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Canada's Cultural Mobilization during the First World War and a Case for Canadian War Culture



Abstract: *This article examines Talbot Mercer Papineau's letter to Henri Bourassa and Papineau's impact on Canadian cultural mobilization and its war culture. European historians of the First World War have used the concept of cultural mobilization to understand the lines that connected battlefield and home front and their impact. As evidenced by the recent historiographical review of First World War literature in the pages of the Canadian Historical Review, Canadian scholars ought to adopt a similar framework to unite two literatures that separately focus on the military history and social history of the war. Papineau's 1916 letter provides a glimpse into how a soldier expressed his perspective of the war from the frontlines and participated in the mobilization of Canada's war culture. His writing was a result of his war experience, but Papineau wrote it for a Canadian audience at home, and its wide publication exposed his views to millions across Canada and Britain. Papineau urged Canadian citizens (specifically French Canadians) to support the purpose and value of the war as understood by Canadian soldiers. This article offers Papineau as a case study to encourage a new direction for the Canadian history of the First World War and further work on cultural mobilization and war culture.*

Keywords: First World War, cultural mobilization, war culture, Talbot Mercer Papineau, Henri Bourassa, Canadian history

Résumé : *Cet article analyse la lettre de Talbot Mercer Papineau à Henri Bourassa et l'influence de Papineau sur la mobilisation culturelle au Canada et la culture de guerre du pays. Les historiens européens de la Première Guerre mondiale se sont servis de la notion de mobilisation culturelle pour comprendre les liens entre le front et le monde civil ainsi que leurs répercussions. Comme en témoigne le récent survol historiographique de ce qui s'est écrit sur la Première Guerre mondiale dans les pages de la Canadian Historical Review, les universitaires canadiens devraient adopter un cadre semblable pour unifier deux historiographies portant l'une sur l'histoire militaire et l'autre sur l'histoire sociale de la guerre. La lettre écrite par Papineau en 1916 donne un aperçu de la façon dont un militaire exprimait son point de vue sur la guerre à partir du front et participait à la mise en œuvre de la culture de guerre du Canada. Fruit de l'expérience de guerre de*

l'auteur, elle a été écrite pour un public au pays, et sa large diffusion a exposé les vues de Papineau à des millions de lecteurs d'un bout à l'autre du Canada et en Grande-Bretagne. Papineau exhortait vivement les citoyens canadiens (en particulier les Canadiens français) à se rallier à la vision des militaires canadiens sur le but de la guerre et sa valeur. Cet article présente Papineau comme une étude de cas destinée à favoriser une nouvelle orientation dans l'histoire canadienne de la Première Guerre mondiale et dans les travaux à venir sur la mobilisation culturelle et la culture de guerre.

Mots clés : Première Guerre mondiale, mobilisation culturelle, culture de guerre, Talbot Mercer Papineau, Henri Bourassa, histoire du Canada

In the midst of the 1916 Somme offensive on the Western Front, the London *Times* heralded Canadian soldier Talbot Papineau as the “Soul of Canada.”¹ Papineau had written to his cousin and fellow descendant of French-Canadian Patriote Louis-Joseph Papineau, Henri Bourassa, imploring the nationalist to stop his campaign against Canadian participation in the First World War. When Bourassa offered no immediate response, Papineau’s Montreal law partner Andrew McMaster sent the letter to Canadian newspapers, and it soon appeared in the pages of periodicals throughout the Dominion and Britain.² “Coming at [a] moment of trial and suffering, it was a very perfect flower of Canadian idealism,” the *Times* proclaimed: “Today . . . it is full of promise for the life of the greater Canada that will be.”³ The endorsement echoed Canadian newspapers, but the *Times* was the pre-eminent newspaper among Britain’s elite and signalled a new level of recognition for the Canadian captain.⁴ Papineau, a Rhodes scholar, an Oxford graduate, a decorated veteran, and one of the few original officers in the prestigious Princess Patricia’s Canadian Light Infantry left from 1914, was an appealing champion for the Canadian war effort. He moved easily between European trenches and the parlours of Paris and London,

1 “The Soul of Canada,” *The Times* (22 August 1916).

2 Those interested can read Papineau’s letter online in its entirety, as well as Bourassa’s reply, see Henri Bourassa, *Canadian Nationalism and the War* (Montreal, 1916), <http://archive.org/details/canadiannational00bour> (accessed 12 June 2015).

3 “The Faith of Canada,” *The Times* (22 August 1916). The popular British weekly, *The Spectator*, also praised Papineau’s letter. “Nationality and Empire,” *The Spectator* (26 August 1916), 231.

4 J.L. Thompson, *Politicians, The Press, and Propaganda: Lord Northcliffe and the Great War, 1914–1919* (Kent, OH: Kent State University Press, 1999), 2. The *Times* had some 184,000 subscribers in 1916, see John M. McEwen, “The National Press during the First World War: Ownership and Circulation,” *Journal of Contemporary History* 17, no. 3 (1982): 482.

often travelling while on leave and mingling with many of those who likely read the *Times*.⁵

Although Papineau was comfortably a member of Canada's upper class, his cultural identity was more complicated. Notwithstanding his famous French-Canadian surname, his American mother, Caroline Rogers, raised him near Philadelphia as an English-speaking Presbyterian. Others often identified him as a French Canadian, though he himself would have probably simply said Canadian – and once noted that he was, in fact, “three quarters American.”⁶ Papineau, despite summers at the family home in Montebello, Quebec, was decidedly not French Canadian.⁷ He spoke French fluently, but a telling example of his chosen cultural identity was the letter he wrote to Bourassa. That Papineau decided to write to the pre-eminent French-Canadian nationalist of the era in English reveals much of where his focus lay. As Bourassa caustically concluded in his reply: “[Papineau] n'a hérité, avec quelques globules de sang français, que les instincts les plus dénationalisés de son origine française.”⁸

Instead, Papineau was the sort of French Canadian that English-Canadian war supporters most desired during the conflict: French by name but “English” by action. He was wealthy, ambitious, and well educated. More importantly, he was loyal to Canada and the British Empire and was willing to fight for both on the battlefield and at home. When war broke out in August 1914, Papineau was speaking about French-Canadian nationalism to the Canadian Club in Vancouver.⁹ He spoke with authority and publicly assured his listeners that “as many French Canadians as English Canadians [would] take up arms in

- 5 Sandra Gwyn details many of Papineau's encounters with British and Canadian elite. Sandra Gwyn, *Tapestry of War: A Private View of Canadians in the Great War* (Toronto: Harper Collins, 1992).
- 6 Talbot Papineau to Beatrice Fox, 24 June 1915, vol. 1, Talbot Mercer Papineau Fonds (TMP Fonds), Library and Archives Canada (LAC). His mother and grandmother were American. At the time, he was corresponding with his American paramour Beatrice Fox, so perhaps he was emphasizing his American heritage to his own advantage.
- 7 His correspondence suggests that Papineau may have even once been a proponent of assimilation. In one letter from 1916, his friend remarked: “I think your views must have altered on the French question since we last used to discuss it. You used to say then that the only way to progress was to absorb them completely. Perhaps you still are of that opinion but prefer to keep it dark in Quebec at present – in which you are wise.” See John Archibald to Talbot Papineau, 19 August 1916, vol. 2, TMP Fonds, LAC.
- 8 Henri Bourassa, “Réponse de M. Bourassa à la lettre du Capitane Talbot Papineau,” *Le Devoir* (5 August 1916) (emphasis added).
- 9 Gwyn, *Tapestry at War*, 98.

defence of the Empire” before he rushed eastward to enlist.¹⁰ Joining the Princess Patricia’s infantry as a lieutenant, Papineau hoped to be among the first Canadian soldiers to land in Europe to make a name for himself while furthering his career and public life. He quickly earned a reputation for bravery and command. He was the first Canadian awarded the military cross for his actions at St Eloi on 28 February 1915. Through the influence of Sir Max Aitken, head of the Canadian War Records Office, Papineau was promoted in February 1916 to captain and aide-de-camp to the Canadian Corps commander, General Sir Edwin Alderson. By late April, General Alderson was relieved of his command and sent off to be the inspector-general of the Canadian force in England and France.¹¹ When his letter to Bourassa was published in July, Papineau was an enthusiastic writer in Aitken’s Canadian War Records Office, documenting the Canadian front-line war experience.

Despite his fame during the war, Papineau was only “rediscovered” as a historical figure in the last decades of the twentieth century.¹² When historians mention Papineau, it is usually in relation to the Papineau-Bourassa letters or as a member of the Princess Patricia’s, not as an influence on the Canadian war effort. His absence is not surprising even though his reputation led Sir Wilfrid Laurier to suggest Papineau as a possible Liberal candidate in the wartime election as well as a powerful recruiter for French Canada.¹³ Papineau’s promising potential disappeared with his death at the battle of Passchendaele in October 1917.

Yet Papineau’s letter points to the pervasive and subsuming nature of the Canadian war experience. His correspondence with his cousin

10 Desmond Morton and J.L. Granatstein, *Marching to Armageddon: Canadians and the Great War, 1914–1919* (Toronto: Lester and Orpen Dennys, 1989), 6.

11 Desmond Morton, “Alderson, Sir Edwin Alfred Hervey,” in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 15, http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/alderson_edwin_alfred_hervey_15E.html (accessed 9 June 2015); Tim Cook, “Documenting War and Forging Reputations: Sir Max Aitken and the Canadian War Records Office in the First World War,” *War in History* 10, no. 3 (2003): 270–8.

12 Notably in Gwyn, *Tapestry of War*; Heather Robertson, *A Terrible Beauty: The Art of Canada at War* (Ottawa: National Museum of Man, 1977).

13 Through Andrew McMaster, Laurier had offered Papineau a chance to run in the deferred 1916 election. See Andrew McMaster to Talbot Papineau, 15 October 1916, vol. 2, TMP Fonds, LAC. For Papineau as a recruiter, see Canada, *House of Commons Debates* (18 June, 1917), 2400–01 (Honorary Sir Wilfrid Laurier). After the war, Prime Minister William Lyon Mackenzie King confided to Papineau’s uncle that Papineau could have been prime minister had he survived. Gwyn, *Tapestry of War*, 401–2.

is one facet of how Canadians perceived the First World War. The battlefield transformed his beliefs about the purpose and value behind the Canadian war effort, and he represented a link between the public understanding of the war and that of the soldier. Papineau's letter transposed his battlefield experience onto to the home front, but he did not solely participate in nation building by justifying the war to his fellow Canadians. In fact, his writing was part of a much larger transformative process affecting Canadian society during the war years. Unlike many other soldiers whose views filtered through censored letters at home or published in memoirs after the war, Papineau had an active role in the cultural mobilization of Canadians during the Great War.¹⁴

"Cultural mobilization" is distinct from other forms of mobilization, such as that of manpower or economic systems. Canadian historians have discussed it before, though under different names. Terms such as "social mobilization," the "mobilization of morality," or arguments exploring the mobilization of the home front are common in the literature but not always explicitly identified as part of Canada's "total war."¹⁵ These works acknowledge that Canadians did not suffer the same sort of blurring between soldier and civilian seen in European nations since an ocean insulated them from the horrors of the front,

14 For an excellent overview of some these letters and memoirs, see Maarten Gerritsen, "Corps Identity: The Letters, Diaries and Memoirs of Canada's Great War Soldiers" (PhD dissertation, Memorial University of Newfoundland, 2008).

15 Some notable examples include Paul Maroney's examination of prewar "socio-political norms" mobilizing Ontarians. Paul Maroney, "'The Great Adventure': The Context and Ideology of Recruiting in Ontario, 1914–17," *Canadian Historical Review* 77, no. 1 (1996): 62–98. Joan Sangster used "mobilization of morality" to describe the mobilization of women. Joan Sangster, "Mobilizing Women for War," in *Canada and the First World War: Essays in Honour of Robert Craig Brown*, edited by Robert Craig Brown and David MacKenzie (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2005), 180. Kenneth G. Lawson discussed nationalism, community, and self-mobilization. Kenneth G. Lawson, "Belonging and Not: Rossland, British Columbia, during the Great War," in *Boundaries and Belonging: States and Societies in the Struggle to Shape Identities and Local Practices*, edited by Joel S. Migdal (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 177–204. Mourad Djebabla reflected on agricultural mobilization alongside the "mobilization of consumers." Mourad Djebabla, "'Fight the Huns with Food': Mobilizing Canadian Civilians for the Food War Effort during the Great War, 1914–1918," in *World War I and Propaganda*, edited by Troy Paddock (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 65–88. Amy Shaw reviewed other works that discussed forms of social mobilization. Amy Shaw, "Expanding the Narrative: A First World War with Women, Children, and Grief," *Canadian Historical Review* 95, no. 3 (2014): 398–406.

but one did occur as they experienced “the intensity and scope of popular mobilization” that dramatically transformed all warring nations.¹⁶ The pervasive influence of the war filtered through to the ordinary lives of Canadians where, as Robert Rutherford writes, “national-level ‘realities’” played out on a local level through articles, speeches, and events within the public sphere.¹⁷ Recent works have explored how Rutherford’s national-level realities emerged in different communities and engaged with the underlying argument of Jeff Keshen’s *Propaganda and Citizenship during Canada’s Great War* that propaganda and the state convinced Canadians of the war’s value.¹⁸ These historians have presented a fusion of individual, local, and national experiences that shaped a coherent vernacular justifying the war’s meaning within the realm of the public sphere.¹⁹ While there were a variety of “hometown” experiences, there was also a nationally accepted understanding of the war that coexisted with it. Less clear is the process by which this wartime vernacular, entrenched in the unique context of 1914–18, penetrated the experience of ordinary Canadians.

Historians have explored the nature of this process already through studies of the collective Canadian war experience and its impact on

- 16 Roger Chickering, “World War I and the Theory of Total War: Reflections on the British and German Cases, 1914–1915,” in *Great War, Total War: Combat and Mobilization on the Western Front, 1914–1918*, edited by Roger Chickering and Stig Forster (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 35.
- 17 Robert Rutherford, *Hometown Horizons: Local Responses to Canada’s Great War* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2004), xxii.
- 18 See Jeffrey Keshen, *Propaganda and Censorship during Canada’s Great War* (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 1996), 3. Keshen’s study is a “systematic examination of the naivete, jingoism and nativism articulated through various means of mass communication” (x). Ian Miller explicitly rejects the assumption Canadians were “convinced” to fight. Ian Hugh Maclean Miller, *Our Glory and Our Grief: Torontonians and the Great War* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002), 6.
- 19 Such as the works by Ian Miller, *Our Glory and Our Grief*; Desmond Morton, *Fight or Pay: Soldiers’ Families in the Great War* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2004); James M. Pitsula, *For All We Have and Are: Regina and the Experience of the Great War* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2008); Jim Blanchard, *Winnipeg’s Great War: A City Comes of Age* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2010). Paul Maroney argues that the failure to form a coherent vernacular weakened a nationally accepted meaning for the 1885 Northwest Rebellion and 1899 Boer War. Paul Maroney, “Lest We Forget: War and Meaning in English Canada, 1885–1914,” *Journal of Canadian Studies* 32 (1997–8): 108–24. Robert S. Prince essentially examined this wartime vernacular, though without referring to it as such. Robert S. Prince, “The Mythology of War: How the Canadian Daily Newspaper Depicted the Great War” (PhD dissertation, University of Toronto, 1998).

individuals and communities. An excellent example is the June 2015 issue of *Social History* dedicated to the First World War, which examined the interplay between individual, local, and national identities. Steve Marti's study of volunteer societies noted that "identity was not just constructed through abstract ideas of nationhood or imperial unity, but through a series of conversations that joined communities near and far in collaborative patriotic projects."²⁰ Likewise, spatial boundaries did not limit a coherent national wartime vernacular but, rather, existed on a national and local level simultaneously. The national and individual experience are not inherently contradictory since each necessarily informed the other and individual voices like that of Talbot Papineau's became national ones in the pages of newspapers and books.

European historians have developed conceptual frameworks that address the dilemma of "delineating the multitudinous effects of total war," as Jarett Henderson and Jeff Keshen recently termed it.²¹ John Horne argues that belligerent nations experienced societal mobilization, the "engagement of the different belligerent nations in their war efforts both imaginatively, through collective representations and the belief and value systems giving rise to these, and organizationally, through state and civil society."²² We might also call it "cultural mobilization," indicating the primary avenues in which it occurred: the printed and spoken medium. This process of national mobilization was complex and often messy between different groups in society. In the Canadian context, French and English Canadians (as well as other groups) had divergent experiences of the war as both groups sought to form their own vernacular concerning their beliefs and value systems that defined the war. Even for individuals within each group, different perceptions and understandings of the war created a dizzying mosaic of wartime motivations and beliefs. Still, as Rutherford and others reveal, the success of societal mobilization (or perhaps the rejection of it in Quebec) penetrated the barrier between opposing views. On a fundamental level, Canadians accepted the pervasiveness of the war and its ongoing sacrifices. All individual experiences of the war, even among those who disagreed, existed within the same environment of cultural mobilization.

20 Steve Marti, "For Kin and County: Scale, Identity, and English-Canadian Voluntary Societies, 1914–1918," *Social History* 47, no. 94 (2014): 351.

21 Jarett Henderson and Jeff Keshen, "Introduction: Canadian Perspectives on the First World War," *Social History* 47, no. 94 (2014): 286.

22 John Horne, "Introduction: Mobilizing for 'Total War,'" in *State, Society and Mobilization in Europe during the First World War*, edited by John Horne (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 1.

French historians have addressed this phenomenon, describing the powerful influence of a nation's "war culture" as "a collection of representations of the conflict that crystallised into a system of thought which gave the war its deep significance."²³ Alongside the process of societal mobilization, war culture describes the world in which all wartime Canadians lived. In France, the term and its impact have been subject to much debate. Peter Farrugia reviewed the debate in 2013, noting that disagreement has faded as an active historiographical topic but that it remains a significant division for French scholars.²⁴ Canadian historians have alluded to similar divides, although, without the same context that occurred in France and without the 1917 soldier mutinies, the Canadian debate hinges on different issues and sources. To date, only Jérôme Coutard's study of Quebec newspapers has attempted to quantify a Canadian war culture and explore the vernacular of war, but, unfortunately, none have updated his work or expanded it.²⁵

In Canada, historians have questioned the legitimacy of the war's nation-building experience as a point of progress in our journey from "colony to nation" and, indeed, the vehemence and uniformity of Canadian support for the war at all. A simplified example is the break between military and social historians, where military histories of the Great War continue to emphasize its place in the nation-building project and, in turn, social histories pull on the loose threads of that narrative. The friction between a national focus that often settles on European battlefields and a local or individual one that is turned towards the home front continues to impede the literature, as Mark Humphries rightfully suggests in his overview of English-Canadian historiography on the war. He argues that connecting domestic and battlefield histories could resolve historians' problematic focus on national narratives, commemoration, and unity.²⁶ While Keshen and

23 Stéphane Audoin-Rouzeau and Annette Becker, *14–18: Understanding the Great War* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2002), 102.

24 Peter Farrugia, "A Small Truce in a Big War: The Historial de la Grande Guerre and the Interplay of History and Memory," *Canadian Military History* 22, no. 2 (2013): 63–76.

25 Jérôme Coutard, *Des valeurs en guerre: Presse, propagande et culture de guerre au Québec, 1914–1918* (PhD dissertation, Université Laval, 1999); see also Jérôme Coutard, "Presse, censure, et propagande en 1914–1918: la construction d'une culture de guerre," *Bulletin d'histoire politique* 8, no. 2–3 (2000): 150–71.

26 Mark Osborne Humphries, "Between Commemoration and History: The Historiography of the Canadian Corps and Military Overseas," *Canadian Historical Review* 95, no. 3 (2014): 385. See also the critiques in Tim Cook, "Battles of the Imagined Past: Canada's Great War and Memory," *Canadian Historical Review* 95, no. 3 (2014): 417–26.

others emphasize the separation between civilian and soldier understandings of the war, Canadian historians can link some common aspects of the beliefs and value systems present at home and abroad by adopting the concepts of cultural mobilization and war culture.²⁷ Unifying the experience of civilians and soldiers and defying, but not ignoring, traditional boundaries of space and identity can lead to a more comprehensive understanding of the Canadian wartime experience.

The case of Talbot Papineau, and specifically his letter to Henri Bourassa, reveals how these concepts can revitalize topics that are well trod by Canadian historians using a new perspective. Papineau's writing spoke to Canadians' collective sense of nationhood and emphasized national unity in the name of a war fought for the British Empire, while also revealing the depth of his own self-mobilization in favour of the war. The ideas he introduced to Canadians, although representative of his own elite upbringing and soldier experience, contributed to Canada's war culture and a process of cultural mobilization. His words speak to the vernacular that rationalized the war.

Papineau penned his 1916 letter to Henri Bourassa in the midst of domestic turmoil. Prime Minister Robert Borden had unexpectedly ordered the expansion of the Canadian Armed Forces to 500,000 soldiers, putting even more pressure on faltering recruitment to meet the new size.²⁸ Regulation 17, the Ontario legislation that had restricted French language schooling since 1912, continued to rouse French-Canadian anger as it entered into the final stages of a court appeal. In March, Liberal Senator P.A. Choquette warned an audience of Regulation 17's impact on Quebec sentiments: "These young-blooded fellows may start an agitation to abolish the use of English in the Quebec schools, despite the calmer councils of older men like myself."²⁹ Such dire cautions were probably not taken lightly by the readership

27 Soldiers were shocked by the persistence of romantic myths about the war among civilians upon their return. See Keshen, *Propaganda and Censorship*, 186–216. Robert S. Prince argues that wartime press solidified civilians' prewar mythologization of warfare and Canada in contrast to the soldier experience. See Prince, "The Mythology of War," 511.

28 The reasons behind Borden's sudden announcement are unclear. It caught his Cabinet off-guard and Borden's biographer, Robert Craig Brown, does not offer any detailed explanation for it. For a brief mention, see Robert Craig Brown, *Robert Laird Borden: A Biography*, volume 2: 1914–1937 (Toronto: MacMillan, 1980), 60–1. For the text of his announcement, see Castell Hopkins, *Canadian Annual Review War Series 1915* (Toronto: Canadian Annual Review, 1918), 185–6.

29 Castell Hopkins, *Canadian Annual Review War Series 1916* (Toronto: Canadian Annual Review, 1918), 393–4.

of Robert Sellar's vitriolic, anti-French, and best-selling book *The Tragedy of Quebec*, updated in 1916 to address growing French-Canadian dissent. "The issue," Sellar wrote, "is simply whether this Canada of ours is to be British . . . or whether it is to be a mongrel land, with two official languages and ruled by a divided authority."³⁰ Nationalist Henri Bourassa was the focal point of elite French-Canadian resistance, and he had renounced any pretence of supporting the war in January, opting to return to "*les solides positions du nationalisme intégral*."³¹

Events at home and abroad dictated the ebb and flow of Canadian positions on the war. Even before the devastating stalemate of the Somme that stretched through the summer, or the costly Canadian involvement in the autumn,³² Canadian unity frayed as more questions arose about the government's conduct of the war and the purpose of fighting it at all. Tensions between French and English Canadians continued, and the party truce between Liberals and Conservatives was paper thin amid calls for an election. Figures like Minister of Militia Sam Hughes and Minister of Public Works Robert Rogers insisted on using the war for political or personal advantage.³³ Hughes had already contributed significantly to French-Canadian isolation by changing mobilization plans and following policies that seemingly dissuaded any Quebec participation in the war effort.³⁴ Supporters of the war could not help but notice that the loudest dissenting voices were French Canadians who refused to accept the war's significance, a significance that many among the English-Canadian elite perceived as unquestionable.

30 Robert Sellar, *The Tragedy of Quebec* (Toronto: 1916), 327–8, as quoted in Robert Craig Brown and Ramsay Cook, *Canada 1896–1921: A Nation Transformed* (Toronto: McClelland and Steward, 1974), 259, n. 37.

31 Henri Bourassa, *Le Devoir et la guerre, le conflit des races. Discours prononcé au banquet des amis du Devoir, le 12 janvier 1916* (Montreal, 1916), 22.

32 By the end of the Somme offensive, 22,029 Canadians were killed or wounded. See Bill Rawling, *Surviving Trench Warfare: Technology and the Canadian Corps, 1914–1918* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992), 81. Though not yet Canadian, the Newfoundlanders were also decimated at the start of the offensive on 1 July at Beaumont-Hamel.

33 Eventually, Borden removed both Rogers and Hughes from Cabinet, see John English, *The Decline of Politics: The Conservatives and the Party System, 1901–20*, 2nd edition (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1993), 98–105.

34 For more, see Desmond Morton, "The Limits of Loyalty: French Canadian Officers in the First World War," in *The Limits of Loyalty*, edited by E. Denton (Waterloo, ON: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1980), 79–98; Desmond Morton, *When Your Number's Up: The Canadian Soldier in the First World War* (Toronto: Random House, 1993), 55–62.

The unfolding conflict similarly affected Papineau's views, taking root before the war but solidifying during his time on the front. At his 5 August 1914 talk to the Canadian Club of Vancouver, he stressed that "Canada today possesses all the privileges of a nation without the responsibilities."³⁵ In the aftermath of the second Battle of Ypres in April 1915, he wrote to his mother of the "glorious history this will have made for Canada. These may be the birth pains of our nationality. Great movements are in progress."³⁶ Later that year, Papineau visited the Hyde Park Hotel in London to visit Sir Max Aitken and other British aristocracy and took note of Aitken's lament of belonging to a "decaying Empire."³⁷ In January 1916, British Commonwealth advocate Lionel Curtis praised Papineau's commitment to his nation and a united empire.³⁸ When Papineau began composing his letter to Bourassa that March, he reflected that the struggle between nationhood and imperialism depended on which could better "protect our common civilization and maintain freedom for its further development."³⁹ For Papineau, who regularly detailed the dangers of shellfire while composing letters and who had lost many friends and fellow officers to its shrapnel, there had to be a greater purpose to the war than a few barren kilometres of trenches. In mobilizing himself, he looked to a unifying national vision.

The great distance between Papineau and Canada elongated the process of finalizing the public letter as Papineau debated its contents with his friend and law partner Andrew McMaster after finishing a draft in March. McMaster was a devoted Liberal and anglophone Montrealer who was well connected in Liberal political circles. He won a seat in the 1917 election after staying loyal to Laurier during the conscription crisis and later served in the Quebec Liberal government of Louis-Alexandre Taschereau. McMaster was wary of the initial draft and warned Papineau that Canada had changed since the outbreak of the war. The lawyer believed Papineau struck the bell of imperialism too loudly:

- 35 Castell Hopkins, *Canadian Annual Review 1914* (Toronto: Canadian Annual Review, 1918), 707.
- 36 Talbot Papineau to his mother, 23 April 1915, vol. 2, TMP Fonds, LAC. The line was added to the letter on 26 April.
- 37 The gathering also included fellow Canadian Andrew Bonar Law (future British prime minister), brothers Alfred and Harold Harmsworth (Lord Harmsworth and Lord Rothermere respectively), and Aitken's wife, Gladys Henderson Drury. For Papineau's account of the night, see Talbot Papineau to Beatrice Fox, 3 October 1915, vol. 1, TMP Fonds, LAC.
- 38 Lionel Curtis to Talbot Papineau, 31 January 1916, vol. 1, TMP Fonds, LAC.
- 39 Talbot Papineau to Beatrice Fox, 14 March 1916, vol. 1, TMP Fonds, LAC.

You speak of an Imperial War – that is not the keynote of all the appeals made for patriotic purposes here – very often it is the Canadian note that is sounded & that the war is a war for civilization and liberty.

I note what you say about the sacrifice we have made constituting for us a glorious and loveable history. At the front – yes – at home in Canada. No. The degradation of public life in Canada has never been more apparent than since the out-break of hostilities, graft, corruption, inefficiency, trying to make party capital of the war have been all too pronounced. The glorious self-sacrifice of the men & women of Canada has been brought into sharp contrast with the bitterness, the dishonesty and the inefficiency of the present Administration.⁴⁰

Papineau's replies to McMaster are lost, but given his already present passion for nationalism, it is likely that his first draft strove to align with the imperial-minded Canada he had known before leaving for Europe in 1914. McMaster noted with reproach that Papineau had seemingly given up the national ideal so quickly. A speech to the Canadian Corps Command School in December 1916 must have better reflected Papineau's beliefs when he told his soldier audience that they could find comfort in the "strong, self-reliant spirit of Canadian Nationality" that the war had wrought.⁴¹ In the franker polemic, Papineau firmly placed Canada among the pantheon of independent nations, which suggests he moderated his letter to Bourassa by considering what impact his words might have on English Canada. Although both McMaster and Papineau claimed they sent the letter to Bourassa with the intention of publishing it only if there was no reply, their private correspondence and the decision to write in English hints at a larger Canadian audience.⁴² By June 1916, McMaster approved Papineau's edits and sent a revised letter to Bourassa in mid-July. There was no reply, so by 28 July, McMaster released it to newspapers across the country.

40 Andrew McMaster to Talbot Papineau, 14 April 1916, vol. 2, TMP Fonds, LAC. Of course, the partisan McMaster was always willing to denounce the actions of the Conservative government.

41 *The McGill Daily News*, March 1920, vol. 3, TMP Fonds, LAC. The *McGill Daily News* notes the speech was given in February 1917, but Papineau's correspondence indicates it was given 20 December 1916. See Talbot Papineau to his mother, 19 December 1916, vol. 2, TMP Fonds, LAC.

42 As does Papineau's correspondence with his mother. On 24 June, he wrote to her that "[n]either Andrew nor you quite understand my attitude re independence. I am as resolutely Nationalist as ever but the situation requires careful handling." Talbot Papineau to his mother, 24 June 1916, vol. 2, TMP Fonds, LAC.

The shift from private entreaty to public essay inserted Papineau's writing into the national consciousness. He now expressed to Canadians a set of values and ideas that legitimized the war effort and fused the Canadian "national community" together, regardless of political or ethnic background.⁴³ If we judge Papineau's letter by its stated purpose, persuading his cousin Henri to support the war, it was poorly argued and consisted more of rhetoric than of substance. As a document mobilizing Canadian support, it has a much clearer place in our history of the war.⁴⁴ The published letter appealed to a Canadian nationalism that bound civilian and soldier in a common cause as Papineau stepped into a cultural divide that far preceded his wartime missive. Canadians had debated the form and future of their nation repeatedly during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Imperialists pushed for closer connections with the British Empire, while nationalists believed Canada had to shed its imperial association.⁴⁵ In the years before the war, the two sides had often clashed over Canadian positions towards the empire, when events like the Boer War, the Alaskan Boundary Dispute, and the Naval Bill, spurred political and cultural divisions.

Imperialism first emerged in Britain as politicians debated the utility of their global empire. It had many variations, but, for Canadians, the concept named by W.A.S. Hewins in 1899 as "constructive imperialism" best described their role in the British Empire. It demanded "the deliberate adoption of the Empire as distinguished from the United Kingdom as the basis of public policy." Its followers advocated for "those principles of constructive policy on all constitutional, economic, defensive, and educational questions which will help towards the fulfilment of that ideal."⁴⁶ Constructive imperialism reached the peak of its influence in Britain and abroad during the two decades

43 In the sense of the "nationally imagined community" from Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Modernism* (New York: Verso, 1991). John Horne discusses the power of national communities in the cultural mobilization of the belligerent powers. John Horne, "Introduction," in Horne, *State, Society and Mobilization in Europe*, 2–3.

44 Bourassa, *Canadian Nationalism and the War*.

45 Sylvie Lacombe offers an excellent deconstruction of these streams of thought in the introduction to Sylvie Lacombe, *La rencontre de deux peuples élus: comparaison des ambitions nationale et impériale au Canada entre 1868 et 1920* (Sainte-Foy, QC: Presses de l'Université Laval, 2002), 2–30.

46 E.H.H. Green, "The Political Economy of Empire, 1880–1914," *Oxford History of the British Empire*, edited by Andrew Porter (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), vol. 3, 347. Robert Craig Brown and Ramsay Cook call this "new imperialism." See Brown and Cook, *A Nation Transformed*, 31.

before the First World War. Imperial defence was the most popular element of this imperialist ideology among the Dominions as they organized in support of Britain against the background of a possible European war and British colonial operations such as the Boer War. The British Empire increasingly used its combined military power as a means of achieving international and collective security, which only benefited the much smaller white Dominions within it.⁴⁷

Canadian imperialism emerged as a reflection of this British imperialism in a local context. Historian Carl Berger's assessment was that imperialism was a political ideology and a set of cultural values, which created a form of nationalism unto itself.⁴⁸ Nationalism did not necessarily mean opposition to the British Empire. British writer Richard Jebb published *Studies in Colonial Nationalism* in 1905 after travelling through the British Dominions and witnessing the emergent nationalist sentiments of Britain's former colonies. Colonial loyalty was giving away to national patriotism, and "the Empire [was] less valued for its own sake and more in proportion as it subserves the interests and ideals of separate nationalism."⁴⁹ For Canadian imperialists, imperial loyalty offered a united vision of the Canadian national community, where all Canadians, in theory, could pledge their support to a higher cause.

In practice, however, nationalists rejected binding Canada to an imperial future, believing that it inhibited national connections rather than encouraged them. The best-organized resistance to imperial nationalism was by French Canadians. Figures such as politician Joseph-Israël Tarte and journalist Jules-Paul Tardivel disputed that Canada ought to be so closely tied to its British heritage.⁵⁰ In their footsteps, a generation of *nationalistes* coalesced, like Olivar Asselin, Armand Lavergne, Jules Fournier, Omer Héroux, and its nominal chief, Henri Bourassa.⁵¹ They desired greater autonomy within a bicultural

47 Green, "The Political Economy of Empire," 347–8.

48 Carl Berger, *The Sense of Power: Studies in the Ideas of Canadian Imperialism 1867–1914* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1970), 250.

49 Richard Jebb, *Studies in Colonial Nationalism* (London: Edward Arnold, 1905), 2.

50 See Pierre Savard, "Tardivel, Jules-Paul," in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 13, http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/tardivel_jules_paul_13E.html (accessed 12 June 2015); Michèle Brassard and Jean Hamelin, "Joseph-Israël Tarte," *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 13, http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/tarte_joseph_israel_13E.html (accessed 12 June 2015).

51 Joseph Levitt, *Henri Bourassa and the Golden Calf: The Social Program of the Nationalists of Quebec (1900–1914)* (Ottawa: Les Éditions de l'Université d'Ottawa, 1969), 2.

and binational Canadian federation as well as independence from the British Empire.⁵²

Among English Canadians, the most ardent defender of nationalism was well-known lawyer, J.S. Ewart. Ewart was the author of the *Kingdom Papers*, a voluminous examination of Canada's legal obligations to Britain that envisioned a future distinct from the empire.⁵³ Many of the prominent politicians and academics of the day, including Bourassa, read Ewart's work on Canadian nationalism.⁵⁴ Like Bourassa, Ewart sought an independent and equal Canada removed from European affairs and British wars. Ewart's romantic notion of nationalism was a unifying and inevitable force of Canadian history.⁵⁵ Canada's disparate peoples would unite, Ewart argued, only when they made it "a nation in name as well as in fact" and took its "rightful place among the nations of the world."⁵⁶ The empire could only impede that coming future. By 1914, these two sides were entrenched in their positions.⁵⁷ Both offered a set of ideas about the "great transformation in progress," as Ramsay Cook and Robert Craig Brown depicted early twentieth-century Canada. "A new Canada was being born," they wrote, "and only partly out of the old."⁵⁸

The emergence of a "war culture" at the outbreak of war in 1914 quickly changed the terms on which these two sides had negotiated their vision of Canada, transforming the transformation itself. Prime

52 Réal Bélanger, "Bourassa, Henri," in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 18, http://www.biographi.ca/fr/bio/bourassa_henri_18F.html (accessed 12 June 2015). See also the *Program of the Nationalist League – 1903*, as reprinted in Joseph Levitt, *Henri Bourassa and the Golden Calf*, 148–9.

53 J.S. Ewart, *The Kingdom Papers* (Ottawa, 1912). The papers were a series of papers eventually published together, though more were added throughout the war past its initial 1912 publication date. After the war, he published *The Independence Papers*, which updated his previous arguments and demanded Canadian independence.

54 Douglas Cole, "John S. Ewart and Canadian Nationalism," *Historical Papers* 4, no. 1 (1969): 71–3.

55 Frank H. Underhill, "The Political Ideas of John S. Ewart," *Report of the Annual Meeting of the Canadian Historical Association* 12, no. 1 (1933): 32.

56 Ewart, *The Kingdom Papers*, vol. 1, 55.

57 Conservative Robert Borden won the 1911 election with an imperialist platform targeting the Liberal failure to support the British naval program and supporting free trade with the United States, even as Wilfrid Laurier was attacked as being too imperialist in Quebec. Liberal opponents in English and French Canada both offered a compelling narrative that questioned Laurier's loyalty, one to Britain and one to Canada, demonstrating the complexity of the issue. See Patrice Dutil and David Mackenzie, *Canada 1911: The Decisive Election That Shaped the Country* (Toronto: Dundurn, 2011), 288–9.

58 Brown and Cook, *A Nation Transformed*, 3.

Minister Robert Borden outlined his vision of Canadian war aims in December 1914, as ambiguous and idealistic as they were. He spoke to soldiers heading to Europe, and in strong terms foretold that “I may see the day, and you young men will certainly see it, when the men of Canada, Australia, South Africa and the other Dominions will have the same just voice in these questions as those who live within the British Isles.”⁵⁹ Canada, he believed, could emerge from the war with a legitimate voice in empire affairs and fulfil its national and imperial aspirations. Others in English Canada had a more demanding vision of the country’s emerging national character, one tied to the “Anglo-Saxon” race and denouncing those who did not fulfil their racial and cultural standards.⁶⁰

On the other side of the nation’s cultural fault line, Henri Bourassa had initially supported the war, but in 1916, he declared the widespread support for Britain’s war an “imperialist revolution” that renounced decades of careful separation between colony and motherland.⁶¹ Bourassa had discovered, like Borden, that the need to justify and mobilize Canada’s growing contribution to the war in material and manpower merged aspects of prewar imperialism and nationalism. In the vernacular of Canada’s war culture, fighting for the nation meant fighting for the empire, and rejecting either was treason – a fact Bourassa confronted as early as December 1914 when a riot nearly broke out as he tried to present his views on the war.⁶² In order to unite Canadians behind the war effort, the war had to be of vital interest for all, regardless of where they fell on the scale between imperialism and nationalism.

Through articles, books, and speeches, this idea was conveyed to Canadians, just as Papineau’s widely published letter would do. By the spring of 1916, Papineau had stepped into these muddy waters with his imagining of a wartime national identity for Canada that fit within the boundaries of its war culture and fell somewhere between imperialist and nationalist. It tied English-Canadian imperialism to

59 Castell Hopkins, *Canadian Annual Review 1914*, 160–1. See also Robert Craig Brown, “Sir Robert Borden and Canada’s War Aims,” in *War Aims and Strategic Policy in the Great War 1914–1918*, edited by Barry Hunt and Adrian Preston (London: Croom Helm, 1977), 55–66.

60 Brown and Cook, *A Nation Transformed*, 303. For a recent examination of the pressures of “Anglo-conformity,” see Mario Nathan Coschi, “‘Be British or be d–d’: Primary Education in Berlin-Kitchener, Ontario, during the First World War,” *Social History* 47, no. 94 (2014): 311–32.

61 Henri Bourassa, *Hier, aujourd’hui, demain* (Montreal, 1916) 39–40, 65, 107ff.

62 Robert Rumilly, *Henri Bourassa: la vie publique d’un grand Canadien* (Montreal: Les Éditions Chantecler, 1953), 521–2.

French-Canadian nationalism, uniting them in a shared struggle against a German menace and the promise of a new and better Canadian nation. Followers of both, he believed, were ready to endure hardship so that an imagined Canada could survive.

Papineau repeatedly sanctified the sacrifice that came with war and justified its cost in the name of the Canadian nation. Papineau argued that a higher purpose superseded the concerns of Henri Bourassa. "What of the Soul of Canada?" he asked in his letter. He continued: "Can a nation's pride or patriotism be built upon the blood and suffering of others or upon the wealth garnered from the coffers of those who in anguish and with blood-sweat are fighting the battles of freedom?" Only through a dutiful and successful war effort could the nation consecrate its soul. Without it, the nation would wither away. "If you were truly a Nationalist," Papineau chastised, "you would have recognised this as her moment of travail and tribulation." Instead, Bourassa stood by his prewar positions, failing to recognize the changing nation that Papineau witnessed on the frontlines. "There," Papineau reminded him, "even more than in Canada herself, her citizens are being knit together into a new existence because when men stand side by side and endure a soldier's life and face together a soldier's death, they are united in bonds almost as strong as the closest of blood-ties." Nor was the Canadian nation forged only in the crucible of trench combat:

There was the great opportunity for the true Nationalist! There was the great issue, the great sacrifice, which should have appealed equally to all true citizens of Canada and should have served to cement them with indissoluble strength – Canada was at war! Canada was attacked! What mattered then internal dissensions and questions of home importance? What mattered the why and wherefore of the war, whether we owed anything to England or not, whether we were Imperialists or not, or whether we were French or English? The one simple commending fact to govern our conduct was that Canada was at war, and Canada and Canadian liberties had to be protected.⁶³

Papineau offered the same motivation to Canadians at home as the one that he believed inspired soldiers who fought on the front. The loss of life and the loss of loved ones were equal sacrifices on the altar of the Canadian nation and necessary to establish "a foundation for a true Canadian nation, a Canadian nation independent in thought, independent in action, independent even in its political organisation."

63 Bourassa, *Canadian Nationalism and the War*, 18–19.

However, Papineau's Canadian nation did not abandon its imperial ties. It was bound to the British Empire through a "*spiritual* union" that offered great benefit. The British Empire was the standard-bearer of civilization, protecting the "individual and national liberty" at risk from the war. He again asked Bourassa to consider the circumstances of the war and forgo his traditional opposition to imperialism. "The bonds which unite us for certain great purposes and which have proved so powerful in this common struggle must not be loosened," Papineau warned, "they may indeed be readjusted, but the great communities which the British Empire has joined together must not be broken asunder." Bourassa's support for a British and Canadian victory would help "preserve and perpetuate that invaluable *spirit* which alone makes our union possible." The imperial community was as necessary as the national one to protect the values and future for which Canadian soldiers died. Though as noted above, it is likely that Papineau included this imperialist rhetoric given political realities of Canada's war culture at home.⁶⁴

Papineau designed an emotional message for the national community that played on fear as much as ambition. He spoke of the direct and indirect German threat to Canada.⁶⁵ Britain's declaration of war, according to Papineau, had immediately opened Canada to the danger of invasion and conquest despite the thousands of kilometres between European and Canadian borders. Germany imperilled the values of democracy and liberty that defined Papineau's Canadian nation. These values had to be defended at all costs and, more importantly, ought to be defended by all Canadians. His letter drew upon pre-existing forces of both imperialism and nationalism, placing them within the sphere of the soldier experience and asked that Canadian civilians be as loyal as the men in the trenches. With the publication of his letter, Papineau joined the process of mobilizing Canadians not as an agent of the state (though he was one as a writer for the Canadian War Records Office) but, rather, as an individual shaping the collective understanding of the nation. All Canadians had to join

64 Bourassa, *Canadian Nationalism and the War*, 20–3 (emphasis added).

65 While in Canada, there were those who illogically feared Germany attacking its coast (see, for example, the alarmist Harry W. Anderson, "If Canada Were Invaded," *Maclean's* (1 October 1914), 5), the most extant threat was from German-Americans to the south. That threat, though nowhere near as dire as some believed, was still very real. For example, see Brandon Dimmel, "Sabotage, Security, and Border-Crossing Culture: The Detroit River during the First World War, 1914–1918," *Social History* 47, no. 94 (2014): 401–19.

the war effort, not just as a matter of politics but also to ensure the survival of the new nation forged by its wartime experience.

Papineau's patriotic plea also was a result of his own self-mobilization, better understood as the process by which an individual rationalized the Great War's brutality. Like many soldiers, his motivations were varied and changed during his time in combat. He felt a strong sense of duty to his fellow soldiers. He entered the Canadian army with a morbid sense of resignation, writing to his mother in November 1914 that "all this worry and trouble and sorrow will make life worth the living if I live and if I don't you will find consolation in the manner of my dying – it is merely sooner than later & better than other things."⁶⁶ In the fall of 1916, Papineau felt compelled to leave his safe position behind the lines to rejoin the Princess Patricia's infantry, asking: "By what strange law am I still here? What right have I to self pleasure any longer. Should my living life not be consecrated just as their dead lives have been?"⁶⁷ It was a small step from believing soldiers' lives were worth the price of victory to believing all Canadians ought to be ready to endure the war's suffering. His own self-mobilization no doubt reflected how many other Canadians justified their part in the war.

The power of Papineau's words is evident, but the reaction among Canadians and the extent to which they mobilized national sentiment is difficult to gauge without more comprehensive studies from historians. Most newspaper responses aligned with Papineau or, at least, took the opportunity to attack Bourassa.⁶⁸ For his part, Bourassa wrote a scathing reply to his cousin that excoriated the soldier. The French-Canadian journalist had spent almost two years outlining his arguments against the war, arguments that Papineau ignored.⁶⁹ Bourassa's reply repeated his argument that the federal government, the press, and the politicians of both parties "applied themselves systematically to obliterate the free character of Canada's intervention." He opposed the war when supporting it was no longer a matter of choice but,

66 Talbot Papineau to his mother, 19 November 1914, vol. 2, TMP Fonds, LAC.

67 Talbot Papineau to Beatrice Fox, 30 September 1916, vol. 1, TMP Fonds, LAC.

68 For newspaper responses, see Robert Rumilly, *Henri Bourassa*, 560–1; Mason Wade, *The French Canadians 1760–1945* (Toronto: MacMillan, 1956), 715; Elizabeth Armstrong, *Crisis of Quebec 1914–1918* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1937), 140.

69 Bourassa had encapsulated his views on the war in two recent publications. Henri Bourassa, *Que devons-nous à l'Angleterre? La défense nationale, la révolution impérialiste, le tribut à l'Empire* (Montreal, 1915); Henri Bourassa, *Hier, aujourd'hui, demain* (Montreal, 1916).

rather, of “blackmail, intimidation and threats.” Surely the high ideals of British civilization that Papineau claimed to protect eroded as the government imprisoned foreign aliens, harassed citizens on the streets, and silenced dissent. Bourassa did not support the war, not because he was a traitor as Papineau implied but, rather, because he was standing by the principles that he had repeatedly expressed before and during the conflict.⁷⁰ He stood firmly outside of English Canada’s war culture, though he continued to shape one for French Canada.

The private correspondence in Papineau’s letters reveals a partial picture of the passionate responses from Papineau’s peers, friends, and family. On the front, many of the senior leaders of the British army were pleased with his intervention, including Corps Commander Sir Julian Byng, Sir Max Aitken, the Minister of Militia Sam Hughes, and others.⁷¹ William Graham Browne, a bond dealer in Montreal, wrote to Papineau with the news that while he had seen many arguments against Bourassa, “none have been so lucid or so convincing as your very excellent letter.”⁷² Papineau’s friend John Archibald praised him, noting: “[T]he points were well made without being laboured and there was plenty of force without sacrifice of urbanity . . . In a word, my dear Talbot, I am very much pleased with your letter and think it augurs well for the future. (Surely after this he will be pacified.)”⁷³ His cousin Henriette wrote angrily to him in French. Her friends had interrogated her on the subject, and she furiously told Papineau that Louis-Joseph Papineau would “*sort[ir] de sa tombe pour voir comment ses descendants [se comportent]*.”⁷⁴ Another friend told him of how the war was viewed in Quebec, warning Papineau that “the feeling in this part of the country is very intense & bitter.”⁷⁵ One commended Papineau’s efforts to reach out to French Canada, complaining about the “ignorant” habitants who illegally hunted on her family’s land. To her, the letter to Bourassa illuminated the path to progress.⁷⁶ A year afterward, one of Papineau’s soldiers told him that his father immediately recognized the name of his commanding officer because “everybody in Canada knew Talbot Papineau by reputation.”⁷⁷

70 Henri Bourassa, “Réponse de M. Bourassa à la lettre du Capitane Talbot Papineau,” *Le Devoir* (5 August 1916).

71 Talbot Papineau to his mother, 18 Aug. 1916, vol. 2, TMP Fonds, IAC.

72 Graham Browne to Talbot Papineau, 3 Aug. 1916, vol. 2, TMP Fonds, IAC.

73 John Archibald to Papineau, 19 August 1916, vol. 2, TMP Fonds, IAC.

74 Henriette to Talbot Papineau, 4 August 1916, vol. 2, TMP Fonds, IAC. This was likely Henriette Bourassa-Chauvin, sister to Henri Bourassa.

75 Evelyn Porteous to Talbot Papineau, 30 July 1916, vol. 2, TMP Fonds, IAC.

76 Elsie Redford to Talbot Papineau, 16 August 1916, vol. 2, TMP Fonds, IAC.

77 Talbot Papineau to his mother, 22 September 1917, vol. 2, TMP Fonds, IAC.

Papineau's blossoming reputation may have been the start of a promising postwar career in politics had he lived. After rejoining his old regiment on the Western Front as a major in charge of a company, Papineau and the Patricia's entered the muddy battlefield of Passchendaele in October 1917. On 31 October, after many narrow escapes, an artillery shell exploded next to him, and Major Talbot Papineau was killed. When the news of his death reached Canada, commiserating tributes poured in for him. Obituaries reverently placed him within the same war culture to which he had contributed. In Ottawa, the *Ottawa Citizen* wrote that Papineau had "resented the intolerance of certain Anglo-Saxon elements in Canada but he also deplored the narrow obscurantism of many sections of Quebec."⁷⁸ The *Globe* wrote that the "soldier and patriot" had "died that liberty might not perish from the earth."⁷⁹ The *Toronto Star* proclaimed that "[had] Talbot Papineau been other than he was – a man worthy of occupying an exalted place in his day and generation – he would not have been equal to the test he has just met with undying glory."⁸⁰ *La Presse* described Papineau's significance to Canadians at home:

*Le héros disparu comptait aussi parmi les Canadiens qui ont le plus à cœur le problème des races et qui soupirent après le jour où Canadiens de sang anglais et de sang français fraterniseront dans l'égalité, la justice et la paix. Malheureusement, la mort est venue le prendre au moment où il faisait les plus beaux rêves pour ses compatriotes et son pays.*⁸¹

The response to his death reveals Papineau's lasting impact during the war itself. In 1917, at least, Papineau was embedded in the national consciousness.

His role in Canada's cultural mobilization is apparent from these obituaries. Mixed within the patriotism-infused obituaries was the repeated note of grief – not for the Papineau who died on the Western Front but, rather, for the Papineau that represented the coming together of French and English for a united war effort. He was remembered not as an individual but, instead, as a symbol. As the conscription crisis unfolded and the divide between the two cultures

78 *Ottawa Citizen* (5 November 1917). The article is found in a booklet entitled "Captain Papineau's Letter to M. Henri Bourassa (editor of *Le Devoir*)," vol. 4, TMP Fonds, LAC. Each of the following obituaries referenced are from the same booklet.

79 *Globe* (5 November 1917).

80 *Toronto Star* (5 November 1917).

81 *La Presse* (6 November 1917).

reached new heights in late 1917, Papineau's death was a sober reminder that his call for unity was still a faraway reality for the Canadian nation.

The cultural mobilization evoked in Papineau's letter demonstrates the coercive nature of Canada's war culture, especially with a century of hindsight. Like so many responses to wartime dissenters, there was no middle ground to debate the war's meaning. Not backing Papineau and the war supporters was disloyal, cowardly, or foolhardy. Papineau did not shy away from threatening Bourassa and those who did not heed his message. He wrote to "those who . . . remained in safety and comfort in Canada and failed to give us encouragement and support [and] those who grew fat with the wealth dishonourably gained by political graft and by dishonest business methods at our expense," warning them that they would have their "day of reckoning" when the soldiers returned home. They would face the "invincible power of our moral influence" that the soldiers had earned by virtue of their combat experience. In other words, join the new Canadian nation or face its wrath.

Canada's war culture likewise narrowed the space in which Canada's French-speaking minority could develop a response to the war separate from their English-speaking brethren. While Papineau described an inclusionary national community, he set the terms for that consideration. The war was "the greatest opportunity which could ever have presented itself for us to show unity of purpose and to prove to our English fellow citizens that, whatever our respective histories may have been, we were actuated by a common love for our country." It carried with it the implication that not supporting the war meant one did not love their country – a position that Bourassa had confronted since the war's beginning.

Bourassa refused to accept that patriotism meant supporting the war at all costs. In June, weeks before receiving Papineau's letter, Bourassa highlighted two important obstacles he encountered during his growing and vocal opposition to the war effort, outlining what opponents to the majoritarian English-Canadian war culture faced. First, the press consistently muted the voices of those opposed to the war. For instance, he wrote that "*partisans de la guerre à outrance*" interpreted any suggestion of peace in their favour. If a German spoke of peace, it meant that Germany was weakening. If a Briton raised the possibility of negotiations, they were a traitor. Nuanced discussions of the war asked questions that defied the simplified rhetoric of wartime, so newspapers reduced them to binaries of support or opposition. Second, Bourassa explained, it was not patriotism expressed

by the war supporters, but “loyalism.” It demanded absolute loyalty to the British crown and its endeavours, even in the face of the war’s enormous sacrifice, yet Bourassa argued that, historically, “Canadian patriotism” had often emerged in conflict with “British loyalism.” “*C’est en luttant contre l’autorité impériale et ses tenants au Canada,*” Bourassa claimed, “*que les Canadiens des deux races s’étaient rapprochés peu à peu et avaient commencé à se lier par un commun attachement à la patrie canadienne.*”⁸² In contrast to the argument Papineau offered, Bourassa maintained that patriotism had once unified the Canadian nation, but now loyalism divided its French and English peoples. War culture was not open to all Canadians, especially those who rejected the vernacular of cultural mobilization.

The distinction between Papineau and Bourassa’s conceptions of patriotism is an important one. Douglas Cole’s study of imperialism and nationalism in British colonies sheds light on the nature of their opposing views. Cole argued that the dichotomy between imperial and national ideologies was not absolute, and he distinguished patriotism – loyalty to the state – from nationalism – loyalty to the national idea.⁸³ Hence, nationalism formed the basis of Bourassa’s opposition to the war without diminishing his patriotism. Papineau and Canadian war culture, on the other hand, combined the two into unquestionable support for the nation-state at war. All nationalists had to support the war waged by the state, just as all patriots had to support the nation at war. He demanded that everyone accept the same collective understanding of the Canadian nation. For Papineau, the war effort was more than just a patriotic undertaking to mobilize state resources. It meant mobilizing the spirit of the nation for the goal of the state: victory at any cost.

Despite the prominence of Papineau, his voice faded quickly after the war ended. As the experience of war became the memory of it, those who once so passionately supported the war could not sustain the same fiery vitriol. English Canada moved its focus to much less stringently imperial nationalism as its memory of the war centred on national and provincial unity. Memorials at battles like Vimy Ridge, where Canadian soldiers from all provinces fought together and achieved victory, echoed a new national spirit. Under the careful stewardship of Liberal Prime Minister William Lyon Mackenzie King, ever

82 Henri Bourassa, “L’enseignement du patriotisme,” *Le Devoir* (12 June 1916).

83 Douglas Cole, “The Problem of ‘Nationalism’ and ‘Imperialism’ in British Settlement Colonies,” *Journal of British Studies* 10, no. 2 (1971): 179. Cole’s argument focused on a scale of imperialist and nationalist beliefs, noting that most lay somewhere between two extremes.

cautious about upsetting Quebec, the Canadian government downplayed the rifts from the war in favour of a “united Canada.”⁸⁴ Quebec nationalism fashioned a mirror of the English-Canadian memory. There, English Canada’s wartime excess and heavy handedness with Quebec enabled a process of collective forgetting that French Canadians had ever vocally supported the war.⁸⁵ Whereas English Canadians trumpeted national unity while avoiding the topic of Quebec, the Quebecois moved towards an inward-looking nationalism that studiously ignored its own contributions to the war. Neither remembered Talbot Papineau, who was once again caught between his two ancestral nationalities. War culture is, after all, a product of war, not of the peace that follows. It lingers, but it cannot maintain the same vitality it had during the war years as it fades into memory.

The way Canadians remembered the war is important because it suggests two Canadian war cultures. Those who shaped a positive memory of the war in English Canada repeated many of the same themes that had mobilized Canadians during wartime.⁸⁶ The foundations of an English-Canadian nationalist memory were military victories abroad that justified the poor handling of the problems at home and that ultimately Canadians consented to the war’s costs and sacrifices. Yet French Canadians like Henri Bourassa surely did not consent to the war. The Quebec memory developed from a very different war culture as they faced English-Canadian demands to shed their apathetic attitudes and the prohibition of dissent. The conscription crisis in 1917–18 led to increasing resistance in Quebec and culminated with the Easter Riots of 1918. Quebec historians did not examine the

84 Jonathan Vance, *Death So Noble: Memory, Meaning, and the First World War* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1997), 213.

85 Vance, *Death So Noble*, 259–60. For example, many French-Canadian veterans published memoirs of their time on the battlefield, but few were remembered after a few decades. See Geoff Keelan, “‘Il a bien mérité de la Patrie’: The 22nd Battalion and the Memory of Courcellette,” *Canadian Military History* 19, no. 3 (2010): 28–40. For an exploration of the Quebec memory in the 1920s, see Alan Gordon, “Lest We Forget: Two Solitudes in War and Memory,” in *Canadas of the Mind: The Making and Unmaking of Canadian Nationalisms in the Twentieth Century*, edited by Norman Hillmer and Adam Chapnick (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queens University Press, 2007), 159–73.

86 The English-Canadian memory of the war is ably explored in Jonathan Vance, *Death So Noble*. In addition, it is important to consider that early historical scholarship was based on archives assembled by the Canadian army’s official historian up until the 1960s. See Tim Cook, *Clio’s Warriors: Canadian Historians and the Writing of the World Wars* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2006), 263.

war in detail since it marked the “birth” of English Canada’s nationalism.⁸⁷ Still, overall, English Canadians remembered consenting to the war, while Québécois remembered those who coerced French Canadians into supporting it.⁸⁸ The nature of English Canada’s cultural mobilization epitomized in Papineau’s writing antagonized French Canadians who saw their circumstances in a vastly different light. Rather than enlarging the space for French Canadians to support the war, it limited it since they could not collectively agree on the justifications for the war to create a coherent vernacular that crossed Canada’s cultural divide. Instead, French Canada formed its own vernacular about the conflict in reaction to English Canada.

Much more work is still required for a comprehensive understanding of Canada’s war culture and the cultural mobilization that shaped it. Papineau’s story is not the story of Canada at war. He was not like the majority of Canadians who fought and lived through the conflict. However, his vision of Canada remains one that was aligned with the popular understanding of the war, which itself ignored other voices of resistance. He represents a common aspect of the Canadian war experience, even as it minimized the nuance of Canadian opinions on the war. For instance, a backlash against the war effort was growing in 1916, strongest among French Canadians, but present throughout the country as the election and debates over conscription in 1917 would reveal. Papineau’s letter was a reply to the position of Henri Bourassa, but what of the war supporters who grew uneasy with Robert Borden’s running of the war? Liberals like Andrew McMaster, while committed to the war effort, spared no opportunity to disparage

87 Mourad Djebabla, “Historiographie francophone de la Première Guerre mondiale: écrire la Grande Guerre de 1914–1918 en français au Canada et au Québec,” *Canadian Historical Review*, 95, no. 3 (2014): 407. Robert Rumilly’s *Histoire de la Province de Québec* provides a clear vision of the war in Quebec nationalist memory. Most telling is volume 21, *Courcelette*. The 1916 Battle of Courcelette was the most important battle of the war for the 22nd Battalion, Canada’s only French-speaking battalion. However, Rumilly’s account of Courcelette is overshadowed by his discussion of provincial politics, the failure of the Bonne Entente movement, which was meant to bring French and English Canadians together in support of the war, and the looming spectre of forced military service. Even though Courcelette was “*essentiellement une victoire canadienne-française*,” only five pages were devoted to the battle.

88 A recent article by Jean Martin has urged historians to reevaluate the number of French-Canadian recruits during the war from 20,000–30,000 to closer to 60,000, beginning a serious discussion about our understanding of French-Canadian contributions to the war. See Jean Martin, “La participation des francophones dans le Corps expéditionnaire canadien (1914–1919): il faut réviser à la hausse,” *Canadian Historical Review* 96, no. 3 (2015): 405–23.

the government's handling of it. In addition, as conscription loomed, Sir Wilfrid Laurier urged in the summer of 1917 that the most important goal of the government ought to be "to maintain the unity of the nation." He reminded Prime Minister Borden that "the unity of the nation is seriously compromised today" and warned of domestic turmoil yet to come, qualifying his support but by no means rejecting the war.⁸⁹ Historians must question the diversity among the war supporters, particularly in 1917–18, and the significance of disagreeing with the total war effort prescribed by the government within Canada's war culture.

Better yet would be a complete history of Canadian war culture during the First World War that reflects on the process of cultural mobilization. Papineau's letter was a small part of a much larger network of cultural products – from periodical publications, to books, to speeches, to government propaganda – that affected what Canadians understood about the war and how they perceived it.⁹⁰ Their impact was not identical across the country, within different social classes or ethnicities, or even throughout the duration of the war. This unevenness makes it difficult to study its effectiveness, and a much larger study is required to encapsulate its pervasiveness. Many questions remain about how exactly the battlefield connected to the home front and how a war culture may have changed in transmission across the

- 89 Canada, *House of Commons Debates* (17 July 1917), 3487 (Honorary Sir Wilfrid Laurier).
- 90 Some good starting points in this vein are Keshen, *Propaganda and Censorship*, and other works mentioned here, but also Peter Buitenhuis, *The Great War of Words: British, American and Canadian Propaganda and Fiction, 1914–1933* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1987); Paul Litt, "Canada Invaded! The Great War, Mass Culture, and Canadian Cultural Nationalism," in Craig Brown and MacKenzie, *Canada and the First World War*, 323–49; Colm Hickey, "'For All That Was Good, Noble and True': A Middle Class Martial Icon of Canadian Patriotism and British Imperialism: John Lovell Dashwood, Canada and the Great War," *International Journal of the History of Sport* 22, no. 4 (2005): 722–44; Susan Fisher, *Boys and Girls in No Man's Land: English-Canadian Children and the First World War* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2011); Peter Webb, "'A Righteous Cause': War Propaganda and Canadian Fiction, 1915–1921," *British Journal of Canadian Studies* 24, no. 1 (2011): 31–48; and selected chapters from Paul Stortz and E. Lisa Panayotidis, eds., *Cultures, Communities, and Conflict: Histories of Canadian Universities and War* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2012). Australian scholars have alluded to "propaganda news" appearing in Canadian newspapers, a question that requires more comprehensive study. See Peter Putnis and Kerry McCallum, "The Role of Reuters in the Distribution of Propaganda News in Australia during World War I," *Proceedings of Australian Media Traditions Conference, 24–25 Nov. 2005* (Canberra, Australia: University of Canberra, 2005).

Atlantic. Unlike in France, where the term originates, Canada was far away from the battlefields and did not have the same immediate stake in the outcome of the war. While this did not stop the war supporters from presenting the immediacy of victory and defeat as a crucial component of the war effort, it certainly changed the impact it must have had on ordinary Canadians. As we go through the centenary years of the First World War, these questions deserve better answers, if only so that Canadians might better remember the war as it was and what they wished it to be.

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