Cynthia Enloe says that "long before the military had women's corps, married quarters, ... and legions of civilian clerical workers, they had women 'in tow'."² She quotes fellow historian, Burton Hacker, who in discussing wars in the mid-seventeenth century, says that one European Army was reported to have had "40,000 male soldiers and 100,00 soldiers' wives, man servants, maids and other camp followers".³ So, for every soldier, there were at least two or three non-military personnel, mostly women, to serve the needs of the military, without the benefit of pay. Traditionally, an ordinary soldier's pay was very meager. Women provided many essential services in the military camps; their own and their husband's survival depended upon it.

¹Kelly Dawn Askin, *War Crimes Against Women: Prosecution in International War Crimes Tribunals* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1997). footnote 168, p. 47, quoted from Kenneth L. Karst, *The Pursuit of Manhood and the Desegregation of the Armed Forces*, who, in turn, was quoting from an article by Michael Wright, "The Marine Corps Faces the Future", *N.Y. Times* (Magazine), June 20, 1982, p. 74.

²Cynthia Enloe, *Does Khaki Become You?: The Militarisation of Women's Lives* (Boston, MA: South End Press, 1983), p. 1.

³Burton Hacker, "Women and military institutions in early modern Europe: a reconnaissance", *Signs*, vol 6, no. 4, Summer 1981, p.653.

During the First World War, with the exception of nursing sisters and V.A.D.s (Voluntary Aid Detachment), women in Canada served the military at a distance from the battlefields, on the home front. Women's wartime employment and their subsequent post-war losses has proved fertile ground for a number of excellent historical and literary treatments. However, in spite of acknowledgment of the very essential nature of the work done by women at home in volunteer capacities, a detailed treatment of the relief efforts still seems to be forthcoming. Historian Ruth Pierson touches on the subject of women's volunteer efforts in her book *They're Still Women After All* and discusses how, in the interests of mobilizing for efficient prosecution of the war effort, the government was quite willing to bring "public acclaim to that everyday labour women perform as housewives".⁴ Pierson acknowledges the home efforts of women⁵, but her focus is more on whether women's wartime participation in the services and paid labour force had any impact on post-war opportunities for women. Her questions are concerned with whether wartime gains for women were sustained and whether "war liberate[d] Canadian women from patriarchal divisions of labour and conceptions of womanhood".⁶

Jean Bruce, whose book, *Back the Attack*, carries the subtitle *Canadian Women During the Second World War—at Home and Abroad*, focuses her discussion on women "who were active participants in the war effort as war workers, servicewomen, nursing sisters, and volunteers at home and overseas." She adds that the reader "will also find out what it felt like to be a

⁴Ruth R. Pierson, *They're Still Women After All* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1986), p.33.

⁵*Ibid.*, "Far and away the largest contribution made by Canadian women to the war effort was through their unpaid labour in the home and through 'volunteer' work.", p. 33.

⁶*Ibid.*, p. 9.

woman at home during the war, 'keeping the home fires burning'.⁷ She does not make a distinction between war effort and war relief effort, yet she seems to make a distinction between volunteers and women "keeping the home fires burning" when, in fact, most of these women *were* the volunteers. It may be that she was using the term in the specific sense of referring to the Women's Voluntary Services, rather than the more general term, but the end result is that volunteers who worked without benefit of uniform or status receive short notice.

Women's unpaid wartime work has always received little notice. What is unfortunate is that even among women historians, little critical attention has been paid to this work. In trying to account for the reasons why the story of the "home fires" women has been glossed over, one suspects that for the generation of women historians, journalists and filmmakers, born during or just after the war, this has not been a compelling subject. For those who have had to struggle to create a place for themselves in the workplace, there has been the need to distance themselves from the domesticity of their mothers and the traditional nurturing work most of them did during the war. It has been easier to highlight the stories of the women who entered non-traditional fields (i.e. "men's" work), who gained economic independence through paid employment and had new opportunities opened up for education, travel and adventure. These "new women" were more inspiring as role models for those seeking historical affirmation of women's capacities to take on non-traditional work. Charting the path of women who carried on in traditional nurturing ways may have been seen (consciously or unconsciously) as playing into the hands of traditionalists who could use

⁷Jean Bruce, *Back the Attack* (Toronto: Macmillan of Canada, 1985), Introduction, vii.

such reinforcement to argue that women should stay at home. And, on the other side of the war story, for some feminist scholars, there has been the more compelling history of the radical pacifists and socialist women who opposed the war.

In general history or survey books concerning the war, women's volunteer work, if mentioned, is generally dealt with in the briefest of paragraphs; it would appear that it is enough to acknowledge the contribution as "major"⁸ without elaboration or discussion. Patriotic accounts immediately following the war years provide more detailed accounts, but no analysis. After the Great War, M.S. Hunt wrote a laudatory account, *Nova Scotia's Part in the Great War*,⁹ in which he devotes a chapter to voluntary organizations. Similarly, Mary MacLeod Moore's history of the Canadian Red Cross overseas during the First World War¹⁰ presents impressive facts and figures of the relief aid, but with a large dose of patriotic sentimentalism. Writer P. H. Gordon, in an account of Red Cross history, assigns a brief final chapter to the subject "Women's Work": "I regret that I feel utterly incompetent to put into words what the Red Cross owes to the women of Canada. In fact without our women there would be no Red Cross as we know it."¹¹

Perhaps the sheer enormity of the relief work can only be grasped by quantifying it and yet, endless lists and numbers of bandages and quilts and knitted socks have a difficult time competing with lists of battles and dead soldiers. Peace activists know full well that the study of war has "traditionally

⁸For example, see R. D. Francis, *Destinies: Canadian History Since Confederation* (Toronto: Holt, Reinhart & Winston of Canada, 2nd ed., 1992), p.212, 302.

⁹M.S. Hunt, *Nova Scotia's Part in the Great War* (Halifax: The Nova Scotia Veteran Publishing Co., Limited, 1920).

¹⁰Mary MacLeod Moore, *The Maple Leaf's Red Cross* (London: Skeffington & Son, Ltd, c1919).

¹¹P. H. Gordon, *Fifty Years in the Canadian Red Cross*, (n.p., c1967), p.97.

had a greater capacity to excite the imagination...than has the study of peace"¹² and maintain that it is one of the problems in the promotion of peace studies. Similarly, the more traditional kind of work that women did during the war does not command the attention in the same way as a story about women building fighter aircraft. Perhaps, however, it is only when it has been quantified in some way that it can be understood as having concrete value and currency. If women themselves knew how significant their contribution was, it is possible that they would be able to use this knowledge as leverage in future to decide whether to support wars. For, as historian Anne Firor Scott comments on the relief work of women during the American Civil War, women may unwittingly contribute to the duration of wars through their aid:

Neither side in the Civil War had a monopoly on sentimental talk about women, and as one would expect 'the Confederate woman' came in for a large share of extravagant praise. Yet there was a bitter irony in the history of Confederate women's war work: many people, including a number of northern generals, thought their assiduous labor had prolonged the war. Indeed there may be an even larger irony: if women on both sides had kept closer to their assigned sphere and let the two governments muddle on without their labor, the short war which so many had predicted might indeed have occurred, and nearly everyone would have been better off.¹³

As one element of this thesis is the contention that women's volunteer labour during wartime has not been accounted for in any substantial way, this chapter will use some of the available evidence to create a fragmentary yet compelling picture of women's volunteer labour. The numbers quoted will only be a small representative sampling and do not

¹²Pierson, *Women and Peace*, ed. Ruth Roach Pierson, Introduction, p. xv.

¹³Scott, *Natural Allies*, p.72.

account in any way for the total. Many groups of women who did relief work during the war did not keep records of their work.¹⁴ Women's own lack of record-keeping, coupled with the destruction of records by fires or radical housecleaning efforts have left a very incomplete documentation.¹⁵

Statistics are kept on how many weapons have been made, the cost of the labour to produce them and these figures all become part of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) index of national accounts. In conventional accounting, war is good for business and provides jobs. However, as New Zealand economist, Marilyn Waring has cogently pointed out, such a system does not have a debiting side. The costs of war in terms of lives lost, families destroyed, or destruction of the environment are not factored into any equations.¹⁶

During the wars the Red Cross kept reasonably good records of the relief supplies shipped overseas; however, even when attempts were made to put a dollar value on the goods themselves, in no way did that value reflect the actual time, materials and skilled labour of the women producing the goods. During World War I, goods or materials were given a dollar value

¹⁴For example, within the Women's Institutes of Nova Scotia (WINS) many branches produced knitted goods, clothing, quilts, bandages, etc. and shipped them directly to Red Cross headquarters in Halifax. In reports to the WINS office, it was not uncommon to see a statement such as the following: "'many' or 'a great deal' from which no actual report could be noted. This is a matter of regret..."— *Home and Country*, Nov-Dec, 1945.

¹⁵Fires that destroyed records during both World Wars are mentioned in annual reports. During World War I, a fire in February 1917 caused the Red Cross to lose the records for the first two years of work received from each separate branch. During the Second World War, the entire WINS records were destroyed in a fire at the Nova Scotia Agricultural College. What records remain were reconstructed from old newsletters donated by Women's Institute members. Another hazard with women's records is the fact that organizational records were generally housed in the homes of executive members. Due to lack of official storage space, these records were not always passed on or saved. In recent years a more concerted effort has been made to have minute books and other organizational records go to the Public Archives, but this has come too belatedly for many.

¹⁶Marilyn Waring, *If Women Counted: A New Feminist Economics* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1988).

only if, in fact, they had been purchased. A typical accounting of women's work during the war, is exemplified in the following Nova Scotia Red Cross report. In this particular instance, the subject is the Nova Scotia Red Cross's outfitting of a couple of overseas hospital units. Along with hospital equipment and furnishings, the units were supplied with sheets, hospital shirts, pyjamas, socks, pillows, nurses' and doctors' operating gowns and masks. These were made by women in the province. According to the records of the Nova Scotia Red Cross:

The value of these two hospital outfits, for materials alone, was in the neighbourhood of \$5,000. The labor of love which completed the long list of finished articles cannot be estimated in dollars and cents.¹⁷

This facile way of accounting for women's work recurs throughout the records (also evident in Scott's reference to the same form of payment of "extravagant praise" during the Civil War). Apparently, for women, work was its own reward; praise was an added bonus. Not only did women across the province make these supplies, but they baled and shipped them to Halifax, where at Pier II, other women unpacked, sorted and repacked supplies to send overseas. In the Red Cross report, it was explained:

Work in the packing rooms was heavy and arduous, but it was most willingly, faithfully and cheerfully undertaken. Needless to say, all this service was purely voluntary, the only person paid being the man who handled the heavy incoming cases and bales, and who did the nailing up of military boxes when completed.¹⁸

¹⁷CRC, Nova Scotia Division Annual Reports, *Nova Scotia Red Cross Report for 1915-1918*, p. 13.

¹⁸*Ibid.*, p. 71.

World War I

During the Great War, the making and shipping of supplies and comforts for overseas was but one part of the larger whole of work women carried out for war relief. As the port through which troops departed and returned, services to provide medical care, respite and hospitality were set up and run by women in the city. In all, 305,655 service personnel passed through Halifax on their way to war, and in 1918-1919; 220,000 returned from overseas, all of whom passed through Pier II. As well, French, Russian, Australian, New Zealand and U.S. troops passed through the port and required the same kinds of services. Halifax's strategic position as the Canadian city through which all servicemen passed made it also the most vulnerable; witness the Explosion of 1917 which triggered a whole new set of local relief needs. The volunteer work in the aftermath of the Halifax Explosion was monumental in itself, and although many local volunteers were diverted from the overseas efforts during this time, work continued on both fronts.

As well, there were extraordinary additional services rendered. For example, when the transport "City of Vienna" was shipwrecked with fourteen hundred men aboard, food, clothing and lodging had to be quickly arranged to meet the needs of the rescued men. Another unexpected episode occurred when a troop of Jamaican soldiers arrived, all having suffered from severe frostbite, due to not having adequate clothing for northern winter weather. At least 36 individuals had to have double amputations of feet or limbs, due to the setting in of gangrene. During the course of their convalescence in Halifax, they were fitted for artificial limbs and received

industrial and vocational training and other educational opportunities before they returned home.¹⁹

Women played key roles in either providing direct services for these extraordinary cases or they raised funds to provide the services they could not directly administer. Many of the returned soldiers had special needs; they were sick or injured or they had suffered severe privations as prisoners of war. As well, thousands of wives and children of servicemen arrived through the Pier. With no advance notice, volunteers might be required to find clothing, bedding, medicines and personal articles for those unfit to travel after landing from a ship; many arrived without luggage. In addition to military hospitals, there were numerous small hospitals and nursing stations set up throughout the city and across the province. These hospitals depended upon the voluntary services of thousands of women, as providers of dressings, clothing, and all such necessities, as well as the added comforts of treats, entertainment, visits and rehabilitation programs. They also raised the monies to pay for furnishings and equipment needed in these health care centres.

Because of Nova Scotia's critical position as a central clearing house for troops and supplies, women here were engaged in a multiplicity of services over and above those required in other parts of the country. The organizational talents of some of those involved in the relief efforts were quite exceptional. When the United States entered the war, the Dominion Government decided to redirect hospital ships to Portland, Maine, from

¹⁹*Nova Scotia Red Cross Report...*, p.52. Calvin Ruck, *The Black Battalion 1916-1920* (Halifax: Nimbus, 1987), p.18, makes mention of the commanding officer of the No. 2 Construction Battalion, Lieutenant-Colonel Sutherland, requesting permission to recruit in the British West Indies in November of 1916, but there was no indication that permission was granted. Possibly this group from Jamaica had intentions of joining No. 2.

Halifax. The Central Committee of Canadian Red Cross in Toronto sent three of Nova Scotia's most efficient and valued workers at the Pier, Mrs. McCurdy, Mrs W. T. Allen and Mrs. Hetherington, "to meet the first Canadian hospital ship and to render assistance and give the benefit of their experience to the Montreal ladies who were to have future charge of this work."²⁰ These were the same women in charge of taking care of provision of physical and emotional comforts for the 220,000 returning soldiers at war's end.

Much of the work done in Nova Scotia would have paralleled relief activities being carried out in the rest of the country. However, as already stated, because of the province's critical positioning and relative proximity to Europe, the need for volunteer labour was intensified. Obviously port work was unique to Nova Scotia but there was another project unique to the province—the collection of sphagnum moss and its preparation for surgical dressings. Not long after the war commenced, the shortage of absorbent cotton became a serious issue. Dr. J. Bonsall Porter of McGill University initiated a program of moss collection in Nova Scotia. Volunteers at over twenty sites throughout the province donned their boots and withstood inclement weather to collect the moss. Many people, but particularly children and youth, were involved; girl guides, scouts, YMCA groups, and school classes with their teachers. The sorting and preparing of the moss, "the most laborious operation of all was done [by women] at Halifax, Sydney, Windsor, Arichat, River Bourgeois, St. Peter's, Chester, Kedgemakooge, L'Ardoise, Guysboro, Canso, Wolfville, Port Hawkesbury, Mulgrave, Antigonish, New Glasgow, Drumhead, Lunenburg, Mount St. Vincent (Halifax), and Port Lorne."²¹ Finished dressings were then turned out in Halifax at Dalhousie

²⁰N.S. *Red Cross Report for 1914-1918*, p. 75.

²¹*Ibid.*, p. 19.

University (a large laboratory had been given over for use, free of charge, to the sphagnum committee), the Women's Council House, as well as Guysboro, New Glasgow and Port Lorne. A total of 14,838 dressings were sent overseas, and 476 bed-pads were made and supplied to hospital ships and trains, as well as a number of elbow pillows filled with the inferior grades of moss. According to some accounts from medical personnel overseas, the moss dressings were felt to be far superior to cotton in hastening the healing of persistent sores.²²

How would monetary value be attached to the work of such an endeavour? In an article written by Dr. J.B. Porter for *The Canadian Medical Association Journal*, the doctor describes the process in detail, making it obvious that a certain amount of training in identification and skill in preparation was required:

...the material has to be collected by people who have trained to know the good from the bad, and as the different species of sphagnum grow very much intermixed the collector will often have difficulty at first in deciding just what to take and what leave. The method of collection is to wade out into the bog, grasp and pull up the upper layers of the moss by the handful, wring them out, put them in sacks and take them to the edge of the bog whence they are carted to some suitable place where they can be spread out to dry and have the rubbish picked out. The rough dried moss is then shipped to Red Cross work rooms where it is very carefully picked over and classified in to three or more qualities. All the best stuff is put into muslin cases for dressings, the intermediate is made up in pillows, splint pads, dysentery pads, etc., the worst discarded. One has to be extremely careful about the first collecting, as the picking over of poor moss requires an enormous amount of labour and time, and produces very little material in the end. Throughout the work all possible

²²*Ibid.*, pp. 19-20.

precautions are taken to keep the moss clean and free from infection....²³

Another facet of relief work was organized by the Prisoners of War committee. This group took on the responsibility of raising funds, finding "adoptees" for specific prisoners, sending parcels and letters. In as much as it was possible, personal communication was maintained, and many POWs regarded their survival, both physical and spiritual, as dependent on the women who kept them from starving, freezing or losing hope. In a list of Nova Scotia groups that supported prisoners wholly or in part during one year of the war, there were "65 Red Cross Auxiliaries and Societies, 7 Women's Institutes, 2 Local Councils of Women, 18 clubs and societies, including I.O.D.E., 17 schools and Sunday schools, and 108 private individuals."²⁴

The following example of one woman's personal efforts during the war highlights a number of challenges in reporting and evaluating women's work. Along with making clothing, first aid and bedding supplies, various foodstuffs made by women were shipped overseas. Rachel Archibald of Wolfville was just one of many who made jam and preserves for the overseas hospitals. She sent an average of 200 jars a year overseas, throughout the war. After Armistice, she continued her work, and in 1920 was reported to have sent 288 jars to Camp Hill and the hospital in Kentville.²⁵

²³J. Bonsall Porter, "Sphagnum Moss for Use as a Surgical Dressing; Its Collection, Preparation and Other Details" paper read before the Montreal Medico-Chirurgical Society, November 1916. *The Canadian Medical Association Journal*, 1917, Vol. vii, p. 205.

²⁴*N.S. Red Cross Report*....p. 37. It is worth noting that children also contributed to relief efforts in many ways during both World Wars. By the time of the Second, the Junior Red Cross was active and grew in its membership by leaps and bounds during the war years. Children knitted, quilted, raised money for ambulances—providing many of the same services as women's groups. The vast majority of the groups were led by women school teachers.

²⁵*Ibid.*, pp.21-22.

Within the context of the late twentieth century, when ready-made food products are easily obtainable, such a recounting has the danger of sounding quaint, sentimental or inconsequential. In the realm of grand ideas and projects, making jam for hospital patients does not seem to register as having much importance. Yet, at the time, jam was considered critical as a source of Vitamin C. The labour involved picking fruit, making the jam and packing it safely for overseas delivery²⁶. Based on estimates of the time entailed in such a project, Rachel Archibald probably spent the equivalent of at least seventeen 8-hour days per year in jam production.

That this account might be considered quaint indicates a particular hierarchy of values. One might ask why the making of a jar of jam should be considered less important than the making of a bullet. One item supplies sustenance and the other causes harm, yet for the historic record, munitions are counted, not jars of jam.

In Nova Scotia, in addition to the branches and auxiliaries in Halifax, Dartmouth and suburbs, such as Dutch Village, Rockingham and Bedford, there were, by the end of the war, 448 auxiliaries and 47 chartered branches of Red Cross in the country districts throughout the province. With the exception of one branch whose president was a minister, all the other branches were run by women. In the final Red Cross report for the war work, a listing of branches and their work and monies raised was included. However, statistics for 275 of the branches were either non-existent or failed to be filed in time for the report. The Red Cross Society undoubtedly kept the best records, yet even here, the documentation was far from complete. Although many established groups, such as Women's Institute, IODE, and

²⁶According to Mary MacLeod Moore's account (*The Maple Leaf's Red Cross*, p. 63), the Officer-Commander of a Canadian hospital in France stated that he had never seen a broken jar.

others channeled their work through the Red Cross, there was still much work done independently.

As was outlined in the introduction to this thesis, the focus on women's volunteer work has been mostly restricted to the efforts most directly related to comforts and relief. Women engaged in much additional work, such as entertaining soldiers on leave, writing to service personnel, and providing extras in the way of cigarettes²⁷, candy and Christmas stockings. They engaged in numerous fund-raising projects. They maintained social and civic services within their home communities as is evident from this 1916 report from the Superintendent of Women's Institute:

While the principal effort of the past year has been towards aiding all patriotic work, yet the Institutes have carried out a surprising amount of community work. Along this latter line they have kept up their interests in the Schools, doing much to improve the sanitary conditions and providing help in various ways. School fairs have been encouraged and assisted and the Institute since its organization has carried through successfully a school fair, providing both seeds and prizes for the children. Nearly all the Institutes have done more or less charity work and have fitted out many destitute families with clothes and food. Sewing classes for school girls have been organized and superintended...Assistance has been given towards town improvement as, the laying of sidewalks, planting of trees and beautifying cemeteries, and installing libraries.²⁸

Most of these women probably were involved in church groups as well, providing similar services on top of raising the funds to pay for ongoing

²⁷In the case of cigarettes, women were not unanimous in their endorsement of such gifts. Mary MacLeod Moore staunchly defended the practice of providing them to soldiers, saying, "I defy the most bigoted anti-smoking person or society to find any fault with a gift which gave such pleasure." p. 54. On the other hand, when the Lunenburg WCTU discussed and voted on whether to send cigarettes, they unanimously voted against it. April 4, 1916 Minutes. PANS MG 20, Vol. 3542.

²⁸*Journal of the House of Assembly*, 1917, Appendix No. 8 - Agriculture, p. 164.

church repairs, the minister's salary and other works. Some of these women might have also belonged to the local WCTU or other organizations, which, in turn, would have carried out another set of social and charitable responsibilities, along with their wartime efforts.

Wartime meant added work for most women; many had to support families on less income, particularly if their husbands enlisted without their permission.²⁹ Even on a soldier's pay, women were hard pressed to support their families. Women had to take care of farms and businesses in addition to their regular domestic duties without the benefit of time and labour-saving devices such as washing machines, dishwashers, electric ovens and other modern equipment. Some women had to join the industrial labour force in order to support their families. During the war, rationing was in effect, and the government relied heavily on women's organizations to carry out the work of public education and monitoring food and price controls. Women's groups sponsored talks and produced pamphlets on food preparation, keeping in mind the restrictions imposed by rationing. In the Halifax Local Council minutes of 15 October 1914, a directive from the national body requested that local councils "work for the active extension of agriculture, raising more food stuffs all over Canada."³⁰ During the same meeting, it was suggested that the Council offer courses in preparing cheap, yet nourishing foods, and one member asked the already existing School Gardens Committee to consider "the utilizing of empty plots in the city for raising more foods."³¹ The Council already had an established program of cost-sharing in the price of seed packets as a way of encouraging children to plant flower gardens. Once

²⁹Barbara Wilson, *Ontario and the First World War, 1914-1918*, p. lxxxv.

³⁰Local Council minutes, PANS MG 20, Vol. 535, No. 6.

³¹*Ibid.*

the war broke out, the emphasis shifted to planting vegetables. Minute book entries throughout the war recount the work of the committee and the success of the gardening efforts. In 1915, mention is made of unsold seed packets being presented to Africville school,³² indicating the Council's awareness of the need to extend the program to those who might not have had even the limited money required for seeds, yet who might wish to contribute to family food resources.

The council not only assisted children in cultivating gardens. In 1917, 112 cash-strapped farmers in the province were advanced fertilizer, which they repaid in the fall, either with money or potatoes. The following spring, Council moved that another two tons of fertilizer be forwarded to farmers for the coming season.³³ As well, the Council took it upon themselves to write to the local Board of Health "asking that with the proper precautions the rules re pigs and hens be relaxed while the need of food production is so great."³⁴ On 21 November 1918, the minute book notes that the "gardening project bearing fruit. Seventy bags of potatoes sent in. Decided to supply several institutions and homes after selling enough to pay freight charges."

Within the first couple of weeks of the opening of the war, Council members were organizing collection and distribution of magazines, books and games for soldiers and navy personnel.³⁵ As the war continued, an extensive program developed whereby magazines were gathered and recovered for more durable use in hospitals and overseas. In an article in the *Evening Mail*, on 23 January 1917, a call to the public from the Council asked

³²*Ibid.*, 17 June 1915.

³³LCW minutes, No. 7, March 1918.

³⁴*Ibid.*

³⁵LCW minutes, No. 6, 20 August 1914.

for donations of magazines, old or new.³⁶ The following month, the records report that "2000 covers have been made in the season's work - packed in boxes for overseas and distributed to hospitals in Halifax wherever most needed."³⁷ Council members not only solicited from the public, but also wrote to the Montreal News Company to ask for donations of unsold magazines in Halifax.³⁸ The company replied by stating that they would charge "65cts per 100 lbs. = 150 magazines."³⁹ Marshall, the local distributor, agreed to carry the surplus magazines free to the Council House.

In considering the volunteer work of women, it is mindful to remember that, with the exception of those in paid employment, most women had little money they could call their own. While some women may have been fortunate enough to have acquired some family wealth or were married to generous husbands, most of the money raised for relief and other projects came from labour-intensive schemes, frugal practices, and ingenuity. One example of how women conducted projects that accomplished several tasks at the same time is that of the salvaging carried out during wartime. Used cloth, yarn, and fur all were utilized by women's organizations in the recreation of new garments and bedding. A scheme which was carried out on a national level, was that of collecting old furs "to be made into sleeping bags for Italian soldiers, fighting in the mountains."⁴⁰ Yarn was difficult to get during the war and, therefore, the price of wool was high. Old socks and sweaters were unravelled and the yarn was used to fashion new items. Pieces of fabric, either from older garments or scraps from sewing projects found

³⁶"Waste Not, The Slogan of Local Council of Women" *Evening Mail* 23 January 1917, PANS Micro.

³⁷LCW minutes, No. 7, 28 February 1917.

³⁸LCW minutes, No. 6, 18 May 1916.

³⁹LCW minutes, No. 6, 2 June 1916

⁴⁰LCW minutes, 18 November 1915.

their way into quilts and ditty bags.⁴¹ Feed, flour and sugar sacks were used in the making of clothing and quilts. Kid and leather gloves were collected for use in trench coat linings.⁴² The salvaging slogan of the Council, "Gather up the fragments that nothing be lost" was scrupulously carried out by women across the city, the province, and across the country.

Organizing a Frugality Committee, the Local Council members conducted paper and rag salvage in the city and were sufficiently successful financially, that monies made from the sale of salvage went toward numerous projects in the community. The Council raised thousands of dollars conducting paper salvage over the course of the war. The money raised was used to buy hospital equipment, set up a new ward at the tuberculosis sanitarium in Kentville, furnish billiard tables for convalescing soldiers, purchase playground equipment and contribute towards the purchase of new quarters for the VON nurses which placed them nearer to their patients in the aftermath of the Halifax Explosion. Halifax was not alone in its efforts. Throughout the province, women's groups cooperated by collection of salvage, sending it on to Halifax where it was dealt with by the Local Council until the Explosion destroyed their storage facilities. After that, groups were directed to sell directly to local salvage operators.

The above record of the work done during the Great War is but a small window on the whole. Although the Canadian Red Cross records indicate a greater emphasis on aid going to soldiers rather than civilians during this war, numerous separate funds, such as those for Belgian and Russian Relief were set up to concentrate on civilian aid. At the war's end, some volunteer groups disbanded; however, many ongoing organizations carried out relief

⁴¹*Evening Mail* 23 January 1917,

⁴²LCW minutes, 18 May 1916.

work for those at home and abroad. Much foreign relief work, as a result of the war was still required. According to Dupuy and Dupuy⁴³, in addition to the over eight million battle deaths (in total, on all sides), there were well over twenty-one million military wounded and over six and a half million civilians killed in the Great War. These records are primarily from military sources and probably do not reflect the real cost in civilian lives; they do not even count the civilian wounded.

Civilians in Europe were wounded, orphaned, widowed and made homeless and destitute as a result of the ravages of war. Canadians at home had been insulated from the direct impact of battle, but they were not unaware of the war's impact on those abroad. People throughout Europe were at "the front" whether they were soldiers or civilians. During World War I, even the meaning of the term "front" had expanded with the development of fighter aircraft and the submarine because, for the first time in history, battle was no longer restricted to the "level playing field". In actual fact, throughout the history of wars, women and children were often "at the front" as marauding armies swept through whole towns and surrounding countryside. As Askin points out, all the atrocities that civilian males experience during war are also experienced by women, but "*additional* things happen to females which far less frequently happen to males...women and children alike - are sexually assaulted with alarming regularity." She goes on to point out that the assaults come not only from enemy civilians and troops, but also allied and national civilians and soldiers.⁴⁴

⁴³Ernest Dupuy and Trevor Dupuy, *The Encycloedia of Military History from 3500 B.C. to the present* (New York, 1977) p. 990.

⁴⁴Askin, *War Crimes Against Women*, p.12-13.

In the October 1914 issue of the WCTU's *Canada's White Ribbon Bulletin*, a very strong articulation on the brutalities and senselessness of war was published, showing very clearly that women were sensitive to the particular sufferings of civilians, especially women and children. During the Great War, propagandists for the Allies used the atrocities in Belgium as a rallying point to create support for the war against Germany. However, as Susan Brownmiller claims, once the propaganda purposes were served, "Allied countries no longer bothered to tally rape reports or to verify the rumors."⁴⁵ Suggestions in the post-war period that victim reports were false or overblown minimized the reality of women's sufferings during war. Judging by the efforts, particularly among women in Canada to provide relief in Europe after the war, there were those who were not convinced of this revision.

Thus, in the post-war period, Canadian women's war-related relief work continued as they responded to the plight of civilian war victims or tended to the needs of returned soldiers. The ripple effect from war was tremendously far-reaching and the statistics fail to include the real number of war casualties. The devastation in families resulting from the death or disabling of one or more⁴⁶ of its members would never be fully assessed.⁴⁷

⁴⁵Askin, *War Crimes*, p. 42. Quoted from Susan Brownmiller, *Against Our Will: Men, Women and Rape* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1975).

⁴⁶As an extreme example, one of the Canadians who attended the unveiling of the Vimy Memorial in 1936 was a Mrs. C.S. Woods; she lost *eight* sons in the war. *Canada in the First World War and the Road to Vimy Ridge* by Cedric Jennings (Ottawa: Veterans Affairs Canada, 1992), p.19.

⁴⁷In a report to the Minister of Veteran Affairs in a study, *Canadians who were prisoners of war in Europe during World War II* by J.D. Hermann (Ottawa: Information Canada, 1973), there was a significantly higher percentage of POW than Controls (others who served at Dieppe, but were not captured) who suffered from nervous conditions. However, from both groups, 75 - 83% reported that their captivity or war service had adversely affected their wives or children. Both groups experienced broken families at a higher rate than the national average. p. 24 and 29.

One writer has made the comment that due to medical advances, a major shift took place during the Great War; for the first time in the history of wars, the numbers of wounded far exceeded the dead at the end of the war. In Canada, in 1939, at the outbreak of the Second World War, there were eight hospitals in the country known as Veterans' Hospitals which were still used for the care of casualties from the First World War.⁴⁸ The government set up these hospitals, but also relied on Red Cross women volunteers for visitations and occupational therapy. The Red Cross records during the inter-war years give one a chilling sense of war's legacy in the numbers of disabled veterans who would never recover enough to be able to fully participate as functioning workers, fathers, husbands or lovers.

In an American source written while World War II was still in progress, the author states that "In the 33 months from April 1, 1917 to December 31, 1919, there were 96,657 men with psychiatric disorders admitted to military hospitals and probably as many more with milder degrees of disability not hospitalized. Even at the time of Pearl Harbor over half of all patients in veterans' hospitals had psychiatric disorders, the overwhelming majority of which represent mental casualties from the *last* war."⁴⁹

War statistics listing the monetary cost of war do not account for the loss in human potential. The war ruined the chances for many young men to have normal productive lives; this cost was shared by wives, mothers and children of those permanently damaged. Just as these punitive costs can never be fully tallied, so too the value of the work that women did in the service of taking care of men, both during and after the war. Two brief entries

⁴⁸United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, *Study on Rehabilitation of the War Disabled in Selected Countries* (New York: United Nations, 1971), p.28.

⁴⁹George K. Pratt, *Soldier to Civilian: Problems of Readjustment* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1944), p.16

in the minute book of the Lawrencetown Women's Institute during the inter-war years speak volumes. On June 8, 1933,

A paper 'Should wives be paid a salary', read by Mrs. J Stoddart, touched a responsive chord in our hearts - would that the husbands had been there - Their ears must surely have burned.⁵⁰

A couple of years later, the minutes recorded,

Roll Call Response 'What we dislike most about housekeeping' The majority confessed to a dislike of getting up in the morning. Statements of all dislikes seemed most sincere.⁵¹

Discussed only within the privacy of the group, these reports provide a hint of the darker reality that faced the "cheerful" housewife whose purported satisfaction in life was work for its own sake.

World War II

Although women's groups had hardly been lax in their relief efforts during the inter-war years, in 1939, the declaration of war placed even greater demands on women's volunteer time. In Chapter One, the organizational strength and initiatives of women's groups was discussed. Here, a further attempt at evaluating women's labour contribution will be made.

As discussed earlier in this chapter, during the Great War, no attempts were made to provide a monetary value to women's volunteer labour. In the Second World War, this situation hardly changed. Occasional reports gave a monetary value to supplies made. However, it remains a mystery how the value was calculated. The list in Appendix 2 provides a useful example of the

⁵⁰Lawrencetown WI minutes, PANS Accession No. 1992-142.

⁵¹ibid, Feb. 4, 1935. A tradition of Roll Call Response has been observed in many women's groups. The themes covered were varied; sometimes seasonal, sometimes humorous, often practical, as in sharing of household tips. In 1942, the May Roll Call of this WI group was 'a garment for Civilian Relief'.

accounting from the 27th Annual Report of the Nova Scotia Branch of the Red Cross. If one divides the total value (\$58,567.97) by number of items made (104,090), the average value per item is placed at \$.56. If one was to just take a single item, for example "sweaters, all kinds" and divide only that figure of 12,243 into the total for the whole lot, it would still only come to a value of \$4.78 per sweater. Surely, the value given recognizes neither the labour nor the cost of materials. Perhaps the value established is based on the cost to the Red Cross for the materials the Society supplied, without taking into account the donated materials or fundraising efforts of women to purchase the materials needed to produce the goods.

In the value imputed to the articles made for civilian relief and Women's Territorial Services (\$43,481.64), it notes that the figure of 51,167 articles included 5,000 quilts. Even at the low value of \$10.00 per quilt (which was a typical price one might pay for a quilt in that period), the figure would be \$50,000 for the quilts alone. If one was to actually calculate the value of the quilts based on paid labour, making the very modest and under-assessed assumption that a quilt might be put together by six women over the course of one 8-hour day at the going rate of \$.40 per hour for women working in the textile industry, it would place the value of the 5000 quilts at \$96,000. If they had been paid at the going rate for men in the same industry, the pay would have been \$.50 per hour, raising the "value" of the labour to \$120,000.⁵² This would not include the cost of materials which could conceivably add another five to ten thousand dollars at the very least.

⁵²According to a table of wages in the Primary Textile Industry in Canada, Nov. 1943, the average wage per hour for women working in the Cotton Yarn and Cloth Industry in the Maritime Provinces was \$.403. For men it was \$.509. Table V, *The Labour Gazette*, Vol XLIV, October 1944 Supplement, Ottawa: Dept. of Labour.

Within recent years, researcher Ron Colman has been conducting a study in Nova Scotia to more accurately measure the province's economic and social progress. This new system of accounting, known as the GPI (Genuine Progress Index) is an attempt to factor in formerly invisible economic elements such as women's unpaid labour, volunteerism, and quality-of-life activities. According to a July 1998 newspaper article, a number of American economists have developed this form of measurement an alternative to the traditional GDP (Gross Domestic Product) method of accounting.⁵³ The new approach owes much to earlier critics, most notably New Zealander, Marilyn Waring, who has written and lectured extensively on the unfairness of a practice that virtually ignores the work of women and children, both productive and reproductive.⁵⁴

According to a recent study, Nova Scotians in the present day contribute 134 million hours a year in volunteer and civic work, which, if calculated at a rate of \$13 an hour would be valued at \$2 billion. Apparently, this amounts to three hours and 23 minutes of volunteer work per week per adult and exceeds the Canadian average by almost an hour.⁵⁵ This rather astounding figure does not include household work, caring for children and elderly family members, or unpaid overtime. As well, it does not factor in volunteer hours contributed by children. By the last year of the war, Junior Red Cross membership in Nova Scotia numbered 67,696 members. Their volunteer work and fund-raising supported both wartime relief and local projects.⁵⁶

⁵³"A new look at society", *The Chronicle-Herald*, Tuesday, July 21, 1998, C1.

⁵⁴Marilyn Waring, *If Women Counted* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1988).

⁵⁵*The Chronicle-Herald*, Friday, July 24, 1998, p. C1, "Volunteers constitute a powerful, invisible force", by Ralph Surette.

⁵⁶*Annual Report for the Year 1945*, CRCS, N.S. Division, p. 19.

Given that women (who do most of the volunteering⁵⁷) are increasingly under more time pressures with paid employment added to their home responsibilities, it is probable that the above figures represent a reduction in the number of volunteer hours per person from earlier periods, particularly during wartime. Women themselves often have no idea how many hours of volunteer work they do. In the survey questionnaire on women's volunteer work during war (see Appendix 3) distributed through Women's Institute, assorted church groups and a Jewish newsletter, one of the questions asked women how many hours a week they volunteered. Of the 98 returned forms, almost one quarter of the respondents did not circle the number of hours worked, yet, as often as not, their volunteer activities included several different tasks, such as knitting, quilting, making ditty bags, packing relief supplies, and entertaining service personnel.

Of the 75 respondents who checked off the number of volunteer hours worked, the average was 7.5 hours per week; over the course of the war, each person worked the equivalent of more than a year's worth of full-time employment (64 weeks), using today's standard of a 35-hour work week for 50 weeks of the year. Among this group, 52 were under the age of 20 when the war began; some were only young children.

This survey, carried out over fifty years after the end of the war, cannot be measured for accuracy. However, women who are not in the paid workforce have a difficult time keeping track of volunteer work hours. Women's work is often multi-tasked; meals are cooked while tending to the needs of children, several rows in the making of a sweater are knitted while waiting for a pot to boil or while relaxing after the meal. A relief quilt might

⁵⁷Surette, *Chronicle-Herald*, July 24, 1998.

be made while socializing with other women. The survey omitted to include a question concerning activities carried out to raise funds for relief, such as putting on suppers, teas, dances or concerts - common activities in all communities in the province. As well, growing vegetable gardens or raising animals to aid in food production is not calculated. Helping farmers harvest their crops has not been counted.

Two items appearing on the same page of the November 3, 1943 *Family Herald and Weekly Star* bring home the reality of farm children's volunteer labour. Both are worth quoting in total. The first is a letter that was sent in to the editor of the "Just for Girls" page by an Ontario teenager:

Dear Maud Kerr:-

I read all the letters by the other farm girls and decided to tell you what I do. I drive the tractor and last spring I did all the cultivating and some plowing. Dad didn't have any men to help him during the haying. He and I drew most of it ourselves. He pitched it on the wagon and I built the load. Then one of my sisters would put in the hayfork and I drove the tractor on the rope. Some of the hay we took off by hand. I also milked three cows night and morning and looked after the flowers. In the harvest I built most of the loads. We have a threshing machine and we threshed the grain and brought it in from the field. In Fall when Dad went out to thresh for the neighbors, my older sister and I went to a fruit farm and picked apples. We picked for a month and then when my father had finished threshing, I came home and helped to do the fall plowing. Last winter my father cut logs and stayed in a camp where a younger sister cooked and then I tended our 20 head of cattle. I also helped mother in the house and in my spare time knit and embroider. I am sixteen years old and not going to school this year. I have two years of High School and intend to go out and get more education when Jerry is licked and there is more help on the farm.

Amy Thomson

Editor Maud M. Kerr contributed her own letter. Perhaps, as a paid journalist, she could appreciate that young girls like Amy Thomson needed an advocate to highlight the worth of their work:

Dear Dad...

This is probably the one page you skip as you read your Family Herald every week, but won't you take a special peek at it this time, for I want to talk to you for a moment about that "hired man" of yours. "What hired man?" you ask. "I haven't any -my girls are the only help I have had for the past couple of years." Exactly, dad-those are the "hired men" I want to talk to you about. No denying it-they've done a swell job. You couldn't have carried on without them. They have worked for you as no hired man could have done-for they had your very special interest at heart. They never grumbled or talked about their backs aching or their hands being blistered with the rough work. There wasn't any glamour for them in a pair of dirty slacks or an old pair of overalls while their sisters in the various Services looked spruce and trim in their uniforms. They knew you needed them desperately-and they stuck to the job-they wouldn't let you or their country down. They knew that our fighting men couldn't exist without the farmer-and they saw to it that no man anywhere on the Fighting Front would suffer because they slacked on the job.

Now, Dad I've been wondering how you paid your "hired man" this year. It was a good year for you. Maybe it was the first time in years that you'd had a real break-that you could have paid your hired man in cash. Of course I know you give your girl a good home and clothes and a little spending money! So what? If you had a man working the same hours, would he have been content with those wages-when he could make real money in a war plant? I doubt it. But daughter hasn't demanded cash for value received-she has left it up to you. Won't you let her see "the laborer is worthy of his hire." It increases a girl's self-respect immeasurably, when she has something in the bank that she can really call her own. It makes all the little sacrifices worth while. I know it is just thoughtlessness on your part. Your intentions are very honorable-but don't let them be too remote. You have a grand opportunity just now to "share the wealth." Buy her a War Bond. A Fifty Dollar Bond would be nice-but a Hundred Dollar Bond just twice as nice. You'll think this over-won't you

Dad? Just show your appreciation of that "hired man"—a mighty fine girl.⁵⁸

Beneath the surface of the fawning language, Kerr was pushing "Dad" to do the unlikely – pay for his daughters' labours. Whether Kerr's` piece of cajolery had any impact on fathers is unknown, but it may have stirred a few girls to initiate action on their own behalf.

According to a recent publication out of the Canadian War Museum, "Canadian agriculture greatly assisted the Allies. Between 1939 and 1944 the productivity of the individual farm worker rose by a third."⁵⁹ No mention is made whether those farm workers were male or female and whether they were paid wages.

In trying to establish a sense of the magnitude of the relief work carried out in Nova Scotia during World War II, heavy reliance had been made on using the statistical information in the Red Cross records. The organization kept better records than most other groups; as well, many groups channelled their work through the Red Cross. However, within the Red Cross itself, the record-keeping varied considerably, depending on the committee. As well, for the years 1938, 1939 and 1940, the annual reports for the Nova Scotia Division of the Red Cross are missing; what little information exists from those crucial years comes from a much-abbreviated report that went to Canadian headquarters.

The minute books of Women's Institute and WCTU branches, church auxiliaries, IODE chapters, and independent groups that organized specifically

⁵⁸*Family Herald*, Nov. 3, 1943, p. 39.

⁵⁹Fred Gaffen, *The Road to Victory: A History of Canada in the Second World War* (Ottawa: Canadian War Museum, 1995), p.72.

to carry out relief work during the war⁶⁰ further attest to the phenomenal amount of relief work carried out by women's groups. While some groups raised funds for both relief and war-making purposes (for example, the Spitfire Fund), with the exception of the IODE, this was far less common than an exclusive focus on relief work. Out of 77 questionnaires filled in by Women's Institute members (Appendix 3)⁶¹, only seven respondents filled in that their group had also been involved in contributing to the Spitfire Fund.

The following statistical reports have been used as examples, primarily because of the unusually detailed record-keeping. These records help to provide a window on what was going on across the province.

In the first instance, the IODE report included deviates from the primary focus on relief work. However, it is included here, partially because of its detail, but also because it is an excellent example of how the military benefitted from the labours of women without having to pay them. Perhaps this group was exceptional in the amount of work they took on; however, judging by other group documents, it differs only in its meticulous, numerical record-keeping.

"A History of the War Effort of Scotia Chapter, I.O.D.E."⁶² is a remarkable document. It is obvious that the group, or some individual within the group, had a keen sense of the value of the work. The volunteers may have given their time freely, but by keeping such a record, a point was

⁶⁰The odd record has survived of independent groups. In Oakland, Lunenburg County, the War Workers Club formed to make quilts for relief; they carried on in the post-war period under the name Cosy Hour Club, continuing to make quilts for charitable purposes. Another wartime group in Halifax, the Aldgate Sewing Group, provided relief supplies to an area of London called Aldgate which had been bombed heavily. The group continued into the 1950s, providing post-war aid.

⁶¹In an earlier version of the questionnaire given to church groups, this question had not been asked.

⁶²PANS Micro.

made about the value they themselves placed upon the work they were doing:

Scotia Chapter, assisted by Colchester Chapter and a group of loyal friends operated a canteen and recreation room for servicemen, during the Second World War, in which the members take justifiable pride.

The rooms, equipped with funds made available by National Headquarters, and later refunded, were operated 42 hours weekly for a period of five years. Here suppers and light lunches, averaging more than 30,000 annually, were provided, primarily for men from nearby Debert camp.

So begins the history of the Scotia Chapter. The chronicler goes on to describe the facilities available, including "ping pong tables, piano, card tables, library, games, magazines, current newspapers from all parts of the Dominion, etc." The place was comfortably furnished and had an ice-cream and soft drink bar in addition to the fully-equipped kitchen. "In the writing corner, some 10,000 sheets of notepaper were given away annually."

This group held regular dances, bridge parties, and Sunday night singsongs for various of the companies stationed at Debert, "in 1944 alone there were 42 such dances when some 2500 men were entertained. At Christmas, free turkey dinners were served, and in addition, boxes of home-made food, gifts, etc. were personally delivered to all patients at Debert Hospital unable to leave for home." All members put in some time on Christmas day; these women were trying to create a home away from home. (Probably for some men, home had never been so good.) In 1944, convalescent soldiers were served suppers at the canteen and then taken to town to attend the movies; 718 suppers were served in this way. This work was taken on by the volunteers in addition to their regular canteen shifts.

The record goes on to count numerous hospitality services provided to various groups, including officers' wives, CWACs (Canadian Women's Auxiliary Corps), ex-Prisoners of war ("some 2500 pots of tea and plates of buttered toast...during their stop-over at Debert"), servicemen's families, and war brides.

The Scotia Chapter did not restrict its volunteer efforts to hospitality for servicemen and their families. They also took charge of serving light lunches in the local blood donor clinic from its inception in April 1942 until the end of the war. There were always four members on duty at each clinic including those held at Debert Camp and nearby points, working on rotation through the IODE membership. Many of the members also gave blood themselves. Three of the members were active in the Red Cross Nurses Aides and one of its members worked as one the physicians in charge.

Because of the proximity of the base camp, the activities of this group were more focused on giving personal services to military personnel than would normally occur with other women's service groups. However, the Scotia Chapter did not restrict themselves to hospitality services. They also carried out a program of knitting and sewing for overseas relief. Their output is worth recounting:

Many boxes of fine new clothing made and shipped to England, particularly children's clothes, many afghans, 20 complete layettes, comprising 560 articles, over 20.000 surgical dressings and 300 garments made for Red Cross.

The Convenor of knitting reports to the following as the total output for the war years:

350 prs. sox	65 scarves
525 sweaters	20 baby bonnets
125 helmets	50 pr. bootees
50 prs. mittens	20 baby jackets
12 prs. gloves	

Another project in 1943 was to make a collection of soft toys for evacuated children. Two hundred handmade rag dolls and animals were shipped to an evacuation centre in Wales. "Poodles, panda and teddy bears emerged from the rag bag like Venus from the proverbial foam!", enthuses the writer of this account. "In addition to the regular shipments of clothing to Britain, cartons of used warm clothing were sent for Polish Relief in Russia, over 600 garments in all." Fur and leather were also collected for seamen's jackets. ⁶³

The group filled 95 ditty bags and 75 personal property bags, they took an active part in the Camps library project, in which some 55,000 magazines and 500 books were donated. Many cartons of books were also forwarded to various ships; a library was collected for *H.M.C.S. Truro*, which was also the recipient of regular Christmas parcels. The group also provided assistance to servicemen's families in the way of groceries, dental work and glasses.

The chapter raised money in numerous ways and donated to the many funds set up for different aspects of war and war relief work. Probably the most patriotic of women's groups, IODE gave much support to the military cause, conducting drives for the Bomber Fund and the Spitfire Fund.

The Scotia Chapter, because so much of their work was directly linked to serving military personnel, offers an excellent example of how women's labours are not registered in the official accounts. One might be able to argue that hospitality and entertainment services were non-essential "frills", but for morale boosting, the military powers absolutely depended on women here

⁶³A project taken on by various women's groups, but particularly IODE, was the making of leather jackets and vests for seamen on mine sweepers. They were made from recycled leather gloves, purses, fur coats, etc. Some of them must have been quite spectacular patchwork pieces, with leathers in a variety of colours.

and elsewhere to provide these services. The provision of dental care, clothing and groceries comes under a category that begins to sound much more like essential services.⁶⁴

For records concerning relief aid, it is useful to look at a sampling of Red Cross work. In the 1945 Report of the Women's War Work Committee, Chairperson Mrs. F.A. Ladd stated:

The Statistical Report will show only in small measure the work done as so much that we did cannot be recorded in statistics...If a record of the number of hours worked had been kept I feel sure it would be unbelievable.

With only the statistics to tell us what was done, they are worth listing. These are for the year 1945:

Statistical Summary Supplies Made by Nova Scotia Division

Knitted Comforts for Men made during the year	42,282
Women's Division Knitted Comforts	779
Hospital supplies	30,746
Surgical dressings	33,263
Miscellaneous	49

Clothing for Civilian Relief

Infants	9,371
Girls	8,765
Boys	5,400
Women	1,890
Quilts	4,664
Miscellaneous	266

We supplied to ships at this port from National and Divisional stock 38,305 articles of Hospital Supplies, 299,009 Surgical

⁶⁴Cynthia Enloe's statement, "Women are being used by militaries to solve their nagging problems of manpower availability, quality, health, morale and 'readiness'" (*Does Khaki Become You?*, p. 9) was referring to the present day, but could be applied equally well to the situation during World War II.

Dressings and 10,794 Knitted Comforts. In addition, 65,187 articles consisting of games, toilet articles, clothing, etc. were purchased for ships.⁶⁵

The 1945 Red Cross record contains reports from 14 committees, some of these were related to war relief and others were concerned with non-war activities, such as outpost hospitals and school relief. The following report of the Red Cross Corps has been included here because the records provide concrete numbers in terms of hours of work.

Mrs. H.P. MacKeen was the divisional commandant of the Red Cross Corps in Nova Scotia. There were three sections in the division: motor transport, nursing auxiliary and food administration; there were detachments in Glace Bay, Sydney, Truro and Halifax. Their tasks were many and will not be enumerated here, but as MacKeen said in her brief report "...their work, however, has not been brief, amounting to a total of 56,234 hours during the past year."⁶⁶ If one imagines the average worker of today paid for a 35-hour week for 50 weeks of the year, this amount of volunteer hours translates into 32 full-time positions. In actuality, this work was spread out among an average of 246 volunteers, but even at that rate, each volunteer put in the equivalent of 6.5 weeks of full time work over the course of the year. MacKeen closes her report with the remark "...I regret that those who do the most menial jobs and those who work at great personal sacrifice cannot get more praise and more thanks." For some, work truly had to be its own reward.

When the war's end was finally declared in 1945, soldiers returned, women in the workplace were sent back home or to their former work in

⁶⁵1945 Annual Report, N.S. Division of the Canadian Red Cross, pp. 18,19.

⁶⁶*Ibid.*, p.33.

low-paying jobs. Homemakers continued to do all their productive and reproductive work, and adjust to returned husbands and sons who had varying physical and emotional needs to be met. They also continued to provide civilian aid overseas. Not allowing herself or her cohorts to let down their guard at war's end, Mrs. Ladd of the Red Cross Women's War Work Committee downplayed the work already done by remarking in her 1945 report, "I feel there is too much to be done in the future to dwell on the past...."⁶⁷ The Women's Work Committee dropped the word "War" from its title, but little else changed. It took years before Europe was to recover from the devastation of the war. By the time that the most needy areas were on their feet, other wars and disasters ensured that women's groups would never run out of relief projects to demand their attention. In 1955, shipments to distressed areas in Egypt, Germany, Lebanon, the British West Indies and Pakistan were recorded. This reflects what would become a more common pattern of aid to the Southern Hemisphere, as Africa, Southeast Asia, and South America became the primary areas for disaster relief. By 1966, tropical countries were receiving 75% of overseas aid sent from Nova Scotia. It was at this point that the Red Cross reported, "We were sorry to have to tell the branches that we do not require quilts for overseas. We have, however, material still on hand for those who like to make quilts - these are needed for our own disasters in the province."⁶⁸

In 1977, a name change occurred whereby the Women's Work Committee of Red Cross became the Assistance - International and Domestic (A.I.D.) committee. This change reflected a shift from shipping handmade

⁶⁷ 1945 Annual Red Cross Report, p.42.

⁶⁸ Annual Red Cross Report for 1966. Nova Scotia was known for its quilt production. When Britain and Holland suffered floods in the early 1950s, one third of the 7500 quilts that went abroad from Canada were made in Nova Scotia, which has only 4% of the nation's population.

relief supplies to making arts and crafts for sale to raise money for overseas aid. Higher transportation costs made shipping more prohibitive. The annual reports began to emphasize the amount of money raised from craft sales, although a record of the number of quilts produced was still kept. By the mid 1980s the committee had another name change to CREATIONS. By 1988, the statistics for the number of quilts produced for disaster relief were no longer kept, although they were still being made. This change coincided with a man taking over the management of the Emergency Services Department, which was the division created in the restructuring process to take over that particular function of relief delivery.⁶⁹

In all probability, the decision by a paid male to drop the maintenance of such statistical records was regarded simply as an administrative efficiency measure. However, it effectively made women's unpaid volunteer labour even less visible.

The Red Cross in this province was initiated by women and the volunteer work has almost all been done by women. However, the paid managers, particularly those in the most important positions, have been men. While the Women's Work Committee was but one branch of work carried out by women, its identification highlighted the concrete nature of women's production. The inventories of supplies made and shipped overseas may not have been given a monetary value, but women themselves were able to understand the currency of sweaters, quilts and socks. Once the name Women's Work disappeared, so too, the currency changed to dollars and cents. This may have meant more to the Red Cross treasury, but less to the women who made the supplies. Something was lost in the translation.

⁶⁹1988-1989 Creations Program Report, CRS, NS Division.

As is evident in Ronald Colman's recent study of volunteerism in Nova Scotia, the currency that has much more value for many women is not measured in monetary terms. The attempt in this chapter to give a monetary value of the work that women carried out during the wars in some ways compromises that work to a value system that has always failed to recognize women and their work. The above exercise merely exposes the disparity between two realities.

Chapter 5

Conclusion

In the preceding chapters, four aspects of women's wartime experience have been explored. Chapter One dealt with women's organizational history. Due to women's organizational strength at the beginning of both wars, their entry into relief and support efforts was immediate, significant and essential. Ironically, it may have been that women were better prepared than the government and the military to mobilize their particular 'womanly' wartime efforts.

In Canada, and especially in Nova Scotia, volunteerism across a wide spectrum of the population has a long and solid history. As stated before, even today, Nova Scotia's record of volunteerism exceeds the national average. Coupled with the province's relative isolation and limited resources, it may well be that a history of wartime demands on their unpaid labour has conditioned women to greater output. During the First World War, in particular, Nova Scotian women's organizations bore the largest burden in the country because of the province's strategic location. Furthermore, in spite of Canada's distance from 'the front', Halifax did become part of the war zone in 1917 with the Halifax Explosion, placing even greater demands on volunteers.

Large organizations like the National Council of Women may have been high-powered with leadership coming from well-heeled, ambitious members of the middle and upper class; however, the success of women's efforts depended on more than leadership. Without the grass-roots involvement of countless numbers of homemakers who worked very much at the local level in their Women's Institute branches, church groups and other organizations, the production of relief supplies and delivery of services could never have been accomplished. As Chapter Four pointed out, the lack

of true accounting and acknowledgement of women's labours during wartime has created a huge gap in our understanding of war history. By focussing on war as a men's project, women's contributions (and culpability) in war have been rendered invisible. The significance of women's involvement needs to be more widely understood.

Women's willingness to participate in volunteer wartime efforts have been cast in a particular light, one which this thesis would suggest is limiting and lacking in complexity. Women did engage in patriotic support of Canada's entry into war, but because of the constraints placed on civil liberties during wartime, it is difficult to know the extent to which women and men with ambivalent or negative feelings about Canada's involvement in the wars were simply silenced. As well, conscientious objection was not registered for women because they were not required to fight. In the case of Mennonites, for example, Marilyn Epp has stated that because women were not conscripted, "Mennonite women have by and large been left out of the great stories of non-resistance and alternative service."¹ Furthermore, humanitarian aid was given by both pacifists and patriots.

In Nova Scotia, it is difficult to discern support for absolute pacifism during either wars. Chapter Two presented the example of Mary Russell Chesley and her daughter, Mary Albee Chesley to show that during the Great War, some were keeping abreast of the international pacifist cause and through their efforts, women were provided with the alternative news through organizational annual reports and newsletters.

The pacifist voice in the interwar years seemed to gain some strength, but as the Second World War loomed, the distinction between peace-loving

¹Marilyn Epp, "'Unite We Stand, Divided We Fall' - Canadian Mennonite Women as COs in World War II", *Mennonite Life*, Vol. 48, No. 3, Sept. 1993, p. 7.

and pacifist positions became more marked. Women who had been working throughout the inter-war period in their women's organizations to promote peace through educational programs abandoned their work for relief efforts. While absolute pacifism may never have had a great following, as Veronica Strong-Boag has said, pacifists during the inter-war period made Canadians pause and think.² Once war was in full swing, however, the tempering influence of pacifist thought was quickly overwhelmed by the propaganda machine.

In Chapter Three, the intent has been to look more carefully at the gendered aspects of propaganda, particularly as it was promoted in Canada. Because war was a national project, the propaganda was managed on a national level. During the First World War, posters, newspapers and film were the chief vehicles for propaganda. During the Second World War, the National Film Board, the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, the national newspapers like the *Family Herald & Weekly Star*, magazines such as *Maclean's*, *Chatelaine*, and *Saturday Night* all played their part in promoting a united Canada engaged in the great fight for world democracy. That individual civil liberties like freedom of speech or objection to the war were prohibited in this fight for democracy seems largely to have been overlooked or excused in the retelling of war history.

Elshtain in *Women and War* states:

'History teaches' us (the collective female 'we') that Beautiful Souls have not only not succeeded in stopping the wounding and slaughter of sons, brothers, husbands, fathers, but have more often exhorted men to the task, sustained their efforts, honored their deeds, mourned their loss. But history does not

²Strong-Boag, "Peace-Making Women: Canada 1919-1939" in *Women and Peace*, ed. Pierson, p. 184.

teach; rather, we 'teach' it, by making it 'speak' to us in various ways, by remembering this and forgetting that.³

Elshtain goes on to suggest a revitalized discussion of just-war thinking as an approach to 'teaching' history. Without entering into a larger discussion in that direction, this thesis would like to suggest that there is still much to be done in the 'teaching' of history through the remembering of different stories from the ones in the standard repertoire.

Military historian John Keegan stated that "the history of the Second World War has not yet been written...the passions it aroused still run too high, the wounds it inflicted still cut too deep, and the unresolved problems it left still bulk too large for any one historian to strike an objective balance."⁴

It seems rather simplistic to imagine that there will ever be one definitive history, let alone an objective one, of such a complex time. Keegan's own exploration of wartime historiography is bound by traditional notions of what and who make history, focusing on malestream political and military history, thereby rendering it limited in scope. A more recent article by Keegan in the *Chronicle Herald*⁵ elicited the following letter to the editor:

After reading about the Battle of the Atlantic Sunday, I realize how we've been taken down the road of myth and legend. All this 'he went heroically to war' and 'he died for democracy' is far from the truth. He went to war for 'adventure,' to get away from the humdrum 1930s. He wanted excitement, battle, love and heroic deeds to whet his appetite.
...A note to the young, as one of many thousands who served in the Second World War.... It is inglorious, dirty and treacherous, and anything at all we can do to avoid it we must...⁶

³Elshtain, *Women and War*, p. 149.

⁴John Keegan, *The Battle for History: Re-fighting World War Two*, The Barbara Frum Lectureship, co-sponsored by U of T, Random House of Canada and CBC (Toronto: Vintage Books, 1995), p. 31.

⁵John Keegan, "Honor and Horror", *The Sunday Herald*, May 10, 1998, C4.

⁶*Chronicle Herald*, May 29, 1998.

Lambasting the newspaper and Keegan for perpetuating propaganda about the glories of war, the writer, Victor Hesketh, declares that he abhors the "cloying maudlinism that surrounds our ceremonies".

Historian Jonathan Vance looks at such memorializing and analyzes the myth of war as enobling sacrifice.⁷ However, in spite of detailed dissection, in the final analysis, Vance would enjoin us not to abandon the myth. If holding on to the vision of heroic sacrifice kept most people from "surrendering to desolation", Vance suggests that we honour that choice.⁸

It would seem that enough time has gone by (especially since the First World War) that we could, perhaps, recognize and empathize with such an acceptance of the myth by large numbers of Canadians, but that we need not perpetuate it. As well, it is mindful to remember that the myth did not serve everyone.

In our memorials dedicated to remembering the war dead, the only public role for Woman is as the Mourner. Mrs. C. S. Woods who lost eight sons in the Great War and was a participant in the unveiling of the Vimy Memorial in 1936 was an archetypal figure of the woman in mourning.⁹ She was part of a *tableau* created to evoke a certain response. The viewers were not invited to question whether this woman could have influenced another outcome. They were not asked to question whether this woman was mad to allow or encourage her eight sons to go off to war. Perhaps she tried to keep them at home. This is not known. She was not put on display for people to question the rightness of her sacrifice.

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

⁸*Ibid.*, pp. 266-267.

⁹Jennings, *Canada in the First World War and the Road to Vimy Ridge*, p. 19.

Such memorializing has been kept alive by the yearly Remembrance Day cenotaph ceremonies in which there is always a 'war mother'. Will such a practice come to an end when the last war mother from World War II dies or will a new mourner be found to take her place?

These questions are not to imply that the tragedies of war are not worth mourning and that the loss of sons, husbands and brothers is trivial. It is to suggest that such memorializing does not create any new understanding of history, but merely perpetuates a particular, static leitmotif.

Women need to know more about their own diverse history in order to determine if the decisions that they choose to make in time of war are informed by more than nationalist rhetoric and a reactive 'beautiful soul' response to the country's call to arms. Women have been excluded from positions of political decision-making and also from serving in armed combat. As that situation gradually changes, the wartime gendered divisions of the 'beautiful soul' and 'just warrior' will have less viability. Both men and women will have to find new ways of thinking about war. Elshtain's warning is this: that the flattening of gendered positions will not place us in a situation where we just as happily accept young women as well as young men coming home in body bags.¹⁰

Elshtain takes a position she calls the 'chastened patriot', asserting a belief that wars are inevitable and that more serious consideration of just-war theories and principles could allow for a more nuanced and humane approach to what is and is not ethical in times of conflict. While her position is a valid and well-considered one, rooted in a more realistic vision of how the political world works, this writer would suggest that those idealists, such

¹⁰Elshtain, *Women and War*, Epilogue, pp. 259-270.

as the Mary Chesleys, with their belief in the sacredness of all human life are absolutely necessary in helping even the just-war theorists develop ethical policy. Just-war theory can easily slide into justification theory as conflicts escalate.

In Nova Scotia and elsewhere today, there are vocal peace advocates who, in fact, make very similar arguments to those made by women like Mary Russell Chesley who were involved in the international peace and arbitration movement one hundred years ago. Chesley and her sister peace advocates argued that one could not end war-making by going to war. They understood that there were strong financial gains to be made by some in the perpetuation of wars. They also predicted that punitive post-war settlements would ensure that the defeated parties would harbour grievances that would eventually cause escalation into future war-making.

The twentieth century has been a century of continuous warfare. The hopes for new international understandings with which people greeted the turn of the century seem now, almost one hundred years later, to be even further out of reach as nationalism and ethnic factionalism run rampant. Controversy exists over whether the humanitarian aid, which people in Canada and Nova Scotia have been always willing to support, does, in fact, help to perpetuate the problems in warring countries. In the case of current Western economic sanctions against a country such as Iraq, it would seem that such punitive measures only serve to cause more suffering among the innocent civilian population without having any real impact on the power structure of a ruling dictator. In trying to determine who the real villains are and who poses the worst threat to world peace, one finds it difficult to wholeheartedly trust or endorse those considered 'allies'.

During the First and Second World War, atrocities were perpetuated by both sides in the conflicts. In particular, the bombings of Dresden, Hiroshima and Nagasaki by Allies during World War Two forever altered the picture of the 'just war' into which the Allies sailed with such righteous conviction. In the post-war years, women in Nova Scotia and elsewhere in Canada sent relief supplies to both Allied countries and former enemy countries, for innocent victims were everywhere.

How Canadians would respond to another war on the scale of the previous world wars is unknown. It may very well be that they would roll up their sleeves and pitch in with the same vigour as before. However, there will be a shift. The sock-knitters are fewer in number now; women do not have the same 'feminine' skills that were so usefully applied in past wars. As well, will there be more women among the 'just warriors' and more men among the 'beautiful souls'? The quashing of civil liberties might not be so readily accepted by citizens, particularly among those groups (the majority of the population, in fact), who have won an expansion of rights over the intervening years - aboriginals, other ethnic minorities, women and homosexuals.

A larger pacifist voice might be heard, although it would not have enough impact to stop the charge of patriots. Nevertheless, the pacifist voice would, hopefully, keep the public aware of when the 'just war' becomes unjust. Women's circumstances in another war will be different; the question is whether their positions will have any impact on changing the direction of national policy. In the past, Canadian women were remarkable agents in their organization of efforts to alleviate suffering. They were, however, not engaged in the decision to enter war. It remains to be seen what roles women will play in any future decisions to make war or to make peace.

Afterword

This thesis was completed prior to NATO's initiation of bombing in Yugoslavia (March 1999). The theoretical questions posed in the preceding chapter become frighteningly concrete in light of Canada's participation in acts of warfare that have lacked government consultation with the citizens of the country and are being conducted without United Nations sanction. Once begun, aggressive action is difficult to stop, particularly when attacks do not prove effective in eliminating the targeted enemy.

One can only hope that historians fifty years from now will not be writing about women's participation in World War III.

APPENDIX 1
123rd Battalion Recruiting Leaflet
To The Women of Canada

In addressing these few remarks exclusively to the women of the country, it is to be understood that we have arrived at that period in the struggle where we realize the utter futility of recruiting meetings.

The men who have as yet failed to join the colors will not be influenced by any eloquence from any platform.

The reason? The man we are trying to reach is the same man who will never listen and the man who never for a moment considers the remarks as applicable to himself.

And so now we appeal to the women - the women who are the mainspring of all masculine action.

In the First Division of the C.E.F. we swept up the young manhood of the country in the first enthusiasm - we secured the cream of the country in the men who flocked to the colors taking thought of neither yesterday or tomorrow.

At the second call men were stopping to calculate and hesitate. Since then the hesitation has developed into stagnation. Men who see a desperate winter ahead are joining, and a few others; the remainder are deadwood.

The reason? Firstly, the man who prefers to allow others to fight for him so that he may pursue a comfortable occupation, preserve his youth, be safe from danger, and explain to his friends that he would gladly join the colors could he obtain a commission - and yet take no steps towards that end.

Second. The man who is influenced by the selfish maternal appeal either from mother or wife.

Third. The man who claims his business would go to pieces without him, but is satisfied to let others throw away life and youth to sustain that business.

Fourth. The others - call them what you may.

And now my Appeal to Women

You entertain these wretched apologies in your homes. You accept their donations, their theatre tickets, their flowers, their cars. You go with them to watch the troops parade.

You foully wrong their manhood by encouraging them to perform their parlor tricks while Europe is burning up.

While Canada is in imminent danger of suffering the same were it not for the millions who are cheerfully enduring the horrors and privations of bloody warfare for the millions who stay home watching the war pictures and drinking tea.

Bar them out, you women. Refuse their invitations, scorn their attentions. For the love of Heaven, if they won't be men, then you be women. Tell them to come in uniform, no matter how soiled or misfitting - bar out the able-bodied man who has no obligations, show that you despise him. Tell

him to join the colors while he can do so with honor. And the day is not far off when he will have to go. The old mother has issued the last call to her sons.

Make your son, your husband, your lover, your brother, join now while he yet retains the remnants of honor. Compulsory training is in the offing.

Get the apologist, the weakling, the mother's pet, in the service. Weed out all, and we will find out who are the cowards. Analyze your friends - you women - refuse your attentions, and tell them why. Make them wake up.

GOD BLESS HIM THE KING CALLS!
JOIN ROYAL GRENADIERS OVERSEAS
BATTALION, 123rd C.E.F.¹

¹Barbara Wilson, *Ontario and the First World War* (Toronto: The Champlain Society, 1977), pp.19-21, taken from *Evening Telegram*, Dec. 3, 1915.

APPENDIX 2

**Statistical Report on Supplies Shipped Overseas for the Year 1941
From the 27th Annual Report of the
Canadian Red Cross Society
Nova Scotia Division**

Overseas cases of Red Cross Supplies and Civilian Relief packed by Branches at Amherst, Middleton, New Glasgow, Truro, Yarmouth, Windsor and the Provincial Warehouse, Halifax, and shipped through the Red Cross Office Pier 2 to England.

A total of 10 ships carried 669 cases of Red Cross supplied valued at \$102,049.61. These cases contained articles made in Nova Scotia. 285 of the above contained the following:

Bath Robes	74
Bed Jackets	64
Bias Bandages	131
Caps, Balaclavas and Helmets	3756
Calots	84
Dressing Gowns	30
Gloves and Mitts	21270
Handkerchiefs	1008
Hot Water Bottle Covers	53
Face Masks	60
Pneumonia Jackets	87
Pyjamas	680
Pillow Cases	480
Scarves and T.N.T.I.	10,430
Sheets	216
Socks	51,431
Socks, Seamen's	882
Socks, Hospital	476
Sweaters, all kinds	12,243
Surgeon's Gowns	93
T. Binders	108
Wristlets	408
Surgeon's Caps	26
Total	----- 104,090
Total Value	\$58,567.97

384 Cases contained Civilian Relief and Women's Territorial Services, as follows:

51,167 articles of New Clothing for Men, Women, Girls, Boys, and Infants, and knitted comforts for the Territorial Services.

Valued at \$43,481.64. (Included in the above figure are over 5,000 quilts).

APPENDIX 3
Survey of Women's Volunteer Work during War

During the First and Second World Wars, women worked both in the paid workforce and the volunteer workforce. The present survey is aimed at anyone who did any unpaid volunteer work during World War II. The information gathered will assist in the formulation of a Master's thesis focussing on volunteer efforts of women (and girls) in N.S. during both world wars.

Some questions will require circling of appropriate answers and there may be more than one category that fits your situation. Please circle as many answers as needed to describe your work.

1. During the war, were you involved in paid and/or volunteer work?
2. Were you a resident of Nova Scotia? If not, where were you living?
3. Did you live in a city, town, village or rural setting?

Paid work **If you did not do paid work, go to Question 7.**

4. If in the paid workforce, how many hours a week did you work?
5. What kind of work were you doing?
Had you been working before the war began?
If yes, was your wartime employment the same as your pre-war job?
If no, what type of work did you do before the war?
6. Did you continue working after the war?

Unpaid Volunteer Work

7. Approximately how many hours a week did you work as a volunteer? Circle
1-3 4-6 7-10 11-15 16-20 21-30 31-40 more than 40
8. What kind of work did you do?
 - Knitting •Rolling bandages •Food Preservation •Preparing ditty bags
 - Quilting •Salvage work •Packing relief supplies •Office/Administrative
 - Making seamen's jackets •Sewing for overseas relief •Driving
 - Entertaining service personnel •Immigration/refugee work •Other - please describe
9. Did you or your group discuss and make decisions about what other types of volunteer work to support— eg. did you focus on relief work or were you also involved in raising funds for spitfires, etc.?
10. Did you carry out your volunteer work alone or in a group?
 - Was your volunteer work done at home? •at church/synagogue? •in school?
 - in a community hall? •in another person's home? •other - describe

11. How old were you when the war began?
12. Did you have children at that time? If so, how many?
13. Was your volunteer work done within the setting of an organization?
- Red Cross •Junior Red Cross •Church/Synagogue group (Women's or Youth)
 - I.O.D.E. •Women's Institute •Other - describe
14. The following is a list of possible motivations for your engaging in volunteer work. Rank these in order of their importance to you at the time.
- | | most
important | | | | | least
important |
|--|-------------------|---|---|---|---|--------------------|
| Had family members or friends serving overseas | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| To provide humanitarian relief | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| To be community-spirited | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| For patriotic reasons | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| For social contact | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| Other - describe | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
15. If your own mother went through the First World War, what do you recall of her reaction and response to the Second World War?
16. Was her reaction and response different from your own? If so, how did it differ?
17. Did you or any woman in your family keep a diary, scrapbook, photo album or group's minute book during World War I or II? If yes, would it be available for study?

Thank you for your cooperation. Please mail to:

Sharon MacDonald
38 Ravenrock Lane
Halifax, NS, B3M 3A1
phone: (902)-457-0338

If you have any questions or wish to give added information, I would be pleased to hear from you. Feel free to photocopy this questionnaire and give to others in your community.

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abbreviations:

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 BA - Baptist Archives, Acadia University, Wolfville
 CRC - Canadian Red Cross, Ottawa
 DA - Diocesan Archives (Anglican Church), Halifax
 MCA - Maritime Conference Archives (United Church), Halifax
 NAC - National Archives of Canada, Ottawa
 NSDCRC - Nova Scotia Division, Canadian Red Cross, Halifax
 PANS - Public Archives of Nova Scotia, Halifax
 UoT - University of Toronto Library, Toronto

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