THE EASTERN TOWNSHIPS IN THE FIRST WORLD WAR: THE FIRST HUNDRED DAYS

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In June, 1914, a group of Sherbrooke citizens met to organize the Sherbrooke Peace Centenary Committee. Like many across Canada and the United States, they were making plans to celebrate the century of peace that had existed between the two countries since the treaty ending the War of 1812 had been signed at Ghent on Christmas Eve, 1814. Two days after the Sherbrooke meeting, Archduke Ferdinand was assassinated in Sarajevo. When it came time to celebrate the Peace Centennial, Canada was at war. Thirty-two thousand Canadians, including several hundred from the Eastern Townships, celebrated Christmas Eve in uniform overseas.

One of those Townshippers was Charlie Westgate of Cookshire. He was with the Canadian Expeditionary Force on Salisbury Plain. Christmas in England had seemed strange for someone from southern Quebec.

> It does not seem to me as if Xmas has really come and gone, [he wrote his mother] no snow that day, the grass nearly as green as in the spring. We had to imagine ourselves at home with a couple of feet of snow and about 20 degrees below.

He was understandably homesick. "I would have liked to be home at Xmas," confessed Charlie, "…it could not be."[1]

The Eastern Townships region of Quebec is a good place to test some of the generalizations that have been made about Canada and Quebec during the First World War, particularly those concerning the attitudes of English- and French-speaking Canadians towards the War. One of the most contentious issues to bedevil the four years of war arose as early as the first month as the first Canadian contingent was training at Valcartier.[2] Some English Canadians drew attention to the apparent and dramatic discrepancy between the number of French and British Canadians in uniform. There were a great number of men with names like Charlie Westgate; comparatively few with names like Maurice Provost. According to their cal-

culations, there were only 1,245 French Canadians, less than four percent of the Canadian Expeditionary Force.[3]

Those who defended French Canada's contribution emphasized that French Canadians were native born, many generations removed from their European roots and without the same emotional ties to either Britain or France. Of the nearly 33,000 so-called British-Canadian volunteers on the other hand, 70 percent had been born in Britain; their mothers were in England, Scotland and Ireland, not in Canadian towns like Cookshire. English Canada was also described as a more urban society, hit hard by the depression of 1913–1914 and where large numbers of unemployed were available for, and attracted to, military service. Quebec was portrayed as a more rural society where the young men were needed on the farms. Their economic role was declared to be vital to increased agricultural production, one of the most important objectives of the national war effort.

How did the demographic, economic and social structures of the Eastern Townships compare with Quebec and Canada? According to the Census of 1911, the French Canadians were in a comfortable majority in the region, representing 73% of the 240,000 people who resided there and nearly reflecting the balance in the province as a whole, where French Canadians represented 80% of the population.[4] English-speaking Townshippers were listed under the general category of "British Origin"; "Canadian Origin" or "American Origin" had no place in the 1911 Census of Canada. Thus it is impossible to know how many residents of the region were the descendants of the American pioneers who had opened the area for settlement around the turn of the nineteenth century. A Townshipper who spoke English in 1911 and who may have been the descendant of a United Empire Loyalist or of an early American settler when asked his or her origin would have had to say English, Irish, Scotch, or perhaps German or Dutch, depending on the origin of the father.

Those of "British Origin" represented 25% of the population of the region. The vast majority of these 60,000 people had been born in North America: 52,000 or 86 percent. With respect to place of birth, they were much like their French-speaking neighbours. Taken together British and French Canadians accounted for 98% of the total population of 240,000, and 94% were native-born.

This meant that there were very few of what some contemporaries called "the foreign element." In this regard the Eastern Townships was very different from the Prairies or large Canadian cities. There was nothing to compare with Berlin, Ontario, where a statue of the

Kaiser was proudly displayed. German Canadians may have been the third largest ethnic group in Canada after the British and the French, but there were only 546 people of German origin in all of the Eastern Townships and only 36 of these were males born in Germany. There was a concentration of 84 Austro-Hungarians in the mining towns of Megantic, and when 600 pounds of explosives disappeared in the early days of the war, they were immediately suspected.[5] After the initial scare, though, there would be little fear of an uprising of German or Austro-Hungarian reservists in the Townships.

The nearly 14,000 Townshippers of Irish origin were included under the general British category in the 1911 Census. It has been assumed that the vast majority were English-speaking, although there was probably a significant rate of intermarriage between Irish- and French-Canadian Roman Catholics. If the one person of Irish origin in St. Alphonse, in Compton County, had married within the parish he or she would have had to take a French-Canadian partner, for the 247 other inhabitants were all French Canadian. The language of the household and the children can only be conjectured. Prime Minister Louis St. Laurent was born in 1882 in the village of Compton. His mother was Irish and his father French Canadian. According to his biographer, he spent his early years under the impression that mothers naturally spoke English and fathers, French.[6]

Quebec was not particularly rural, despite what romantics and apologists urged. After Ontario, Quebec was the most industrialized and urbanized province. The Eastern Townships on the other hand was much more representative of the old rural Quebec that was passing. Seventy-five percent of Townshippers lived in rural parishes, townships and villages. Sherbrooke was the only city which had more than 15,000 people. The next largest centre was Thetford Mines with just over 7,000. There were only nine other urban centres with more than 2,000 people.

The city and towns of the Eastern Townships, moreover, were not bastions of English-speakers. Of the 54,000 people who lived in urban centres, over 57% were French Canadian, and they were the majority in Sherbrooke and every other town. English-speaking Townshippers were still overwhelmingly rural. Nearly four out of every five lived in townships, parishes and villages, almost the same percentage as French Canadians in the region. There was a geographical distinction in the rural areas: English-speaking Townshippers were concentrated in the southern counties; French-Canadian Townshippers in the northern. Thus, like the Townshipper

who spoke French, his English-speaking counterpart was typically native-born and living in a rural area. Would then reactions to the war be comparable?

After language and geographical location within the region, perhaps the most significant cultural difference between the two groups was the presence of eight-and-a-half thousand people in the English-speaking community who had been born in the United Kingdom. This may have helped to reinforce a British identity and imperial connection. On the other hand, such sentiments may have been tempered by an almost equal number of people who had been born in the United States. In any event, when war was declared and flags were unfurled, many did not know how to fly the Union Jack properly. The Sherbrooke Regiment's colour-sergeant observed that many patriotic citizens of Sherbrooke were flying it upside down. They could not be blamed, he added, for the local post office had been flying it that way regularly.[7] Some public service organizations had difficulty even finding a flag for their meetings. One of the first wartime acts of a local chapter of the Imperial Order of the Daughters of the Empire was to purchase a Union Jack to be loaned out for public meetings of patriotic organizations.[8] Farther north, in Richmond, the County Council decided that the war warranted the painting of the flagpole at the court house to accommodate a new flag. In nearby Melbourne, one resident, described as a "well-known citizen," asked why all the flags were flying. "To jolt the German aviators," he was told.[9]

There were two other important features of the English-speaking community. First, it was the largest English-speaking community in the province off the island of Montreal. Second, the Eastern Townships was the only region in the province where English-speaking settlers—American pioneers and emigrants from the British isles—had arrived before the French. These features contributed to the lingering impression that the region was predominantly English. As late as 1990, the newspaper *La Tribune*, celebrating the 80th anniversary of its founding in 1910, congratulated the "… fondateurs courageux qui, dans un environnement anglophone, faisaient le pari de publier un quotidien francophone."[10]

The economic and social positions occupied by some English-speakers was even more important in giving the Townships an English character. English-speaking farmers had a reputation of being more successful than their French-speaking neighbours. Perhaps it was due to their ancestors having been first on the scene, and being able to select the best locations. English farms would have been

farmed for more generations, and theoretically, should have had more acreage under production and equity accumulated for capital investment in machinery.

The region's mines and mills were also owned and managed by English-speakers. These had been developed by private capital, most of it from outside the region. Their products were extracted or manufactured for national and international markets. The more the Eastern Townships industrialized, the more the dominance of the English language and its speakers was reinforced.

This is not to say that all English-speaking Townshippers were successful farmers or businessmen. Far from it. Nor is it to suggest that French Canadians were subsistence farmers, hewers of wood, drawers of water, or industrial workers. There was a French-speaking elite in the Townships, but because of the economy's structure, its activity was confined to the professions, small-scale enterprises and politics.

The social domination of the Eastern Townships by English-speakers was reflected in the local militia. There were six militia regiments in the Eastern Townships before the First World War. Four were mounted rifle units and were situated like the points of the compass. To the north, there was the 11th Hussars of Richmond County. In the east, in Megantic and Compton, there was the 7th Hussars. Regimental regalia proclaimed "United Empire Loyalists" but this was nonsense. The 7th's ranks were filled with Morrisons, Macleods and McDonalds, reflecting the Scottish character of the counties' early colonists who arrived early in the 19th century. Ironically, in Shefford, Brome and Missisquoi, the westernmost counties where the descendants of the few Loyalists were concentrated, the local regiment was called the 13th Scottish Light Dragoons. In the south, the 26th Stanstead Dragoons protected the border with the United States "For King and Empire."

The first priority of the Canadian militia was to defend against an American invasion. Eastern Townshippers, many the descendants of Americans, with family and friends across the line and about to celebrate the peace centennial, probably found it difficult to take this official threat seriously. The inspection reports for the summer camps of 1913 and 1914 described each unit as seriously under strength. Eight years earlier the Militia Council had refused the 7th's request that the Governor-General be made the Hussars' Honorary Colonel because of its poor efficiency. Major W. Melrose of the 26th Stanstead Dragoons published a book just before the war to try to arouse more enthusiasm. Entitled *The Stanstead Cavalry,* it traced the

military traditions of voluntary service back to the American colonists and the French and Indian Wars but admitted, "We in the Province of Quebec do not take quite as keen an interest in our County regiments as they do in Ontario and the West…."[11]

The country militia regiments, although reorganized, renumbered and renamed from time to time, did have a long history in the Eastern Townships. This meant that almost all of the officers and non-commissioned officers were English-speaking. This was not the case in the city of Sherbrooke where there were two infantry regiments, the long established and English-speaking 53rd Sherbrooke Regiment and the recently formed French-speaking *54e Carabiniers de Sherbrooke*. From the point of view of efficiency and manpower, the 53rd was much like the mounted rifle regiments in the country. In 1913 it was six officers and 235 men below its authorized establishment of 540. The inspecting officer at the annual summer inspection of that year rated the unit as "fair to good" but was most concerned about the medical officer who was absent without leave and the fact that the regiment did not have a qualified adjutant, signalling officer or musketry officer. The *54e*, on the other hand, was rated as "good to very good," it was only 2 officers and 18 men below establishment and all of its officers were qualified.

The extraordinary display of a united and enthusiastic patriotism that was evident in most Canadian cities when war was declared that August was also apparent in Sherbrooke. Even before the Empire formally declared war, Lieutenant-Colonel Émile Rioux, commanding officer of *le 54e Régiment, les Carabiniers de Sherbrooke*, sent a telegram to the Minister of Militia advising that all of the officers of the regiment had volunteered to serve.[12] Lieutenant-Colonel Harry Baker of the 13th Scottish Light Dragoons and Member of Parliament for Brome did the same.

The Minister of Militia, the effervescent Sam Hughes, was overwhelmed with similar offers from across the country. The result was confusion. The carefully laid plans for mobilization were discarded. Eventually, general orders called out Sherbrooke's two infantry regiments.[13] In the days that followed, the *54e Régiment* and the predominantly English-speaking 53rd began to drill and parade in the streets of Sherbrooke. The men in the units and the citizens who watched sang *0 Canada*, *God Save the King*, and *La Marseillaise*. By the second week of the war, the two regiments began to parade together. "[It was a] scene unparalleled in the history of Sherbrooke," reported the *Record*.[14] On the llth, the men of the *54e* marched from their armoury on Belvedere to join the 53rd at its armoury on

Williams Street. The combined forces then marched towards the centre of the city, led by the senior regiment and its band. When they reached the intersection of King and Wellington, they halted. Soldiers and citizens then sang the national anthem. Speeches followed. It was announced that 180 men from the *54e Régiment* had volunteered for the Canadian Expeditionary Force, approximately the same number as had volunteered from the 53rd. Amidst the shouting and cheers, Senator Rufus Pope sounded the only sombre note when he declared that some present would not return.

> And to those brave boys who may find green graves beneath the sod of European lands we will erect monuments here in Sherbrooke, and on them inscribe the story of the bravery of the young men of the two great races who have given their lives for their countries.[15]

The speech must have been delivered from very near the location where the Sherbrooke war memorial is now situated.

Many who had volunteered would not in the end sail with the Canadian Expeditionary Force. About half of the volunteers from each regiment failed to pass the initial medical examination. In addition to being in good health, one had to be between the ages of 18 and 45, 5'3" in height, and have an expanded chest measurement of 33.5 inches. Chest size and eyesight were the two principal tests the local volunteers failed. If under the age of 21, one had to have parental permission; if married, one had to have the written permission of one's wife. The number of wives refusing permission surprised authorities. "[I]t was never expected that it would be so generally invoked," complained an Ottawa colonel.

Local branches of the Canadian Patriotic Association tried to ease the burden by raising money to support the wives and children of volunteers who would be adversely affected. Some employers offered to continue to pay employees who joined. Bishop's University continued to pay its recently appointed lecturer in natural science, Mr. Qua, one half his salary after he volunteered.[16] The Sherbrooke notarial firm of Beron and Begin offered to draw up wills and other legal documents for volunteers at no charge. The Sherbrooke Medical Society offered the free services of its member doctors to soldiers' dependants who could not afford to pay.[17]

Recruiting for the first contingent of the Canadian Expeditionary Force was left to the local militia units. The emphasis was on infantry, then artillery, so the region's four mounted rifle regiments were ignored. Sherbrooke's two infantry regiments would be respon-

sible for the first efforts, although Montreal's 5th Highland Regiment was authorized to send Lieutenant Greenshields and some pipers into the hills of the Townships to rally the Scots.[18]

In less than three weeks, Sherbrooke's two militia regiments had recruited over 200 medically qualified men. They left on Sunday evening, August 23, to join the Expeditionary Force which was being assembled and trained at Valcartier. One hundred and eight men were from the 53rd and 120 from the *54e*.[19]

The *Sherbrooke Record* and *La Tribune* estimated that more than half the city's total population turned out that Sunday evening. The men first assembled at their respective armouries and were addressed by their commanding officers. Lt. Col. Rioux declared that the number of volunteers from *le 54e Régiment* "was a source of great satisfaction" and the chaplain, Mgr. Tanguay, added that the cause was "righteous" when congratulating the men on "their devotion to their country."[20] The 53rd, accompanied by its band, arrived at the depot first and entrained. Then the *54e* band could be heard as the regiment marched down King Street preceded by the Union Jack and *Tricolore*. The ladies of the Patriotic Association provided each man with a boxed lunch and the Women's Christian Temperance Union distributed white ribbons with a text from scripture. Despite the patriotic airs played by the two bands at the railway station, "The seriousness of the situation tempered the enthusiasm," noted a reporter, "… and from hundreds of hearts silent prayers for the safety of the men went forth instead of cheers."[21]

It has not been possible to determine how many of the first English-speaking volunteers had been born in Canada and how many in the United Kingdom. Impressionistic evidence suggests that those who were British-born were in the large majority. Commenting on the volunteers from the 53rd, the *Sherbrooke Record* observed, "The opportunity of assisting in the defence of the Empire is being eagerly seized by young men now in Canada whose homes are in the British Isles."[22] Fifteen men joined up from Waterville; most were employees of the bed and mattress company who enrolled in the Army Service Corps which was attempting to make Valcartier habitable. A city councillor boasted that with a population of 1,000 Waterville was making the largest contribution of any town in Canada. He also expressed his disappointment "… that only 20 percent of all ranks going were Canadian born."[23] A contributor to the *Stanstead Journal* made the same observation a year later in a piece of doggerel,

> When we looked over our heroes to see who had answered the call,
> It took but a swift glance to tell us,
> that they were Old Country lads all.[24]

On the basis of this evidence, one has to conclude that there were many more native-born French Canadians who left Sherbrooke that Sunday than native-born English Canadians.

The numbers of volunteers from the 53rd and *54e* regiments were hardly sufficient to constitute a battalion. At Valcartier, most were put into the 12th Battalion, a unit made up of men from the Maritime Provinces and Quebec City. Eventually the Townshippers would be organized into that unit's "F" Company. The men now submitted to another month of training, medical testing and inoculation. Regimental numbers were assigned and a nominal roll prepared just prior to embarkation at the end of September. The nominal roll indicated country of birth, military experience, and the address of the next of kin and provided the opportunity to learn a little more about some of the volunteers from the Eastern Townships.

Seventy-eight men of the 109 who had volunteered from the 53rd Regiment in Sherbrooke were now with the 12th Overseas Battalion of the Canadian Expeditionary Force. Fifty-two of these 78 had been born in Great Britain; only 19 English-speaking volunteers had been born in Canada.

As for the French-Canadian volunteers who had left Sherbrooke, there was no French-speaking battalion in the first contingent to welcome them at Valcartier. Canada had rejected the recommendation from Britain that it organize such a unit. French Canadians from Montreal and Military District No. 4 found a home in one company of the 14th Battalion; but not those from the Eastern Townships and Military District No. 5. They were scattered. Twenty-six of the original 120 were put into the 12th. All 26 had been born in Canada and the addresses of their next of kin were in the cities and towns of the Townships. The remaining 94 did not sail with the first contingent that September.

Other men from the region found other ways to Valcartier and the first contingent of the Canadian Expeditionary Force. Captain Charles Fraser, son of South African War veteran Lt. Col. H.R. Fraser of Sherbrooke, joined the 8th Rifle of Quebec City. He was given command of one of the companies of the 12th Battalion, probably "F" Company. There were thirty-three others in that battalion who had not been with those who left Sherbrooke on 22 August but who had served with Eastern Townships regiments or whose next of kin had Townships addresses.

There were also sixteen who may have heard the pipers from Montreal's 5th Highland Regiment. They were now wearing kilts in the 13th Battalion, the Royal Highlanders of Canada. Most had been born in Canada and few had Scots names. The battalion was commanded by Lt. Col. Frederick Loomis, a native of Sherbrooke, and the highest-ranking officer in the first contingent from the Eastern Townships. He had experience in the ranks in the militia and then as an officer in Sherbrooke's 53rd. He was commanding officer of Montreal's 5th Highland Regiment when war broke out, but he failed to impress at least one volunteer during manoeuvres at Valcartier:

> Colonel Loomis lost his head as usual & messed things up completely... so that the umpire declared us out of action. The Colonel is quite excelling himself in giving wrong orders, & generally messing things up, & the general opinion throughout the whole regiment, is that sooner we get rid of him the better.[25]

Colonel Loomis was not sacked, and the battalion would have only seven months before it found itself in the Ypres Salient.

The Eastern Townships boasted of one native son who enjoyed the rank of brigadier-general, but he was not with the Canadian Expeditionary Force. He was W.T. Heneker, son of Richard Heneker, who had been one of Sherbrooke's most successful businessmen and prominent citizens. Heneker had graduated from the Royal Military College in Kingston and had gone on to a career in the British army. His younger brother was also serving in the British army. Both had friends in Sherbrooke and a third brother still resided there. Their letters and news reports would serve to link the community to the Imperial forces.

Two local batteries of the Canadian Field Artillery had also been asked to raise volunteers. They were the 15th Battery from Shefford and the 22nd from Sherbrooke. One officer and 130 men left for Valcartier at the end of August. Forty-five were French Canadians, all but eleven in the ammunition column.[26]

The response to the call to arms was united but quite modest when compared with Ontario and the West. The high percentage of native-born Canadians in the Eastern Townships was probably one explanation for the low turnout. As Professors Granatstein and Hitsman have observed, "…Canadians had initially little evident desire to go overseas to fight for King and Empire."[27] There were also new economic opportunities in factories and on farms. Headlines announced, "Big Business Boom is Anticipated."[28] An advertising

campaign urged businessmen to expand production not only for the war but to take over markets once dominated by European competitors.

> The whole world is looking to the North American Continent—to Canada and the United States—for much of its provisions, machinery, textiles, boots and shoes, beverages, vehicles, cement, brick, earthenware, fancy goods, fur, glass, garments, paper, soap, tobacco, wood products and much else.[29]

Local firms benefited immediately from war orders. A week before the volunteers left, W. Blue and Co., whose president, John Harry Blue, was a major in the 53rd Regiment and a loyal Conservative, received a contract for 20,000 khaki trousers. New machines were installed and plans were announced to operate 24 hours a day for five weeks.[30] Paton textile mills, the largest in Canada, obtained what was described as "an enormous order" and Mr. Paton declared that the plant would work around the clock for six weeks, "…if he could secure the necessary help."[31] A month later, Dominion Textiles reported that its ten mills were working to full capacity and that workers who had been working on 70% time were now working three and four time shifts a week.[32]

Yet there was concern about the long-term prospects. Canada had been in a depression when war was declared and some feared economic dislocation. The official line was optimism. In his weekly column, "The Onlooker Comments," the Onlooker wrote,

> There are business men who believe that by next spring, even if the war should continue, general business in Canada will be materially better than it was last spring and prior to the opening of the war.[33]

Under the circumstances, the businessman who stayed home and attended his business was doing patriotic work. The Onlooker reprinted a poem to this effect from the London *Daily Chronicle*. It was entitled "The Man Who Keeps His Head."

> There's a man who fights for England, and he'll keep her still atop,
> He will guard her from dishonor in the market and the shop,
> He will save her homes from terror on the fields of Daily Bread,
> He's the man who sticks for business, he's the man who keeps his head.[34]

Two days earlier, an article had surveyed the economic situation and concluded, "… the Eastern Townships is suffering less from depression, incidental to the war, than any other part of the country." In addition to the textile mills, the pulp and paper mills at

Windsor, East Angus and Bromptonville were said to be booming. The reports from Canadian Rand and Canadian Fairbanks, iron foundries, were "emphatic that business is 'picking up'." Other companies were expanding or building new facilities: Canadian Cotton, Brompton Pulp and Paper, Sherbrooke Machinery and Hamilton Shoes. There must have been a stockpile of pulpwood, for demand was said to be low. There was also little demand for lumber and asbestos, but dealers "… are not worrying and anticipate an early return of active market conditions."[35]

Farmers also benefited. Quebec's Minister of Agriculture, speaking at the annual Sherbrooke Exhibition, declared, "This was probably the best opportunity the farmers had had for forty years."[36] War had fortunately been declared before the harvest and farmers were able to benefit from the much higher prices and producers were said to be obtaining "splendid returns."[37] The army's demand for horses seemed insatiable and the region was close to Valcartier. Farmers were reported as doing so well from the sale of horses that they were urged to contribute 10% of the sales to the Patriotic Fund. The provincial government, like other provinces, declared that it would donate food to Britain, in its case four million pounds of Quebec cheese.[38]

Thus, in the first months of the war, one could perform one's patriotic duty in the Eastern Townships in the factory and on the farm as well as in the army. Sowing fall rye and wheat was now described as "A Patriotic Act" which would also result in profit. "Do you wish to serve the Empire and at the same time secure an excellent return from your labor?" the article asked.[39] One of the region's most prosperous farmers hoped that banks would see their way clear to the patriotic effort by easing credit restrictions for farmers so that they might invest in expanded production. To date, there has been no evidence to suggest that bankers followed the example of notaries and doctors.

Increasing demand brought higher prices and the Canadian ministries of Agriculture and Labour said that they would keep an eye on the situation. Twenty-eight Sherbrooke merchants promised more. "It will be understood that prices may increase," the advertisement proclaimed, "but we, as loyal Canadians, promise to carry on our business with the least margin of profit."[40] The ad went on to urge people not to stockpile, "Forget the war during business hours—Great Britain cannot lose." The producers of breakfast cereals went one step further and announced that their prices would not be raised. On August 25, 1914, the Canadian Postum Cereal Co.

ran an advertisement declaring

> The war has just begun
> What will the end be?
>
> There's one food that will not advance in price—
> a food Europe is now calling for—
>
> **GRAPE NUTS**
>
> A food for War and Peace[41]

Kellogg's Toasted Corn Flakes promised "No War Prices" and "Notwithstanding the enormous advance in the price of Corn.... the price would remain ten cents a package."[42]

The war and patriotism, summed up in the slogan "Patriotism Produces Prosperity"[43] were linked to buying and selling in other commercial advertisements. Postum and Kellogg's were not the only American companies to attempt to capitalize on the situation in Canada through their branch plants. Six weeks after the war began, the Gillette Safety Razor Co. announced a new model, the "Bulldog." "It's British to the hilt, and looks the part."[44] A local entrepreneur invented a new card game called "Shoo the Kaiser" and for 40 cents a patriot could order the deck of cards from the Sherbrooke *Record*, three decks for a dollar. Twenty-two cents would get you a War Atlas from the same newspaper and the jeweller and optometrist, A.C. Skinner, urged an eye examination so that readers could follow the war news without eyestrain.

It was hoped that all militia units would come to full strength to provide volunteers for overseas and local defence. Plans for a second contingent were announced before the first sailed from Britain. Memories of the Fenian raids were evoked as articles drew attention to the thousands of enemy reservists in the United States who might invade Canada. There was also discussion of Germany sending an expeditionary force to invade Canada through the state of Maine whose extensive woodlands bordered on the Townships. The German ambassador to the United States fuelled this discussion when he declared that since Canada was a belligerent, a German invasion would not be a violation of the Monroe Doctrine. Fears were dampened when the Governor of Maine described an invasion as "absurd" and the ambassador issued a clarification saying that his earlier remarks were merely theoretical.

In addition to volunteering together, English- and French-speaking Townshippers demonstrated other examples of co-operation and unity during the first months of the war. Members from both communities rallied to support the Patriotic Association

in its efforts to raise voluntary contributions for the support of families whose welfare was jeopardized by the absence of the principal wage-earner. La Patrie, whose population was hardly prosperous and, with the exception of two persons of Irish origin, entirely French Canadian, donated $100.00 to the Patriotic Fund.[45] At a loftier level, the Premier of Quebec announced that the Province's employees would follow the example of some companies and donate one day of one month's wages to the fund. The report emphasized that this included the Premier himself, Sir Lomer Gouin.[46]

Work on behalf of the Patriotic Association also brought members from both communities to the same speakers' platform. At the annual Sherbrooke Exhibition, it was announced that 5% of all prize money would be donated to the fund. After the French-speaking Minister of Agriculture declared that the war would be a boom for farmers, the English-speaking Provincial Treasurer and M.P.P. for local Richmond County, P.S.G. Mackenzie, added that he believed the war "would tend to cement those two great races in Canada into closer bonds of unity."[47] The sentiment seemed to be echoed by Father Lamoureux at the founding of a branch of the Patriotic Association in Missisquoi. It was reported that he "roused the meeting to such enthusiasm by declaring at this juncture there were no French Canadians…."[48] Perhaps he was a reader of *La Patrie* and was paraphrasing its famous editorial that there were now no English Canadians or French Canadians but one people united in a common cause.

Father Messier's address, in French, to a similar meeting in Cowansville was reported more fully. He seconded the motion put by the Hon. W.W. Lynch, Judge of the Superior Court of the District of Bedford.

> We, the citizens of Cowansville and Sweetsburg, in public meeting, assembled on this twenty third day of September, 1914, to affirm our unalterable allegiance to the British Throne, and record our unfailing determination to rally to its support, particularly in this time of war.

Father Messier declared that French Canadians were loyal to Great Britain, loved its liberty and constitution, would do their duty, "as loyal citizens of the Empire," and were prepared to "suffer" in its defence. He asserted that French Canadians had helped to save Canada for the Empire during the War of 1812. He also drew a distinction between the duty to Britain and the affection for France. While France was "his motherland … France was not his country,—

Canada was his country … before France."[49]

Townshippers were prepared to pay more than lip service to the Canadian Patriotic Association. Towards the end of September, some citizens of Sherbrooke decided to launch a fundraising drive. To date, only 116 had subscribed a total of $6,487; women volunteers were reported as being more successful than men, and "Poorer classes" more generous. The new goal would be $25,000. The campaign began with a concert at His Majesty's Theatre, on Wellington Street. The hall was liberally decorated with British, French and allied flags, and after introductory remarks from the mayor and a report from Col. Fraser about the less than satisfactory contributions so far, the audience heard the Liberal Member of Parliament from Shefford, the Hon. G.H. Boivin. He repeated the now familiar clichés about French Canadians, the British Empire and liberty and the Union Jack, then asked how anyone would like to see the German flag "on the public buildings and legislative halls of Quebec." Senator Pope got down to the practicalities to address the problem of soliciting donations. He objected to sending letters, as letters were "a cold thing." Instead, he

> advocated sending out women collectors, as he believed they possessed a deeper sense of patriotism than men, and were willing to endure greater suffering and privations.[50]

By now the women of the region had become so active in the cause that the Sherbrooke *Record* began to run a column which appeared almost daily, "What Eastern Townships Women Are Doing For the Patriotic Fund." Whether it was because women were already doing so much or because it was deemed unladylike to canvas, Senator Pope's recommendation was not acted upon. Instead, 60 men, organized into eight teams, were chosen. The names were a Who's Who of Sherbrooke. Three of the teams were French Canadian. Together they surpassed their goal by $5,000.

Sherbrooke women had another occasion to demonstrate the same inter-group co-operation in an appeal for Belgian relief. J.E. Poutre announced that the profits from sales in his department store for two days would go to that cause. Women volunteers, another Who's Who of Sherbrooke, would be in charge of the eleven departments on 2 and 3 November. Again, both the English- and French-speaking communities were well represented.

Relations between the two communities in the Townships appeared to be good during those first hundred days of the war. This was not the case in other parts of the country and province and

these tensions had an impact on the region. First there were the complaints from some in Ontario about the small number of French Canadian volunteers at Valcartier and about Quebec not doing its part in the war. The article in the Sherbrooke *Record* about French-Canadians proposing to organize a battalion of their own for the second contingent was immediately preceded by a report that a member of Montreal's Canadian Club had introduced a resolution to expel Henri Bourassa from the Club.[51] The news at the end of November was of much greater significance. A judge in Toronto had upheld the government of Ontario's Regulation 17 banning the use of French as a language of instruction in the province's public schools. Some in Quebec would interpret this to be a declaration of war on the French in Canada by English Canadians.

Two regular weekly columnists in the Sherbrooke *Record* rallied against the attacks on their French-speaking neighbours. The first and longer article was written by the Saturday feature writer, The Onlooker. He began by arguing that he was not defending French Canadians, "for the simple reason that the French Canadian does not need any defence." Rather, the article was intended to "call to the notice of those who are not of this older race of Canadians" the many contributions which this "purest type of Canadian" had made to Canada. It cited writers, a poet, sculptor and statesman then focussed on the authorship of *O Canada*, recalling the combined enthusiasm it had evoked during the Quebec Tercentenary celebrations six years earlier. "At present we are a people of many peoples," he concluded.

> English, French, German, Austrian, and others in plenty, we indeed are. But the only man among them who proves a traitor to his adopted country is he who emphasizes instead of forgets the racial differences.[52]

A more folksy rebuke came two weeks later from the other Saturday feature writer, Uncle Joe. Alluding to a local medical doctor who was reported to have been wounded while attending to casualties in Antwerp, Uncle Joe commented, "I suppose the fanatics who are jeering at the loyalty of our French Canadians will argue that Dr. Beland is a Scotchman."[53] And when another doctor, E.J. Williams, announced his intention of joining a stationary hospital overseas, his colleagues presented him with luggage and an address from doctors Hume and Ledoux. They declared that his appointment was an honour, not only to himself but to "the whole medical fraternity of this district." They referred to his research, his

contribution to the new hospital, his free lectures to nurses and first aid classes and his efforts to improve the sanitation and hygiene of the community. The address concluded with the hope "…that, erelong, you may return to our midst crowned with the laurels of an approving conscience and country." Of the thirteen doctors who signed the address, six were English and seven were French.[54]

Martial enthusiasm seemed to wane once the volunteers left for Valcartier and the Patriotic Fund had reached its goal. Overseas, the men were enduring the wet, cold and mud of Salisbury Plain, longing for action and France, for anything that would take them from that camp. Most published letters home tried to focus on a bright side such as comradeship and sites visited while on leave. By November, however, the patience of some was wearing thin and complaints began to appear in the press about the terrible accommodations and poor equipment.

In Sherbrooke volunteering seemed to have stopped and the 53rd Regiment failed to come to full strength. An appeal by Major Bayley at the beginning of November was followed by two public letters from Sherbrooke women. The first commented on the poor turnout at a parade and asked, "… where are all the hundreds of young able-bodied men of Sherbrooke?"[55] The second was from a mother with one son overseas and two others with the 53rd. "How many mothers in Sherbrooke can say the same?" the letter asked. "I take a walk down town and see Wellington Street crowded with fine able-bodied young men who should be ashamed of themselves.": "They are not asked to go to war," she added, "they are asked to enlist for home defence."[56] Neither appeal had much effect, for a week later, less than 200 men turned out.[57]

There was other evidence of waning enthusiasm and even dissent. The *Record* carried George Bernard Shaw's advice that "private soldiers of both armies should shoot their officers and return to their homes," although beneath the headline "G.B.S. At It Again."[58] One letter writer questioned the need for $30,000 for the local Patriotic Fund.[59] Another was worried that it might divert much needed moneys from other worthy charities like the orphanage and "the Old Peoples' Home."[60] Some went so far as to question the authenticity of German atrocity stories. Father Saint-Jean, a native of Rock Forest and parish priest in Richmond, visited Belgium and reported, "The Germans were stern in their enforcement of their regulations, but no acts of savagery, such as have been reported in despatches, came directly to his attention."[61] One letter writer, describing himself as "a Britisher who has some old-fashioned notions about the fitness

of things" challenged the reports that thirteen Red Cross nurses had had their hands cut off and that the German army had destroyed Rheims cathedral.

> When I read and hear of men of prominence in this and other communities speak of the German as "brute" and "barbarian"—the same German of whom we spoke yesterday in terms of admiration on account of his material and, perhaps, intellectual progress—I marvel much.[62]

The local press was surprisingly objective and fair in its treatment of Germany and Germans during the first months of the war. It carried little stories now and then introducing readers to German military and political leaders with their photographs almost as if they were contestants in a sporting event. Typical of these early entries was a portrait of General August von Mackensen beneath which was the following caption.

> The leader of the German forces against Russia is credited with one of the most brilliant feats yet chronicled in the present war. When his army was almost entirely surrounded by the Russians he succeeded in bringing it through, not unscathed, but still capable of carrying on the offensive. The Iron Cross of the first order was conferred upon him recently.[63]

The Sherbrooke *Record*'s first page once featured a painting of naval vessels attributed to the Kaiser who was described as "no mean artist." The Duchess of Connaught, wife of the Governor-General, was identified as the daughter of a Prussian prince and niece of the Kaiser. The *Stanstead Journal* reminded its readers that some of the United Empire Loyalists were German and one of its articles reported on the reception in Berlin for German "War Heroes."[64] The Empire was not at war with the German people but fighting against militarism, "kultur," and the ambition for world-rule. And when The Onlooker wrote about Canada being a people of peoples, he included Austrians and Germans.

There was also some dissent among local clergymen. The Reverend Mr. Burt's sermon in the chapel of Bishop's University supporting the war was to be expected from an Ontario-born Anglican clergyman and Professor of Philosophy. The Congregationalists of Quebec seemed to be a little more uncomfortable when their convention met at Melbourne in October. Those who spoke on the subject of the war were all from Montreal. The cleric from Melbourne who presided over the opening service did not mention the war at all in his sermon. It was after the service that the Reverend G. Ellery

Read delivered an address entitled "Can War be Justified from the Christian Standpoint?" According to the Reverend Mr. Read, it could, as it was a war "… against the curse of militarism [and] a great sacrificial movement in harmony with the highest interests of humanity, for it was a war against war."[65] It was reported that considerable discussion followed, but the nature of the discussion was not reported. The Reverend Mr. J.B. Belford of Richmond spoke on "the Spirit of Brotherly Love" and was followed by a former Methodist from Belfast who described his joy at becoming a Congregationalist. Another clergyman from Montreal spoke of some of the spiritual benefits of the war.

> The great impulse given to the temperance movement by the restrictions placed on the liquor traffic. Then men were giving more attention to prayer; our soldiers and sailors carry with them a copy of the Bible and the sailors carry in their hate a short prayer which they are requested to use daily. The war is also resulting in a great spiritual awakening.

The final presentation was by the Reverend Hugh Pedley, also from Montreal. "Mercilessly he stripped war of its glamor and attraction and showed it in its hideous repulsiveness."[66] The most extraordinary clerical statement on the war during this period came from a Baptist minister in Sherbrooke. He went so far as to describe the war as a just and divine retribution on England, France and Belgium for their national sins

> towards England for having forced the opium trade upon China at the point of the sword, France for her scepticism and for driving the Huguenots from that country, … Belgium for crimes committed in the Congo….[67]

There was a lull in war fervour as winter and Christmas approached. The news that Fall had gone from the brink of disaster to the promise of early victory. The French government had retreated to Bordeaux as the German army advanced; then the tide was stemmed at the Marne and the German army went on the defensive. Perhaps the war would be over by Christmas after all.

In the Eastern Townships, the harvest was in and the boom from the first war contracts was over. Local authorities began to plan for the distribution of relief among the unemployed. They believed "that probably the worst situation this winter would arise in the cases of those who, till lately, had been steadily employed at high wages and were now completely out of work."[68] The Sherbrooke Symphony Orchestra, which had cancelled its season so that sub-

scribers could donate the price of their subscriptions to the Patriotic Fund, now sponsored a concert to raise money for the unemployed.[69] It failed to attract the kind of response that the campaign for the Patriotic Fund had a month earlier. Unemployed men would now be available for a second recruiting drive that would soon begin.

There had been complaints that the first contingent had ignored the mounted rifle units of the Eastern Townships. The prospect of such a force in the next contingent fired the imagination of one North Hatley resident, "Think of it, my readers, an Eastern Townships Mounted Rifle Brigade...."[70] The authorization to recruit the 5th Canadian Mounted Rifles from the Townships was contained in General Orders, dated Christmas Eve 1914.

In the meantime, the innocence of the first months of the war was passing. Overseas, the military authorities issued orders forbidding soldiers from corresponding with the press; at home, the new censor closed the mails to American newspapers which were deemed to be pro-German.[71] On the last Saturday in November, the weekly columnist in the *Record*, the Onlooker, considered the impact of the first 100 days of the war. He was struck at the way the public had become accustomed to news about death and suffering so quickly. "We read of thousands of casualties without shock. ...[W]e do not cry out against such awful slaughter...." He tried to explain it by suggesting that the world at war had seemed to come under a spell and so long as it lasted, "let us be glad."

> When the spell is gone [he warned] and some human instinct bids us see those battlefields aching with the burden of their dead and dying, kind fathers, loving sons, brothers, lovers and husbands,... then shall the full shock of the change this crime of civilization has worked come over us.

He believed that the war, in just 100 days, had changed the world forever.

> If the world ever was inclined to be too gay, that accusation will not again be laid against the generations of men and women who have lived during the last hundred days and more.[72]

And the Canadian Expeditionary Force, with its volunteers from the Eastern Townships, had yet to go into battle.

Christmas 1914 was a season for innocence at home and hope abroad. Innocently, Charlie Westgate's mother had cooked him some chicken for Christmas and had sent it to him in England. Charlie wrote to say that it had all spoiled. "It seems common talk

amongst the soldiers here," he added hopefully, "that the war will be over before this time next year, perhaps by June."[73]

RESUME

Cet article était censé devenir le premier chapitre d'un livre que feu Robin Burns projetait d'écrire sur la vie des gens des Cantons-de-l'Est pendant la Première Guerre mondiale. L'article présente d'abord des données démographiques permettant de comparer la situation des deux communautés linguistiques des Cantons-de-l'Est à cette époque. Le texte offre ensuite un compte rendu du déroulement des événements alors que les Cantons-de-l'Est voyaient partir les recrues durant les premiers mois de la guerre. Le thème dominant est celui de la coopération entre francophones et anglophones dans les Cantons-de-l'Est, mais il se dégage aussi une véritable impression de communauté, la perception d'une petite ville qui voit ses fils partir pour la guerre.

NOTES

1 *Sherbrooke Daily Record* (henceforth *SDR*), February 15, 1915.

2 R.C. Brown, *Robert Laird Borden* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1975), vol. II, p. 19.

3 J.L. Granatstein and J. M. Hitsman, *Broken Promises: A History of Conscription in Canada* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1977), p. 23.

4 Information in this section is derived from the *Census* of 1911, but Dr. Burns' manuscript and notes do not contain a precise listing of the volumes and tables he used. See *Fifth Census of Canada, 1911* (3 volumes) (Ottawa: King's Printer, 1912–1915).

5 *SDR*, August 11, 1914.

6 Dale Thomson, *Louis Saint-Laurent: Canadian* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1968).

7 *SDR*, August 15, 1914, p. 8.

8 ETRC Archives, I.O.D.E. fonds, King George V Chapter, *Minutes,* November 5, 1914.

9 *SDR*, September 28, 1914, p. 5.

10 *La Tribune*, 21 February, 1990.

11 W.M. Melrose, *The Stanstead Cavalry* (Hatley: 26th S. Dragoons, 1912).

12 *SDR*, August 3, 1914.

13 A.F. Duguid, *Official History of the Canadian Forces in the Great War 1914–1919. General Series. Volume I, August 1914–September 1915. Appendices and Maps* (Ottawa: King's Printer, 1938), Appendix 32, p. 29.

14 *SDR*, August 10, 1914, p. 1.

15 *SDR*, August 11, 1914.

16 Bishop's University Archives, Corporation of Bishop's University, *Minutes*, June 16, 1915, p. 352.

17 *SDR*, August 31, 1914.

18 *SDR*, August 14, 1914.

19 *SDR*, August 24, 1914.

20 *Ibid*.

21 *Ibid*.

22 *SDR*, August 14, 1914.

23 *SDR*, August 18, 1914, p. 6.

24 *Stanstead Journal*, December 2, 1915.

25 Imperial War Museum, Lt. S.V. Brittan Collection, *Diary*, September 17, 1914, p. 3.

26 *SDR*, August 29, 1914.

27 Granatstein and Hitsman, p. 24.

28 *SDR*, September 1, 1914.

29 *SDR*, August 26, 1914, p. 2.

30 *SDR*, August 18, 1914.

31 *SDR*, August 11, 1914, p. 6.

32 *SDR*, September 10, 1914, p.7 and September 11, 1914, p. 6.

33 The Onlooker, *SDR*, September 17, 1914.

34 *Ibid*.

35 *SDR*, September 17, 1914.

36 *SDR*, September 10, 1914, p. 1.

37 *SDR*, September 17, 1914.

38 *SDR*, August 19, 1914.

39 *SDR*, September 1, 1914, p. 3.

40 *SDR*, September 19, 1914.

41 *SDR*, August 25, 1914.

42 *SDR*, August 26, 1914.

43 *SDR*, October 7, 1914.

44 *SDR*, September 19, 1914.

45 *SDR*, September 1, 1914.
46 *SDR*, September 29, 1914.
47 *SDR*, September 10, 1914.
48 *SDR*, September 17, 1914.
49 *SDR*, September 26, 1914.
50 *SDR*, September 22, 1914.
51 *SDR*, September 24, 1914.
52 *SDR*, November 14, 1914.
53 *SDR,* November 28, 1914.
54 *SDR*, September 22, 1914.
55 *SDR*, November 6, 1914.
56 *SDR*, November 7, 1914.
57 *SDR*, November 13, 1914.
58 *SDR*, November 13, 1914.
59 *SDR*, November 5, 1914.
60 *SDR*, October 26, 1914.
61 *SDR*, October 19, 1914.
62 *SDR*, November 5, 1914.
63 *SDR*, January 4, 1915.
64 *Stanstead Journal*, March 11, 1915.
65 *SDR*, October 23, 1914.
66 *SDR*, October 26, 1914.
67 *SDR*, November 20, 1914.
68 *SDR*, November 11, 1914.
69 *SDR*, November 18, 1914.
70 *SDR*, November 17, 1914.
71 *SDR*, November 13, 1914.
72 *SDR*, November 28, 1914.
73 *SDR*, February 5, 1914.