2008

A SMALL PRICE TO PAY: CONSUMERISM ON THE CANADIAN HOME FRONT, 1939-1945

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A SMALL PRICE TO PAY: CONSUMERISM ON THE CANADIAN HOME FRONT, 1939-1945

(Thesis Format: Monograph)

by

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Graduate Program
in
History

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

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Abstract

A Small Price to Pay is an examination of consumerism on the Canadian home front during the Second World War. As the first comprehensive study of consumerism in Canada during the war era, it builds upon existing scholarship in four ways. First, it goes beyond the examination of the administration of rationing and price controls, which have been the subject of previous studies, and instead focuses on consumer behavior, retailing, and advertising methods. Second, it challenges the commonplace assumption that the war was a period of extreme consumer deprivation in Canada, by demonstrating that the consumer economy remained remarkably vibrant and resilient despite the pressures of economic mobilization for war. Third, it contends that the defense of private enterprise and consumer choice was part of the general intellectual and political discussion of the time, and that these arguments were necessarily at odds with wartime appeals for conservation, thrift, savings, as well as with reconstruction proposals that centered on the creation of a social welfare state. Finally, and above all, it underscores the central position that consumerism had in the political and social life of the Canadian home front. Even a cursory examination of the period reveals an obsessive concern with how the war effort would affect consumer behaviour, and indeed with how consumer behaviour would affect the war effort.

Keywords: Consumption, Advertising, Retailing, Rationing, World War 1939-1945, Canada, Home Front, Women and Gender

Acknowledgements

I fear that this small achievement is unworthy of the many remarkable people who have assisted in its completion. I am in the first place indebted to Jonathan Vance, for patient counsel well beyond that which normally is expected of a dissertation advisor. If the seeds of this project were planted during his course on Canadian cultural history, they began to germinate during a challenging and intriguing field exam in consumer history, supervised by Daniel Robinson. My chapter on the automobile industry had its genesis during many hours of conversation with Douglas Leighton. Benjamin Forster generously offered his graduate seminar on consumer history as a forum in which to test early drafts of two chapters, and provided commentary that was both serious and reassuring. All students should be so lucky as to have teachers like these. Luck, too, played some part in securing an Ontario Graduate Scholarship and a Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council Doctoral Fellowship that provided early funding for this dissertation. I have been equally fortunate in counting Dorotea Gucciardo, Wes Gustavson, Alison Hunter, Renée Soulodre-LaFrance, Alice Taylor, and Robert Ventresca as friends, allies, and intellectual tutors. My final and greatest thanks I reserve for Amanda Green, who has over the course of several years both financed the struggle and maintained morale on the home front.

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The great tragedy of our time is that no democracy has been able to understand or to accept the demands of total war until their homes were under actual bombing attack.[1]

Walter Gordon, chairman of the Wartime Prices and Trade Board, January 1942

Man lives by certain civilizing influences. These include the luxuries of the daily newspaper, art galleries, and fine pictures; music and theatrical entertainment; movie shows; and rapid transit, motor cars, airplanes, time saving appliances, even a knife, a spoon, a few serving plates, an ornament or two for various parts of the house...to have a good heart for war work, people must have something extremely desirable to fight for.[2]

Editorial, *Canadian Jeweller,* April 1942

Until recently it was possible to state with conviction that the social history of Canada during the Second World War awaited its author. An early version of this introduction, dating from 2002, said precisely that. Since then, several works have altered the historiographical landscape of this period. Jeffrey Keshen's pioneering survey of civilian life, *Saints, Sinners, and Soldiers: Canada's Second World War,* published in 2004, was followed in quick succession by Magda Fahrni's *Household Politics,* a study of postwar reconstruction that commences with an examination of Montreal families in the war's last summer, and Serge Durflinger's *Fighting from Home,* an amusing and insightful examination of the war efforts undertaken in

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[1] "Total War and the Housewife," *Consumer's News,* May 5, 1942, 5.
[2] "Extinction: Does It Face the Canadian Jeweller?," *Trader and Canadian Jeweller,* April 1942, 42.

Verdun, Quebec. Most recently, Jennifer Stephen's *Pick One Intelligent Girl* offered further insight into the badly misrepresented topic of women's wartime employment.[3]

A Small Price to Pay is a contribution to the ongoing effort to produce a social history of Canada at war. Its emphasis is on consumerism – the economic and cultural practices associated with the manufacture, marketing, sale, and purchase of commodities. As has often been observed, personal consumerism became one of the most powerfully motivating social forces in the industrial world in the twentieth century, an activity around which governments shaped policies and through which social identities were formed or reconfigured.[4] But very few histories of Canadian consumerism exist and there are none at all about wartime consumerism in Canada. If anything, the phrase "wartime consumerism" seems like an oxymoron: in the hallowed spaces of social memory where the war resides, consumerism is thought to have been suspended for the duration of the conflict. In *Northern Enterprise*, his

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[3] Serge Marc Durflinger, *Fighting from Home : The Second World War in Verdun, Quebec, Studies in Canadian Military History,* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2006), Magdalena Fahrni, *Household Politics : Montreal Families and Postwar Reconstruction, Studies in Gender and History.* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2005), Jeff Keshen, *Saints, Sinners, and Soldiers : Canada's Second World War* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2004), Jennifer Anne Stephen, *Pick One Intelligent Girl : Employability, Domesticity and the Gendering of Canada's Welfare State, 1939-1947, Studies in Gender and History.* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007). Mention should be made, too, of Stephen Kimber's engaging popular history, Stephen Kimber, *Sailors, Slackers, and Blind Pigs : Halifax at War* (Toronto: Doubleday Canada, 2002).

[4] A large body of literature on the emergence of consumer societies has been written in the past three decades. Important works on North American consumer society include T.J. Jackson Lears, *No Place of Grace: Antimodernism and the Transformation of American Culture 1880-1920* (New York: Pantheon, 1981) and William Leach, *Land of Desire: Merchants, Power, and the Rise of a New American Culture* (New York: Vintage, 1993.)

history of Canadian business, Michael Bliss writes that "elaborate controls limited civilian purchasing power," which, he claims, "did not rise from Depression levels," while J.L. Granatstein, in his entry on Canada in the *Oxford Companion to the Second World War,* writes that Canadians' personal savings rose because "consumer goods were unavailable" on the home front.[5] More recently, journalist Ken MacQueen, writing for *Maclean's* just after the September 11th attacks on the United States, considered the degree to which society had changed since the early 1940s, changes he found reflected in the consumer habits of civilians on the "home front".

> (In the Second World War) the role of the home front was one of scrimp, salvage, and sacrifice. Victory gardens were planted. Victory Bonds were bought. Hoarded cans, used foil, and scrap iron were made into battleships. Food and fuel were rationed, nylon stockings vanished, even new tires for the family car were a squandering of war resources. It was a penurious kind of patriotism, ill-suited to these modern times.

By contrast, he wrote, "the war on terrorism...is a shop-til-you drop proposition", where politicians and their corporate allies urge consumers to spend with confidence in order to prop up the war effort, and where advertisers symbolically link consumption with patriotism while manufacturers devise new

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[5] Michael Bliss, *Northern Enterprise: Five Centuries of Canadian Business* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1987), 448. J.L. Granatstein, "Canada" in *The Oxford Companion to the Second World War,* edited by I.C.B. Dear and M.R.D. Foot (New York: Oxford, 1995), 183. I will contest each of these claims in the chapters that follow.

consumer products whose purchase promises to deliver, as MacQueen put it, "a body blow to psychopathic terrorists everywhere."[6]

As I shall argue, however, this portrait of "penurious patriotism" describes only half of the war, and even then it does so inaccurately. In MacQueen's case, the error lies not merely in the incongruity of any comparison between the "war on terror" and the Second World War, but in his assumption that there is something new about mobilizing consumer impulses on behalf of a military effort. When Canada declared war in September 1939, no one called on consumers to make sacrifices because no one predicted that such sacrifices would be necessary. Prime Minister William Lyon Mackenzie King's government had committed itself to a war of "limited liability", in which the domestic impact of war would be comparatively small.[7] In October 1939, there was nothing unusual about it when the editors of *Maclean's* expressed the very sentiment that MacQueen found so alarming sixty-two years later, advising readers to "carry on" with their consumer lifestyles, because, in their words, "the best service that can be rendered is to keep our national economic structure functioning as normally as possible."[8] Such views were almost everywhere regnant. Throughout the press, the battle cry was "business as

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[6] Ken MacQueen, "Shop until You Drop: The Marching Orders of Consumers Are Clear," *Maclean's*, October 15, 2001, 42.
[7] See J.L. Granatstein, *Canada's War: The Politics of the Mackenzie King Government* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990), especially chapter one.
[8] "Carry On," *Maclean's*, October 15, 1939, 15.

usual", and millions of Canadians, wary of war, but weary of Depression, rallied to it.

All this was, of course, prior to the succession of catastrophes that the Allies suffered in the spring and summer of 1940. Before France's capitulation, Canada had been treated, in the words of the British official history, as a "purely marginal source of supply."[9] But following the Nazi victory over France in June 1940, a torrent of munitions orders poured forth from panicked British ministries and the Canadian government's own fiscal restraint was, as Robert Bothwell put it, "jettisoned virtually overnight."[10] But if this was a turning point in Canada's war effort, there was very little indication of it in the course of consumer affairs. For more than a year, Canadian manufacturers, so many of whom had been operating at reduced levels throughout the long, lifeless years of the Depression, were able to mobilize idle capacity to meet military orders without seriously disrupting the flow of consumer goods. From some quarters of the government calls for greater consumer sacrifice began to emerge but, if anything, the "business as usual" rhetoric only intensified everywhere else. In September 1940, the country's most popular women's magazine, *Chatelaine*, actually published a special issue whose theme was "shopping to win the war." Even women's organizations such as the Imperial Order Daughters of the Empire (IODE), whose

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[9] H. Duncan Hall, *North American Supply* (London: H.M. Stationery Office, 1955), 16.
[10] Robert Bothwell, "Who is Paying for Anything These Days? War Production in Canada, 1939-1945" in *Mobilization for Total War: the Canadian, American, and British Experience,* edited by N.F. Dreisziger (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1981), 61.

members at times expressed moral misgivings about the modern consumer society, urged Canadians to "buy victory now", not with War Savings Certificates or Victory Bonds, but through the purchase of British-made goods.

While British consumers felt the pinch of war from its earliest days, and American consumers would within a month of Pearl Harbor, Canadian consumers experienced two years in which they seemed neither at peace nor fully at war. Granted, as the war widened and as the Canadian armed forces grew, some anxious officials began to murmur that severe restrictions on civilian consumption were inevitable. But 1941 was nonetheless the best year to date for the production of washing machines, stoves, refrigerators, toasters, and other appliances; furniture store sales that year were three times higher than they had been just prior to the war; and as late as June 1941, even as Germany invaded the Soviet Union, the editors of *Automotive Trade* wrote reassuringly that the automobile business could go on as usual, there being no evidence that immediate changes were required.[11] Sooner or later, however, the insatiable demands of Canada's expanding war effort, coupled with the impact of the American rearmament program, was bound to result in the large-scale rededication of consumer production for military purposes, but that moment was postponed until late 1941, when the government ordered drastic cuts in

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[11] Figures for sales of stoves, refrigerators, and other appliances are from *Census of Industry: Mining, Metallurgical, and Chemical Statistics: The Electrical Apparatus and Supplies Industry* (Ottawa: Dominion Bureau of Statistics, 1939-1945), various pages. Furniture sales figures are from *Historical Statistics of Canada*, Series T35-52. "Editorial," *Canadian Automotive Trade*, June 1941, 14.

the production of most consumer durables and the Wartime Prices and Trade Board (WPTB) imposed sweeping wage and price controls in order to combat inflation. "We must face the fact," Mackenzie King announced to the House of Commons that November,

> that there are not enough men; there are not enough machines; there are not enough materials to meet both the demands of consumers and the demands of war...we have no choice but to reduce our consumption of consumer goods. To us, too, has come the choice between guns and butter.[12]

Between 1941 and 1944, production of home radios plummeted from nearly half a million to none; electric refrigerator production dropped from an all-time high of 64,000 in 1941 to 350 in 1943; and tire production fell 96 percent by the end of 1942. So it went in most categories of consumer durable production and sales, including in the case of some seemingly innocuous everyday items: the production of electrical clocks fell by 99 percent, for example.[13] But the most striking difference was the almost total absence of new passenger car production after 1941. Cars had become one of the benchmarks of the consumer society and Canadians had purchased a quarter million of them in the first two-and-a-half years of the war. In 1943, fewer than 1,000 would be sold to civilians, and those were reserved for drivers whose jobs were

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[12] Speech quoted in "Stabilization of Prices and Wages in Canada," *The Labour Gazette* 1941, 1363.
[13] Radio and appliance figures: *Census of Industry: Mining, Metallurgical, and Chemical Statistics: The Electrical Apparatus and Supplies Industry* (Ottawa: Dominion Bureau of Statistics, 1939-1945), various pages. Tire production figures: Canadian Automobile Chamber of Commerce, *Facts and Figures of the Automobile Industry*, 1946, 11.

deemed essential to the war effort.[14] In addition, the WPTB imposed coupon rationing for gasoline, sugar, tea, and coffee in the spring and summer of 1942, butter later that year, and meat beginning in May 1943. All this coincided with a doubling of direct personal taxes (which had already increased a staggering six-fold since the beginning of the war) and an immense propaganda effort aimed at discouraging consumer spending.[15] A deluge of posters, billboards, advertisements, radio messages, and documentary films issued by half a dozen government agencies underscored the importance of combating inflation and preventing any diversion of resources to satiate needless consumer demand. Some of this propaganda went so far as to equate spendthrift consumerism with treason.

Was this, the mating of nationalistic moralizing with consumer deprivation, the "penurious patriotism" to which MacQueen alluded? In part, certainly, but not entirely, for even after the production of consumer durables was suspended and coupon rationing began, private manufacturers, advertisers, and retailers devised ingenious new ways to sell their remaining wares by converting a myriad of wartime anxieties into rationales for continued mass consumption. For every advertisement urging conservation and thrift, there were dozens more that encouraged patriotic shoppers to part with their paycheques, advertisements whose message was that

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[14] *Historical Statistics of Canada* Series T61-66. On automobiles and other consumer durables, see chapter five.

[15] Direct taxes paid by individuals increased from 45.4 million in 1939 to 296.2 million in 1941 to 698.4 million in 1943. *Historical Statistics of Canada* Series G1-25.

buying, under the correct circumstances, was neither wasteful nor unpatriotic but a contribution to the war effort, and even a sacrifice that consumers made for freedom. In so doing, manufacturers, advertisers, and retailers offered Canadians an alternative reason for why the war was being fought: not just for Britain and Empire, nor merely for nationhood and liberty, but also for free enterprise, for a "selling way of life", and for access to a future of limitless consumer choice, where the expectation was not of further sacrifice, but of a hard-earned share in a world of plenty.[16]

Still, it is altogether too obvious to state that the wartime consumer society was, as the overused phrase goes, "contested terrain", as if there is something exceptional about the discovery of an historical moment that contains ambiguities, contradictions, and paradoxes. Consumerism has always been attended by arguments about its propriety – the accusation that unnecessary consumption equals vice and moral decay was one that the Stoics had leveled against the Epicureans in ancient Athens.[17] Of more immediate relevance to the study at hand, historian David Horowitz has identified two major strands of anti-consumerist thought in the United States in the 19th century, and students of Canadian consumer history will find them familiar. One was rooted in the misgivings of middle-class moralists who feared that the pursuit of

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[16] Other historians have noted the tendency in consumer societies to equate consumer choice with political freedom. Susan Strasser, for example, has written that "twentieth century rhetoric has conflated democracy with an abundance of consumer goods." Susan Strasser, *Satisfaction Guaranteed, The Making of the American Mass Market* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1989), 288. In my estimation, the express equation of consumerism with political liberty seldom was made in Canada before the Second World War.

[17] See James Davidson, *Courtesans and Fishcakes: The Consuming Passions of Classical Athens* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997).

pleasure undermined the time-honoured virtues of plain and pious living centered on hard work, thrift, and sobriety – in short, that the consumer society threatened to supplant God-fearing self-denial with self-indulgence before a false god. Such views subsequently were elaborated upon by a variety of modern social critics — the archetypal examples would be sociologists Robert and Helen Lynd of *Middletown* fame — who worried less about self-indulgence than about the erosion of self-identity in the sea of a stupefying and homogenizing mass culture.[18] To these two categories we might add a third source of anti-consumerist thought: Marxists, communists, and socialists who argued that consumerism was predicated upon the exploitation of labour and undermined working-class solidarity by offering an alternative, though ultimately counterfeit, vision of human emancipation.[19]

What makes the war years of particular interest in the ongoing debate over consumer capitalism is the extremity that the argument reached. When the war began, the apostles of free enterprise argued that consumerism underpinned the economic prosperity and industrial power necessary to wage war. As the conflict

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[18] David Horowitz, *The Morality of Spending* (Baltimore: Johns-Hopkins University Press, 1995), xviii. On the longstanding suspicion of luxury, see: Maxine Berg and Helen Clifford, *Consumers and Luxury: Consumer Culture in Europe 1650-1850* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999), 2-3. Robert and Helen Lynd, *Middletown: A Study in Contemporary Culture* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1929). On the Lynds and their famous study, see Richard Wightman Fox, "Epitaph for Middletown," in *The Culture of Consumption: Critical Essays in American History 1880-1980,* edited by Richard Wightman Fox and T.J. Jackson Lears (New York: Pantheon Books, 1983), 101-142 and David C. Tambo et.al., *Middletown: An Annotated Bibliography* (New York: Garland, 1988).

[19] The critique of consumer-capitalism has been so central to Marxist and other collectivist social theories that it is nearly tautological to point out the relationship between them. On Canadian socialism specifically, see Walter D. Young, *Democracy and Discontent: Progressivism, Socialism, and Social Credit in the Canadian West* (Toronto: McGraw Hill, 1978) and Alan Whitehorn, *Canadian Socialism: Essays on the CCF-NDP* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1992).

widened and the ferocity of the fighting grew to horrific new heights, anti-consumerist moralists seized upon the circumstances to argue that a nation of consumers who forsook self-sacrifice for self-indulgence imperiled the survival of the nation. The debate over the place of consumerism on the home front was therefore much more than the passing dispute that it appeared to be. It was not merely an argument over the extent of material sacrifice necessary in a nation at war. It was part of a broader debate over the place of consumer capitalism in Canadian society – including whether or not it would have a place.

In addition, the study of the wartime consumer economy highlights the immense economic and cultural "weight" that the United States already had in Canada. Historians have tended to emphasize the British character of wartime Canada, with most taking it for granted, as J.L. Granatstein has argued, that Canada went to war in 1939 because Britain did and for no other reason.[20] While there is no denying the Britishness of much of English Canada during the Second World War — when English Canadians of that generation referred to the "Prime Minister" they often meant Winston Churchill rather than Mackenzie King — it is equally true that Canadian consumers were awash in a sea of American goods and cultural products. Canadians drove cars, listened to radios, read magazines, cooked with stoves, wore clothing, and applied cosmetics manufactured in the United States or in Canada by

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[20] See, for example, J.L. Granatstein, "Commentary" in Norman Hillmer, et. al. *A Country of Limitations: Canada the World in 1939* (Ottawa: Canadian Committee for the History of the Second World War), 291.

subsidiaries of American firms, and hundreds of thousands of Canadians tuned in to American radio stations every night. As for the silver screen, the relative dominance of the allegedly crass and degraded products of Hollywood that so alarms Canadian cultural nationalists in the early 21st century was as great, if not greater, in the 1940s than in the present.[21]

Still, given the extremity of what was at stake in the Second World War, a reader could be excused for arguing that the study of wartime consumerism is a trivial or even frivolous pursuit by comparison. But this was not the sentiment at the time, when issues of personal consumption and their relationship to the war were important aspects of government planning and quite central to civilian life on the home front. In retrospect, this should be unsurprising: personal consumer spending accounted for the majority of economic activity in Canada during the Second World War. In *Arms, Men and Governments,* the official history of Canada's war policies, C.P. Stacey estimated that the Canadian government's total war-related expenditure from 1939 to 1945 was $19 billion.[22] In the same period, retail sales in Canada totaled just under $25 billion. In no fiscal year of the war, not even in 1944, did the Department of National Defence's expenditure exceed domestic retail sales for the corresponding calendar year, and total war expenditure exceeded it — by the

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[21] On this, see chapter six.

[22] C. P. Stacey, *Arms, Men and Governments : The War Policies of Canada, 1939-1945* (Ottawa: Queen's Printer, 1970), 532-35.

narrowest of margins — in only the fiscal years ending March 31, 1944 and March 31, 1945.[23]

Having said that, there should be no mistaking this study for an economic history of the Canadian home front, although a healthy measure of "hard" economic considerations will be found throughout. Nor is it a study of government regulation of the consumer economy, although the presence of the Wartime Prices and Trade Board looms over some of these pages as heavily as it did over the transactions of wartime retailers. Administrative histories of the WPTB and related agencies such as the Department of Munitions and Supply (DMS), which oversaw defense conversion and armaments procurement, have already been written.[24] As for economic histories of the war, they have tended to dwell upon industrial mobilization for armaments production rather than on personal consumption, and for reasons which are eminently defensible – it was upon the assembly lines of converted factories that the war was lost or won. Moreover, in most other countries — the United States being the foremost exception — the material conditions faced by wartime consumers were

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[23] Retail sales figures: M. C. Urquhart and K. A. H. Buckley, *Historical Statistics of Canada* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1965), Series T1-24. Stacey, *Arms, Men and Governments : The War Policies of Canada, 1939-1945*, 532-35.

[24] The political and administrative history of the Canadian government and its agencies in wartime is the one aspect of home front history which has been adequately attended to. There is no published study of the Wartime Prices and Trade Board, but there is E.J. Spence, *Wartime Price Control Policy in Canada* (PhD diss., Northwestern University, 1947) and Christopher Waddell's 800-page dissertation, *The Wartime Prices and Trade Board: Price Control in Canada in World War Two* (PhD diss., York University, 1981). In addition, J. de N. Kennedy, *History of the Department of Munitions and Supply.* (Ottawa: King's Printer, 1950), is cumbersome but an invaluable source on the conversion of civilian manufacturers.

immeasurably more spartan than those experienced by Canadians. In the totalitarian and occupied states of Europe especially, the war reduced millions of people to the most meager and miserable standards of living. About consumerism in these countries historians have had very little to say.[25]

Rather than an economic or administrative study, *A Small Price to Pay* is a social and cultural history of home front consumerism in Canada. It is the first major study of wartime consumerism in Canada. None of the handful of the social histories of the Canadian home front deals with consumerism at any length. Keshen's *Saints, Sinners, and Soldiers* comes closest, featuring two chapters of related interest. One is about the WPTB's efforts to cope with the accommodation shortages that bedeviled so

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[25]In Italy, to cite one example, average daily caloric intake per person declined by more than a third between 1939 and 1942, and would have declined further if not for the black market. See Vera Zamagni, "Italy: How to Lose the War and Win the Peace," in *The Economics of World War Two: Six Great Powers in International Comparison*, ed. Mark Harrison (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998). On the Nazi economy at war, see Eleanor Hancock, *The National Socialist Leadership and Total War, 1941-5* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1991), R. J. Overy, *War and Economy in the Third Reich* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994). and, most importantly, Adam Tooze, *The Wages of Destruction : The Making and Breaking of the Nazi Economy* (New York: Allen Lane, 2006). Each of these works explodes the once-dominant theory, most forcibly advanced by Alan S. Milward, *The German Economy at War* (London: University of London, Athlone Press, 1965)., that the Nazi leadership, fearing home-front unrest, initially favoured consumer over military production on the assumption that the *blitzkrieg* tactic would yield a short war. For an economic perspective on the extreme material privations faced by civilians in the Soviet Union, John Barber and Mark Harrison's *The Soviet Home Front 1941-1945* (London: Longman, 1991) is the best work in English. British consumers, too, were faced with impositions far greater than those experienced by Canadians. Their travails are the subject of Ina Zweiniger-Bargielowska's *Austerity in Britain: Rationing, Controls, and Consumption 1939-1955* (London: Oxford University Press, 1999). In addition, there is Raynes Minns's amusing popular history, *Bombers and Mash* (London: Virago, 1980), which deals with home-making and cuisine in the besieged island. It is worth noting that Matthew Hilton's *Consumerism in 20th Century Britain* addresses the Second World War for no more than a few sentences. Studies of Axis-occupied Europe do not concern themselves with consumerism, at least as it is defined in this study, for reasons that are entirely understandable. Recently, however, Donald Kladstrup recounted the story of how the French resistance attempted to foil Nazi efforts to seize their country's most revered and coveted consumer good. See Don Kladstrup and Petie Kladstrup, *Wine and War : The French, the Nazis, and the Battle for France's Greatest Treasure* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 2001).

many municipalities during the war; the other concerns the black market and was so good that I chose not to pursue the issue much further in this work. Neither of the two scholarly works on Canadian women at war, Ruth Roach Pierson's *They're Still Women After All* and Jennifer Stephen's *Pick One Intelligent Girl,* addresses consumerism at all. Serge Durflinger's *Fighting from Home* discusses rationing and shortages in Verdun for a few pages and, in a memorable chapter, chronicles the "Mayor's Cigarette Fund", a patriotic charity that dispatched several million cigarettes to Verdun soldiers overseas. A very short article by Susan Turnbull-Caton concludes that fashion design continued in wartime Canada; some aspects of wartime tourism in British Columbia are considered in Michael Dawson's *Selling British Columbia: Tourism and Consumer Culture, 1890-1970*; Yves Tremblay's article *La consummation bridée* deals with the administration of rationing and price control; and Daniel Robinson has considered elements of consumer polling and market research. As for Canadian consumer histories, David Monod's *Store Wars: Shopkeepers and the Culture of Mass Marketing, 1890-1939* concludes at the beginning of the war and Joy Parr's *Domestic Goods* begins at its conclusion.[26] Russell

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[26] Susan Turnbull Caton, "Fashion and War in Canada, 1939-1945" in *Fashion: A Canadian Perspective*, ed. Alexandra Palmer (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004), 249-296; Michael Dawson, *Selling British Columbia: Tourism and Consumer Culture, 1890-1970* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2004.) Yves Tremblay, "La consummation bridée: controle des prix et rationnement durant la Deuxieme Guerre mondiale," *Revue d'historie de L'Amerique francaise*, 58 (4) Spring 2005: 569-607. Daniel Robinson, "Polling Consumers: the Rise of Market Research Surveys in Canada, 1929-1941," *Journal of Canadian Historical Association* 8 (1997): 187-211. David Monod, *Store Wars : Shopkeepers and the Culture of Mass Marketing, 1890-1939* (Toronto ; Buffalo: University of Toronto Press, 1996). Joy Parr, *Domestic Goods : The Material, the Moral and the Economic in the Postwar Years* (Toronto:

Johnston's history of Canadian advertising, *Selling Themselves,* suspends its analysis at the beginning of the Depression, and Valerie Korinek's careful study of *Chatelaine* magazine, *Roughing it in the Suburbs,* concerns the postwar world only. Beyond the few exceptions noted above, nothing of substance has been written concerning consumerism in Canada during the Second World War.[27]

University of Toronto Press, 1999). Russell T. Johnston, *Selling Themselves : The Emergence of Canadian Advertising* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001), Valerie Joyce Korinek, *Roughing It in the Suburbs : Reading Chatelaine Magazine in the Fifties and Sixties* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2000). In addition, Cynthia Jane Wright's intriguing dissertation, *The Most Prominent Rendezvous of the Feminine Toronto: Eaton's College Street and the Organization of Shopping in Toronto: 1920-1950* (University of Toronto, 1993), despite its title, says nothing at all about the war.

[27] Much the same is true for American and British consumer histories. Lizabeth Cohen's *Making a New Deal: Chicago Workers 1919-1939* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990) and Roland Marchand's *Advertising the American Dream: Making Way for Modernity 1920-1940* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985) suspend their analysis with the outbreak of war. T.J. Jackson-Lears's *Fables of Abundance: the Social History of American Advertising* (New York: Basic Books, 1994) leapfrogs the war years, as does David Nasaw's *Going Out: the Rise and Fall of Public Amusements* (New York: Basic Books, 1993). There are two significant exceptions for the United States: Lizabeth Cohen's recent *A Consumer's Republic : The Politics of Mass Consumption in Postwar America* (New York: Knopf, 2003), which deals mainly with postwar America, contains a chapter on American consumers during the Second World War, and Amy Bentley's *Eating for Victory: Food Rationing and the Politics of Domesticity* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1998) concludes, as I do, that food politics were a central aspect of women's wartimes experience. Of course, this represents only a small sample of the literature on consumer history that has emerged in the past two decades, but the general picture is the same everywhere: the Second World War has not yet been given serious attention by historians of consumerism. American economic historians, however, have shown interest in matters concerning rationing and price control, but not consumerism in the cultural perspective. See, for example, Hugh Rockoff, "The United States from Ploughshares to Swords," in *The Economics of World War Two: Six Great Powers in International Comparison,* ed. Mark Harrison (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 121 and Harold Vatter, "The Material Status of the U.S. Civilian Consumer in World War II: The Question of Guns or Butter," in *The Sinews of War: Essays on the Economic History of World War II,* eds. Geofrey T. Mills and Hugh Rockoff (Ames: Iowa State University Press, 1993), 219-242. Late in my research, I discovered a reference to Frank W. Fox's *Madison Avenue Goes to War: The Strange Military Career of American Advertising 1941-1945* (Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University Press ,1975), embedded deep within the thickets of the footnotes of another work. Never reviewed, rarely referenced, and just ninety-eight pages long, this monograph is nonetheless of interest for two reasons. First, it is an early study of American advertising (published half a decade before Stuart Ewen's seminal *Captains of Consciousness*) and, second, because it is, apart from this study, the only really substantial examination of North American advertising during World War II. However, Fox considers only the efforts by American corporations to bolster

Any study that attempted to describe the full scope of regional, class, and ethnic variations present in a country as large and diverse as Canada would, by necessity, require several volumes. Instead, I have attempted something more modest – a sketch of how consumerism was expressed and debated on a general level in wartime Canada. Whenever possible, I have used data gathered by the Dominion Bureau of Statistics (DBS) and other agencies to account for regional differences, but a great deal remains to be said. I have written nothing at all, for instance, about the far north, the First Nations, or the Métis, and not very much about farmers. In fairness, this study is concerned with those who manufactured, marketed, regulated, and bought and sold consumer goods. In respect to these matters, there is far less to write about the many Canadians who, even at peak of wartime prosperity, lived without electricity on farms or in small communities in remote regions, far from the shops, restaurants, and theatres that were the mainstays of the urban consumer society. I hope that regional studies will soon add perspective to the rather two-dimensional landscape that I unveil here.

In addition, this study's emphasis is on civilians rather than soldiers. We need good social histories of the armed forces at home (approximately half of all Canadians who served never left the country), but it is often forgotten that even at the peak of mobilization, in 1944, nearly ninety-five percent of Canadians, including the majority

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their public-relations image through institutional advertising and he has nothing at all to say about consumerism.

of males of military age, were civilians.[28] Soldiers stationed in Canada, including tens of thousands of soldiers from Allied nations, could be enthusiastic consumers, especially of movies, meals, and certain extralegal recreational services that are beyond the scope of this study, but statisticians in Canada did not distinguish between a dollar spent by a soldier and one spent by a civilian. This in turn illustrates one of the chief difficulties in undertaking a study of this kind: the most elusive aspect of the wartime consumer economy is none other than the consumer him or herself. Even wartime advertisers and retailers, for all their pseudoscientific pretenses about being able to activate consumer desires with the ease of throwing a switch, often found themselves powerless to sway customers whose manifold motivations were at times frustratingly inscrutable.

By increments this study will reveal a good deal about ordinary consumers, but the fact remains that more is known about the people who manufactured, marketed, and sold goods than the people who bought them. Corporate records and trade journals offer insight into the inner workings of the business world; advertisements offer us some perspective on the worldview of marketers; newspaper editorials and magazine articles dealing with every aspect of the nation's economy are easily found; and government agencies laid low whole forests to document their doings. But consumers themselves steadfastly refused to anticipate the needs of future historians.

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[28] C. P. Stacey, *Six Years of War: The Army in Canada, Britain, and the Pacific* (Ottawa,: Queen's Printer, 1957), 522-23.

As Keith Walden put it in his innovative examination of early twentieth century grocery store window displays, "customers did not confide to diaries or share with correspondents the pleasures of buying a pound of cheese or a jar of pickles. Surviving account ledgers reveal little about human activities in and perceptions of the stores."[29] So it was with wartime consumers. If they wrote letters to manufacturers or retailers, or composed diary entries meditating on the meaning of consumption in a nation at war, very few of them are extant, and my efforts to explore those that I found yielded a meager return on investment. The *Eaton's* fonds at the Public Archives of Ontario, for instance, include the late company's complaint book, but the handful of letters from the war years concern the most ordinary administrative matters. As for diaries and memoirs, they proved to be a strictly hit-and-miss affair, and only thrice does the word "shopping" appear in the diurnal meditations of Canada's most enduring diarist, William Lyon Mackenzie King. Of course, this predicament is by no means unique to social historians. Not by accident have scholars of literature, for instance, been more interested in novels, plays, and poems than in the people who read them. Writers are at least partially revealed by what they write, but the text is a parsimonious teacher indeed when it comes to revealing the reader.

Again, this is not to suggest that we know nothing about ordinary consumers – far from it. By good fortune, 1941 was a census year and, it bears repeating, it is

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[29] Keith Walden, "Speaking Modern: Language, Culture, and Hegemony in Grocery Window Displays, 1887-1920," *Canadian Historical Review,* LXX (3) 1989: 287.

possible to deduce a good deal about consumer behaviour from a careful study of the somewhat erratic reports that the government produced or commissioned during the war. Moreover, although market research and polling was, if not in its infancy, then surely in its adolescence during the war, a number of attempts to elicit the opinion of consumers were made on the home front, including efforts undertaken by the WPTB's Consumer Branch, which I discuss in Chapter One.[30] In addition, it must be remembered that those who worked on the "supply side" were themselves consumers. Adworkers, for example, believed that they knew what made the typical consumer "tick" in part because they knew what they themselves found appealing. While they probably overestimated the extent of their insight into the motivations of the general public (incurable self-importance seems to be one the hallmarks of their trade), the advertisements they produced may yield what Roland Marchand called "plausible inference" into certain aspects of consumer behavior.[31] Much the same can be said about the strategies that certain retailers and service providers devised to maintain and even expand consumer spending in spite of wartime pressures.

Most of all, our understanding of wartime consumer behavior must be anchored to one fact that belies all notions about "penurious patriotism": consumer spending in Canada increased during the war. Historians have often referred to a postwar

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[30] See Daniel J. Robinson, *The Measure of Democracy : Polling, Market Research, and Public Life, 1930-1945* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999).
[31] Roland Marchand, *Advertising the American Dream: Making Way for Modernity, 1920-1940* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), xix.

consumer boom, but this study contends that the explosion in consumer spending is best described as a *post-Depression* boom that began with the outbreak of war in 1939. Between 1939 and 1945, retail sales experienced an after-inflation growth of 48 percent. By way of comparison, the six years from 1949 to 1955 — the supposed era of guiltless postwar consumption — saw a 32 percent increase in after inflation retail sales.[32] Over the course of the war, the restaurant business tripled, jewelry, women's clothing, shoe store, and drug store sales doubled, and paid admissions to movie theatres leapt from 138 million in 1939 to 208 million in 1944.[33] Even at the peak of mobilization in 1943, consumer spending remained high despite hefty taxes, rationing, and shortages. An examination of newspapers from the last two years of the war reveals page after page of retail advertising, incorporating all the obligatory watch-words about the necessity for savings and thrift, but featuring dinette sets, ice refrigerators, box-spring mattresses, fur coats, and diamond rings nonetheless. Coupon rationing, which did not begin until the war was nearly three years old, applied to only a handful of goods and did little to curtail spending. Moreover, many consumers seem to have actually liked it. It was social leveling in a way that the free market was not, and consumers were often exhilarated by the opportunity to serve the war effort in a risk-free fashion. Having accomplished that, having done "their

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[32] Urquhart and Buckley, *Historical Statistics of Canada*, Series T1-24. In all cases the inflation rate for the purposes of this study was determined using the Bank of Canada's inflation calculator at http://www.bankofcanada.ca/en/rates/inflation_calc.html. See a discussion of wartime spending and differing estimates of the rate of inflation in Appendix One.
[33] Ibid., Series T213-26.

bit", bought rationed portions of sugar and meat, and taken their change in War Savings Stamps, it is clear that many consumers felt entitled to do some shopping, eat out, and go to the movies.

Most consumers were women, and an incessant barrage of propaganda from the WPTB told them that their efforts were needed most urgently at the checkout line rather than on the assembly line. As for the nation's many retailers — a community not merely diverse but divided — the war presented them with many challenges, not the least of which was the requirement to observe multitudinous, ever-changing, and sometimes even conflicting government regulations. Still, sales went up, profits went up (though only as far as the ceiling on "excess profits" permitted), and while they grumbled about regulations, nearly every retailer found that he benefited from at least one regulation and hoped that it would continue when the war ended. In the war's last year, as victory approached, many Canadians looked forward to a future where their social security would include a share in a world of material abundance, to a future where the land "fit for heroes" that had failed to emerge after the Great War would finally materialize. As one advertisement put it, the Second World War was "a small price to pay" for the sumptuous future that was around the corner.[34]

A Small Price to Pay is divided into six essays that examine related aspects of the wartime consumer society. Chapter one chronicles the interaction between the female consumer and the regulatory state. Histories of Canadian women at war have

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[34] "'What's Coming Is Plenty!'" *Maclean's*, June 1 1943, 23.

tended to emphasize the importance of women's participation in the paid labour force and the armed forces, but they have overlooked the extent to which the government appealed to Canadian women as consumers. I contend that, from the perspective of the WPTB, at least, a woman's most important contribution to the war effort was to be made not in the workforce but in her traditional role as wife, mother, homemaker, and principal consumer for the family. Moreover, I argue that the leadership of some of Canada's largest and most influential women's organizations enthusiastically endorsed this view, perceiving varying approaches to consumerism as a means through which women could simultaneously aid the war effort and stake out a greater claim for political and economic equality for their members.

Chapters two, three, and four deal with adworkers and advertising. As the propaganda arm of the system of consumer capitalism, advertising plays an important role in communicating rationales for mass consumption to the buying public. It might even influence their buying behaviors. It is in advertising's symbolic tableau that we find the most visible representations of the tensions inherent in the wartime consumer society. By 1942, it was not uncommon for the readers of magazines and newspapers to find appeals for conservation side-by-side with advertisements urging them to spend as a contribution to the war effort. In addition, the wartime debates over the role that advertising should play on the home front serve as a stand-in for debates about industrial capitalism generally.

Clothiers, booksellers and stationers, grocers, and other such retailers were forced to contend with many new regulations — it would be both tedious and trivial to itemize them all — but for the most part benefitted from the wartime seller's market. By contrast, many consumer durables were simply unavailable after 1941. Cars, stoves, electric refrigerators, and the like may have accounted for a minority of overall consumer spending, but they were the very symbols of the modern mass consumer society. Chapter five therefore concerns the uniquely difficult circumstances faced by retailers and consumers of durable commodities.

Chapter six examines the most popular form of public amusement in wartime Canada: movie-going. Of course, Canadians also attended dances, concerts, live theatre, and spectator sports, but they spent comparatively little on these sorts of amusements. Ninety percent of Canadians' entertainment budgets were expended on the movies. Since consumerism, as I define it, involves some kind of monetary expenditure, it seemed fitting to dwell at some length on wartime movie-going. Finally, the study concludes with a consideration of the relationship between the emerging welfare state and a competing vision of the future – one where economic prosperity would be secured through private enterprise built upon a foundation of personal consumerism.

Some readers might question the decision to confine the study's analysis to the war years. An argument could be made for beginning the study earlier, in order to better observe the consumer in the late years of the Depression, or for extending it to

1947 on the grounds that the WPTB did not suspended operations until then. But as Graham Green wrote in the *End of the Affair,* a story has neither a beginning nor an end; the author must pick a point from which to look forward and back.[35] For those purposes, the years 1939 and 1945 are as good as any, and better than most.

[35] Graham Greene, *The End of the Affair* (New York: Penguin, 1951), 7.

A Brief Digression on Definitions and Terminology

Lest my repeated use of the word "consumerism" yield accusations that I am guilty of what Churchill called "terminological inexactitude", I will advance a working definition. While not subscribing to the definition found in Sir Alan Bullock's *Dictionary of Modern Thought*, which holds that consumerism is the process of manipulating consumer behaviour[36], nor to the opposite definition currently fashionable in cultural studies — consumerism as a process through which buyers assert their sovereignty in the marketplace[37] — I do take the word to mean much more than the straightforward act of purchasing goods and services. Such a definition is satisfying from an economic perspective, but as I define it, the cultural phenomenon of consumerism has two mutually reinforcing halves. First, it is a multifaceted process by which people select and purchase goods and services, not merely to fulfill their material needs but also, and perhaps predominantly, to satisfy an array of socio-cultural ones. Such needs typically include a broad range of nonmaterial desires: for fun, happiness, comfort, leisure, and sensual pleasure; for enhanced social status, friendship, affection, and even love. As we shall see, in

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[36]Tim Steele, "Consumerism" in *The New Fontana Dictionary of Modern Thought* edited by Alan Bullock and Stephen Trombley (London: HarperCollins, 1999), 165.

[37] On consumerism as a form of consumer agency, see the argument at its most dogmatic in: James B. Twitchell, *Lead Us Into Temptation: The Triumph of American Materialism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999).

wartime it came to encompass nothing less than the consumer's yearning for victory and a prosperous peace.

Second, consumerism is the process by which the marketplace attempts to satiate these and other needs, at least temporarily. I say "temporarily" because consumer capitalism requires insatiable consumer demand. From the perspective of the marketplace the exigencies of maximizing profit require insatiable consumer demand. As historians and theorists of consumer culture have long observed, the pervasiveness of the belief that it is virtuous to want more and better things is one of the hallmarks of the modern mass consumer society.[38] One of the recurring themes of this study is how social tensions emerged when the government urged highly sophisticated and unusually prosperous wartime consumers to want less and make do with the things that they already had.[39]

It has sometimes been argued that, strictly speaking, the consumer is the person who consumes (uses) the product and not necessarily the person who buys it.[40] By the Second World War, advertisers, retailers, and government statisticians had

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[38] For example: John Kenneth Galbraith, "The Dependence Effect" in Juliet B. Schor and Douglas B. Holt, *The Consumer Society Reader* (New York: The New Press, 2000), 20-25; Lawrence B. Glickman, "Born to Shop?" in *Consumer Society in American History*, edited by Lawrence B. Glickman (New York: Cornell University Press, 1999), 1-16. Gary S. Cross, *An All-Consuming Century: Why Commercialism Won in Modern America* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000).

[39] I must also acknowledge that the word "consumerism" is somewhat anachronistic when applied to the Second World War, as it was very seldom used at the time. The word does not appear once in *the Globe and Mail* during the war, for instance. The *Oxford English Dictionary* dates the word to 1944, although I have in the course of this study seen earlier examples. Significantly, in its early use the word usually referred to the protection of consumer interests, which is more in keeping with the definition currently fashionable in the realm of cultural studies.

[40] See, for instance: Mark A. Swiencicki, "Consuming Brotherhood: Men's Culture, Style and Recreation as Consumer Culture, 1880-1930," *Journal of Social History* (31)1998, 73-808.

long since discovered that women were the principal buyers for their families, but this does not necessarily mean that they were principal consumers. At times, the distinction between buyer and consumer is useful but rather obvious. At other times, however, the distinction imposes an altogether too utilitarian conception of what it means to consume. In this perspective, a woman who buys candy for her children is merely a buyer; her children are the consumers. But the woman who bought the candy may have done so for many reasons apart from fulfilling her obligation to feed her children. She might have sought their affection, or the joy that a parent feels when children are content. In this sense, she too is a consumer, since the candy was not purchased solely to fulfill the needs of the children who ate it. Presumably, this is the case with a great many purchases made by women who did most of the shopping for their families. I have therefore tended to use the word "consumer" interchangeably with "shopper" and "buyer", except where circumstances necessitated greater precision.

Commodities — goods and services resulting from production — are also subject to classification. Economists distinguish consumer "durables" such as automobiles and appliances from other commodities not so much by their physical durability but because they deliver services over time. A can of tuna, for instance, might be 'durable' in the physical sense, but it is not a consumer durable. Goods such as clothes, linens, books, and all manner of small giftware such as home decorations are more difficult to categorize. Although they may deliver services over time, they

are seldom described as consumer durables because that term generally is reserved for comparatively expensive and technologically sophisticated "big ticket" items. Canadian statisticians of the war era sometimes called such goods "semi-durables" or "soft goods" in the specific case of clothing and dry goods manufactured from cloth. By contrast, goods whose exchange value is exhausted at the moment of consumption (food is the most obvious example) are referred to as "non durables". "Services" are intangible goods that are non-transferable. One cannot transfer the experience of watching a movie, listening to a concert, or staying at a resort in the same sense that one can transfer the ownership of other goods, for instance.[41]

Needless to say, the distinction between these categories is neither rigid nor exact. China and silverware, for instance, can cost more and last longer than most appliances, but they are not usually considered consumer durables. A meal in a restaurant is tangible and even transferable (theoretically, you could give your meal to someone else) but the chefs who prepared it and waiters who delivered it are considered employees of a service industry. It is perhaps best to reflect that these categories are imposed by economists and statisticians, not by consumers, and such distinctions made little difference in the day-to-day lives of the people with whom this study is concerned. I have tried to be non-dogmatic in their use.

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[41] See relevant entries in: Graham Bannock, R. E. Baxter, and Evan Davis, *The Penguin Dictionary of Economics*, 7th ed. (London ; New York: Penguin Books, 2003).

In addition, some clarification of the phrase "home front" is necessary. As Canadian writers employed it, the "home front" referred not just to a geographic location but to civilian activity undertaken in Canada on behalf of the war effort. More than half of Canadians who served in the armed forces during the Second World War never left the country, but people tended not to think of soldiers stationed in Canada as part of the home front. Needless to say, this distinction was never intended to denigrate those soldiers who served in Canada rather than overseas. Although troops raised under the National Resources Mobilization Act earned the unkind moniker "Zombies", no one at the time was unaware of the fact that military service of any kind involved risks and sacrifice.

Chapter One
"May we be worthy of this great hour in our history": Mrs. Consumer, Patriotic Consumption, and the Wartime Prices and Trade Board

The women of Canada have been recognized as a most important ally in the price ceiling plan...we have a chance to build our organization, to regiment ourselves, voluntarily, and show that, because of our years of efficiency in our own organizations we can take our place in Canada's national life – and make history by the way we conduct ourselves.[1]

> Byrne Hope Sanders, director of the Consumer Branch of the Wartime Prices and Trade Board, March 1942

They may cut down on my bacon, they may take away my ham;
they may ship all my beef to Britain, and leave me fowl and lamb;
they may send across the ocean all the quantities they wish of our famous, our delectable, our most delicious fish;
and I wouldn't care a penny if, quite lawfully, they seize, for the gallant folks in Britain, all our fine Canadian cheese.
They may weaken up my cream, and I shall manage very well,
though I'm partial to this wholesome food, yes, more than I can tell.
They make take away my sugar bowl – small sacrifice, say I, and certainly not worth a thought, much less a sob or sigh.
But I wonder, yes, I wonder, what mad ravings I should utter if they'd lay their desecrating hands upon my precious butter![2]

> Anonymous, *Globe and Mail*, February 1942

In October 1940, Byrne Hope Sanders, the editor of *Chatelaine* (and shortly to become the director of the Wartime Prices and Trade Board's consumer-relations efforts), used her monthly column to admonish the women of Canada not to "take on too much work." Remember always, she wrote, "that your first loyalty and duty must

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[1] Address by Byrne Hope Sanders, LAC, RG 64 Vol. 1449 File A-10-29-16 Consumer Branch Administration.
[2] Anonymous, *Globe and Mail*, February 6, 1942, 9,

be to your family."[3] Contrary to the "Rosie the Riveter" mythology, in which it is claimed that the war significantly, albeit temporarily, eroded traditional gender mores such as these, this more traditional conception, in which women are viewed principally as wives, mothers, homemakers, and caregivers, not only persisted throughout the war but assumed an even greater tone of urgency. Domesticity, the argument went, had always served society as a bulwark against moral decrepitude; now, in the eyes of many Canadians, it was the foundation of the nation's moral and economic defense against Hitlerism.

Consumerism, in turn, was the foundation on which modern domesticity rested. As has often been observed by historians of consumption, shopping for the household had assumed a central place on every homemaker's list of duties by a very early stage in the evolution of the modern commercial marketplace.[4] In Canada, the claim that women were responsible for 85 cents of every dollar spent ("and had a pretty good idea of what happened to the other 15," Sanders liked to say) was repeated throughout the press and in speeches by politicians and the leaders of

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[3] Byrne Hope Sanders, "As An Editor Sees It," *Chatelaine*, September 1940, 60.

[4] On this, see, for example: Joyce Boydston, *Home and Work: Housework, Wages, and the Ideology of Labor in the Early Republic* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990); Lenore Davidoff, *Family Fortunes: Men and Women of the English Middle Class, 1870-1850* Rev. Ed. (New York: Routledge, 2002); and, especially, Susan Strasser, *Never Done: A History of American Housework* (New York: Pantheon, 1982), 243-263. For a sociological perspective, see Marjorie L. DeVault, *Feeding the Family: The Social Organization of Caring as Gendered Work* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991). A discussion also occurs in Sherrie A. Inness's introduction to her edited collection, *Kitchen Culture in America: Popular Representations of Food, Gender, and Race* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2001), 1-13.

voluntary women's organizations.[5] Nowhere was the claim empirically proven, and its origins are unknown, but it was accepted as a truism nonetheless. A typical housewife, said a presenter to the Toronto Advertising and Sales Club, "Decides what money is going for this and that, not her husband ... men are saps when it comes to buying."[6] One of the most succinct and visually striking expressions of this belief can be found in a September 1939 advertisement for *Chatelaine* (see Figure 1.1, below.) The advertisement depicts a young woman, beaming in her bridal gown, next to the tag line: "Purchasing Agent (just appointed)." The copy goes on:

> Joyous shouts of "here comes the bride!" have a wealth of meaning. The radiant girl you see is not only a bride. She is also a woman embarking on a lifetime career in the business of home making. Among other duties which she will now assume are those of purchasing agent for her new household.[7]

Discretion over the family's shopping budget was considered to be a momentous responsibility, especially in hard times. Innumerable articles and advertisements in consumer magazines advanced the view that the failure to be an informed and judicious consumer was to fail as a wife and mother. Shopping was a duty upon which the health and happiness of one's family depended. It was a serious business, not a leisure activity, even if major department stores did all they could to make it as leisurely as possible with amenities such as salons and dining rooms.[8]

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[5] Sanders used this line in no fewer than three speeches and two *Chatelaine* columns that I examined.
[6] *Men's Wear Merchandising*, December 1, 1940, 27.
[7] "Purchasing Agent (Just Appointed) ," *Marketing*, September 16, 1939, 7.
[8] On the emergence of the idea of shopping as a leisure activity, see: Erika Rappaport. *Shopping for Pleasure: Women in the Making of London's West End* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000)

Purchasing Agent

(just appointed)

JOYOUS shouts of "Here comes the bride!" have a wealth of meaning. The radiant girl you see is not only a bride. She is also a woman embarking on a lifetime career in the business of home making.

Among other duties which she will now assume are those of purchasing agent for her new household. In these duties she has probably had little experience so that mostly she will have to learn her job as she goes along.

And where will she get the information she needs to fill this job satisfactorily? Partly from her family and friends, to be sure. But, more particularly, in these modern days, from what she reads!

In that fact lies one of the major reasons for Chatelaine's existence. This magazine, you know, was designed specifically to render a service to Canadian women of the younger married class. An examination of the editorial contents of any issue will quickly show you how well it fulfills this purpose.

Chatelaine's interest compelling, informative housekeeping pages . . . its advance fashions . . . its timely up-to-the-minute "Your Home" department . . . its brightly written topical general articles . . . its absorbing fiction . . . and its host of other features, all are of a type to appeal directly to young Canadian women of the better class.

When you advertise in Chatelaine you associate your advertising with things about which young Canadian women want to read . . . you identify your product with things in which they are vitally interested. Decide now that you will capitalize on the real "reader interest" which this magazine enjoys. Let Chatelaine carry your sales message to the women of Canada and assure for your product a place on the shopping lists of a quarter of a million purchasing agents!

CHATELAINE 481 University Avenue, Toronto

Montreal · London, Eng. · New York · Chicago

canada's most interesting women's magazine

Figure 1.1. It was an article of faith in the popular and trade press that purchases made by female shoppers accounted for 85 percent of all consumer dollars spent. This advertisement draws a remarkable explicit parallel between housewife and consumer.

As consumer historian Jennifer Scanlon has observed, scholars of consumerism have often taken it for granted that, historically speaking, consumer culture has reinforced a domesticity that subordinated women within the confines of the home.[9] On one level, Sanders's appeal to women to avoid taking on "too much work" (by

[9] "Introduction," in *The Gender and Consumer Culture Reader*, edited by Jennifer Scanlon (New York: NYU Press, 2000), 8.

which she meant paid labour outside the home) can be understood in this sense. But many prominent women of the time, including Sanders herself, would have resented and rejected any suggestion of subordination. During the Second World War, a more nuanced relationship between the Canadian homemaker and the consumer culture is apparent. From the very outset, Canadian women's organizations such as the National Council of Women, the Federated Women's Institutes, and the IODE, professed what I have ventured to call a "patriotic consumerism." Patriotic consumerism was a means by which women could fulfill their duties as wife and mother and assert themselves in the public sphere, strengthening both the war effort and their own claim to fuller citizenship. During the war, the homemaker, referred to generically as "Mrs. Consumer", was entreated again and again to consider her homemaking duties, and especially those related to consumerism, as immeasurably important contributions to the struggle against the Axis. "We women have been called in to wage a battle which is one of the most important ones in history," said Sanders in March 1942, having just assumed her post as director of the WPTB's Consumer Branch.

> Every one of us has our own patrol – the beat we tread on our shopping routes. Our weapons are our pencils and a list of prices ...our great and mobile defense line is the Wartime Prices and Trade Board. Our allies are our merchants; we know full well the horror of our foe – inflation. The success of any battle lies in knowing all about the defense. So for the army on this home front, your country

> has picked soldiers who for years have been drilling for this work ... may we be worthy of this great hour in our history.[10]

Hyperbolic though this might sound to modern ears, it must be understood that wartime propaganda made continual use of military metaphors to describe the patriotic volunteerism of civilian women. Moreover, the fear of inflation, especially to those consumers who remembered the runaway prices of the Great War, was genuine. Nothing so threatened a woman's ability to buy household necessities as inflation, and the need to combat inflation was one of the things about which nearly everyone agreed, even if they disagreed about how to do it. It is difficult to overstate the extent to which patriotic appeals went out to Canadian women in their capacity as consumers. Here was a readymade "war job" for millions of homemakers, one that did not ignite anxieties about gender roles and expectations in the way that women's participation in the industrial workforce or in the armed forces was wont to do.[11] In thousands of newspaper editorials, radio addresses, public speeches, and propaganda posters, Canadian women were told that their foremost contributions to the country's war effort would be made as wives, mothers, homemakers, and consumers. It was an argument that never wavered, not even when the national war effort reached a size far greater than anyone had predicted in 1939. When he spoke to the National

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[10] Address by Byrne Hope Sanders, LAC, RG 64 Vol. 1449 File A-10-29-16 Consumer Branch Administration.

[11] On wartimes anxieties over women's employment, see Ruth Roach Pearson, *They're Still Women After All*, especially pages 129-168.

Council of Women in June 1943, at the very peak of the country's industrial mobilization, Finance Minister J.L. Ilsley praised the women of Canada for undertaking munitions work and serving in the armed forces, but also for performing "the most important job of all – the vital job of maintaining Canadian homes and raising Canadian families" by being informed and thrifty consumers.[12]

What did change, however, and what was never fully agreed upon, was the definition of what constituted appropriate consumerism under the circumstances. Rather than the "penurious patriotism" of social memory, in which consumers are imagined to have done little but scrimp, sacrifice, and save, wartime consumers, in tandem with advertisers, retailers, and service providers, devised elaborate and evolving discourses of patriotic consumption. Until late 1941, patriotic consumption entailed no reduction in consumer spending; on the contrary, calls for increased consumer spending were the norm in the first two years of the war. In the years of rationing and shortages that followed, the meaning of patriotic consumption became more hotly contested. The government and most women's organizations urged consumers to buy only the essentials, but advertisers and retailers threw all their ingenuity into expanding the boundaries of what consumers considered to be essential. Some of these efforts, as we shall see, stretched the boundaries of credulity, but there is no denying that consumers continued to buy far more than just the necessities of life.

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[12] National Council of Women, *Yearbook 1943*, 53-55.

Canada's declaration of war in September 1939 touched off the biggest proportional consumer spending boom in the country's history. The last vestiges of the Depression evaporated as war put Canadians to work and as work put money in their pockets. Within two years, the number of people seeking jobs dropped from over 500,000 to about 135,000.[13] In the first two years of the war retail sales grew by 23 percent, even after adjusting for inflation – a rate of growth three times higher than that which would occur in the first two years of peace.[14] Retailers during this period exalted in the rebounding economy, while consumer magazines were saturated with advertisements that hardly mentioned the war, except to encourage people to buy useful items for men in uniform. "We're so darned busy we don't know which way to turn - and to think we owe it to the war!" exclaimed the editors of *Bookseller and Stationer* in February 1941.[15] It was an oft-repeated sentiment. Richard Needham, associate editor of *The Calgary Herald*, recounted the story of a woman who, having nearly starved during the Depression, told him, "It's a terrible thing to say, but I hope the war goes on for a long time. This is the first security I've known for a long, long time."[16] Crass though this might seem to the modern reader, it was a commonplace

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[13] *Historical Statistics of Canada*, Series C56-69.
[14] Ibid., Series T1-24. Post-inflation growth of retail sales from 1946-1948 was a meager eight percent.
[15] "Editorial," *Bookseller and Stationer*, February 1941, 1.
[16] Richard J. Needham, "Hard Times," in *Canadian Spokesman*, April 1941, 54.

and comprehensible sentiment among people groping out of a decade-long depression.

In Ottawa, Mackenzie King, desperate to avoid a repetition of the previous conflict's conscription crisis, which had imperiled national unity and torn the Liberal party apart, promised Canadians a war of "limited liability." Only volunteers would be sent overseas, he pledged, and Canada's major contributions to the war effort would be economic and materiel.[17] Initially, at least, the opposition Conservatives, eager to pick up seats in Quebec, concurred.[18] Their first wartime leader, Robert Manion, even accused King of hijacking the policy of "limited liability" from him, while the former prime minister, R.B. Bennett, remarked on the eve of war that what the British wanted was not Canadian troops but Canadian airfields to train pilots and Canadian factories to equip them.[19] Granted, the news from overseas was mostly bad, but ironically the Nazi conquest of France worked in favour of King's scheme. Rather than to the meat-grinder of sustained combat, Canada's army went to England, where it trained and grew and did not fight for year after year. To the end of 1940, it suffered just fifteen losses to enemy action.[20]

Desperate, too, to avoid the runaway inflation of the Great War, and also the recession and strikes that had followed it, King's government took steps in 1939 to

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[17] Stacey, *Arms, Men, and Governments,* 6-9. See also J.L. Granatstein, *Conscription in the Second World War 1939-1945* (Toronto: McGraw-Hill, 1969), 16, 19.
[18] Granatstein, 15-16.
[19] Ibid, 19.
[20] C.P. Stacey, *Six Years of War: the Army in Canada, Britain, and the Pacific* (Ottawa: King's Printer, 1955), 524.

ensure the orderly regulation of the consumer economy. By order-in-council the government created the Wartime Prices and Trade Board on the very day Britain declared war. That this occurred a week before Canada's own declaration of war is indicative not only of the inevitability of Canada's entry into the war, but also of the government's determination to put a lid on wartime economic upheaval regardless of how circumstances unfolded. The WPTB's mandate was to regulate the supply of food, fuel, and other commodities. But in the first two years of the war, facing only abundant supplies and a consumer spending boom, the Board operated, as historian Christopher Waddell put it, "on the periphery of the economy."[21] Early measures to regulate the consumer economy, such as a November 1940 order prohibiting the introduction of new kinds of products and design changes to old ones, were hardly noticed by most consumers and considered only a trifling inconvenience by retailers.[22] The Board would not begin to make serious impositions on the consumer economy until late in the summer of 1941.

American tourists were surprised to discover that many Canadians acted as though war had never been declared. In a lengthy travelogue written for the *Atlantic Monthly* in late 1941 and early 1942, the American journalist William Henry Chamberlin recounted in great detail the notable contributions Canada was making towards Britain's war effort. But he also detected no small measure of reticence and

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[21] Christopher Waddell, *The Wartime Prices and Trade Board: Price Control in Canada in World War Two*, iv.
[22] On this, see chapter three.

reservation, which he ascribed to something more than the taciturn Canadian character. "There has been," he wrote, "less flag waving, less hysteria, less enthusiasm, perhaps more grimness than in the First World War."[23] Above all, he was struck by how little the war effort had impinged upon the day-to-day lives of Canadian consumers:

> A day of stern sacrifice and deprivation is being predicted. But up to the spring of 1942 the majority of Canadians were probably living a little better than they were before the war began. Shops were well stocked; restaurants were crowded; there was plenty of money in circulation.[24]

It was in this somewhat surreal environment, in a country nominally at war but displaying many signs of one prosperously at peace, that Canada's homemakers carried out their duties as consumers for the first two years of the war. From the outset, the country's biggest voluntary women's associations had adopted a policy, not of consumer restraint, but of "buying British" in order to shore up the mother country's economy. As early as September 1939, representatives of the National Council of Women, claiming to speak on behalf of some eighteen women's organizations and their 1.5 million members, had met with officials in Ottawa, where they declared their readiness to serve the war effort as the moral heart of the family and as the economic heart that pumped the national economy. At their annual congress in the summer of 1940, the Council officially endorsed the "Buy British"

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[23] William Henry Chamberlin, *Canada: Today and Tomorrow* (Boston: Little and Brown, 1942), 163.
[24] Ibid., 134.

policy – with "Buy Canadian" enumerated as a secondary priority.[25] Other organizations, including some which in the past had expressed misgivings about the morality of the spendthrift consumer society, adopted the policy as well. "The clothes you wear, the beverages you drink, the presents you give this Christmas could help win the war," wrote a columnist for *Echoes*, the official magazine of the Imperial Order Daughters of Empire, in November 1940. "Do you realize that the expenditure of only 50 cents a day on British goods by each Canadian could make a profound difference to Britain's financial position?"[26]

"Buy British" and "Buy Canadian" were common refrains throughout the popular press. For example, J.L. Rutledge, editor of the Canadian edition of *Liberty* (which claimed to have the highest newsstand sales of any magazine in Canada), referred to the "buy British" platform as "the fourth arm of defense."[27] But nowhere was the idea embraced with such enthusiasm as in the nation's most popular consumer magazine, *Chatelaine*. With more than 200,000 subscribers and probably twice as many readers, *Chatelaine* served as a sacred temple of mass consumption for hundreds of thousands of Canadian women.[28] In September 1940, even as the Battle of Britain reached its peak, the magazine published a special "shopping to win the war" issue, featuring tips on "what's smart to wear and patriotic to buy." "We women of Canada have burned

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[25] National Council of Women, *Yearbook*, 1940, 29.
[26] G.C.D. Stanley, "Buy Victory Now," *Echoes*, December 1940, 6.
[27] "The Fourth Arm of Defense," *Liberty*, November 9, 1940, 3.
[28] *Chatelaine's* subscription figures are from *Lydiatt's Canadian Advertising Rates and Data*, 1940.

with a desire to 'do something' toward waging and winning the war," wrote columnist Alice Sharples. But what to do? Her answer: shop to win the war by buying British and Canadian goods.

> It is our *duty* not to wear our old tweeds but to buy new ones...not to make last year's frocks 'do' but to launch out in famous English prints; not to do without tea but to serve more tea than ever.[29]

"Every woman a mannequin" was the slogan she proposed, urging readers to model British fashions and goods, especially for American tourists, who would be encouraged to buy them. The following issue, editor Byrne Hope Sanders renewed her promise that "shopping for victory" was a slogan that *Chatelaine* would "hammer away" at for the duration of the war.[30] In fact, less than a year and a half later Sanders would be preaching a different gospel, one in which sacrifice and savings were the central tenets, and *Chatelaine* would be publishing articles about how to make last year's frocks "do" after all. But the notion that a woman's duty was in some way related to consumerism never subsided.

The consumer boom that attended the first two years of the war could not last – at least not in its original form. The trajectory of civilian consumption was bound to collide with the country's skyrocketing war effort at some point. Canada's war expenditure for the fiscal year ending March 1940 was $118 million; the following

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[29] Alice Sharples, "Shopping to Win the War," *Chatelaine*, September 1940, 38.
[30] Byrne Hope Sanders, "As an Editor Sees It," *Chatelaine*, October 1940, 78..

year it was $752 million; a year after that it was $1.3 billion. This represented a growth of 1000 percent in two years. It tripled in the year that followed.[31] As the scale of the war effort grew, and as Britain suffered further defeats in Greece, Crete, and North Africa, demands for greater sacrifice began to emanate from political speeches, war propaganda, and magazine and newspaper editorials. One popular pamphlet, *Come on Canada!*, written by the economic historian Stanley Saunders, mounted a seething indictment of Canadians for their free spending and carefree living while Britons suffered and Russians carried the bulk of the fighting.

> The blame cannot be shifted: the responsibility rests squarely on the shoulders of the Canadian people. Are they still to be content with halfway measures when nothing but a total effort can save the situation? A total war is not now being made, and will not be made so long as men and women who are free and able to work are not at work, so long as the civilian population is being supplied with goods and services that are not essential, and so long as more people are engaged in any industry than are needed for maintaining the necessary output.[32]

Subsequent chapters will detail the tensions between consumer spending and the increasingly strident demands for consumer sacrifice that emerged in late 1941 and early 1942. Suffice it to say the chasm between the two positions led to some unintentionally humorous and even embarrassing juxtapositions. At the end of September 1941, for instance, J.L. Rutledge, who only a year earlier had given his unqualified endorsement to the "Buy British" policy, used his monthly column in *Liberty* to lament Canadians' "tendency...to think of this as the government's war."

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[31] Stacey, *Arms, Men, and Governments*, 532.
[32] S.A. Saunders and Eleanor Buck, *Come on Canada!* (Toronto: Ryerson Press, 1941), 36.

Only twenty percent of Canada's manufacturing potential was committed to war production, he wrote. All the rest remained devoted to the production of "commodities that we all use to assure our comfort and convenience." Canadians, he went on, "have almost duplicated the fabulous spending jag of 1929" and "have not yet felt the cost of war," having made "little, if any, sacrifice of our accustomed comforts." What was wanting was sacrifice. "We can have either more consumer goods," Rutledge warned, "or we can have more shells and more guns and more ships. The inescapable fact is that we can't have both."[33] Later in the same issue, the regular "Girl Meets Girl" column offered readers a lengthy piece entitled, "September Shopping Spree". "If you love nice things," the author exclaimed, "you can't just wish for them, you *must* shop for them." She recommended "an early start, comfortable shoes, a carefully thought out list, and plenty of time to mull over the merits of each item" and proceeded to describe a fanciful shopping whirlwind, without a word spoken about the war.[34]

Although the consumer economy would continue to be far more vibrant than is often remembered to be the case, guiltless shopping sprees of that kind were coming to an end. Not only were the demands on Canadian industry growing, the American rearmament program, which began months before Pearl Harbor, had the side effect of reducing American exports of parts and materials needed for civilian

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[33] J.L. Rutledge, *Liberty*, September 1941,

[34] Bubbles Schanazi, "September Shopping Spree," *Liberty* September 1941,

consumption in Canada.[35] Between rising consumer purchasing and diminishing supplies, the only possible result was inflation, which to Mackenzie King's mind threatened labour unrest and a discontented electorate. In 1940 and 1941, inflation was an alarming 11 percent, and the price index for food alone was, by most measures, a good deal higher than the national average.[36] In the government's view, price controls were the only option. In October 1941, the WPTB exploded into the public consciousness when King, in one of his typically lugubrious radio addresses, announced that the Board would be overseeing a freeze on wages and prices in order to combat inflation.[37] In the first two years of the war, the Board had merited a mention just twenty-eight times in *The Globe and Mail*; in the following two years there would be ten times as many.[38] It is no exaggeration to say that for many homemakers and for every seller of goods, the Board became an omnipresent force in their everyday lives for the remainder of the war.

King had personally selected Donald Gordon, the former Deputy Governor of the Bank of Canada, as the Board's new chairman in October 1941[39] Gordon — *Saturday Night* called him King's "no man" — became the public face of the price

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[35] On this, see the discussion in Chapter Three.
[36] Bank of Canada Inflation Calculator. http://www.bank-banque-canada.ca/en/rates/inflation_calc.html. On food prices, see *Monthly Indexes of Retail Prices*, 1940-1941.
[37] The text of King's speech appeared in *The Globe and Mail*, October 19, 1941, 1-2.
[38] Based on a keyword search on *The Globe and Mail: Canada's Heritage Since 1844.* http://heritage.theglobeandmail.com.proxy1.lib.uwo.ca:2048/Default.asp
[39] Granatstein, *Canada's War*, 179. On Gordon's term as chairman of the WPTB, see Joseph Schull, *Great Scot: A Biography of Donald Gordon* (Montreal: McGill-Queens, 1979).

ceiling policy and the most prominent of all the "Ottawa men."[40] It is somewhat revealing of the pugnacious quality of his character that he clung to his little postage stamp of a moustache, identical to Hitler's, unfashionable though it might have been at the time. As Gordon described it, modern war required extreme sacrifices, including the subordination of every consumerist whim to the war effort. Every cent not spent on War Savings Bonds, every yard of fabric that made dresses rather than uniforms, every gallon of gasoline pumped into a passenger car rather than a military truck materially aided the Axis. A joke that made the rounds at the time went like this: the local strongman, showing off in a tavern, squeezed all the juice from a lemon in his mighty hands. He defied anyone to squeeze one drop more, at which point Donald Gordon stepped forth and squeezed out two.[41]

Above all, Gordon relentlessly extolled the necessity of combating inflation. "Out of inflation," he said in a December 1941 speech, "has grown most of the evils of our modern civilization and it is, I am convinced, the greatest single reason why war is such a recurrent tragedy." He reasoned that Hitler would never have seized power in Germany had the Weimar state kept its economic house in order, and warned that the democracy here, too, would be imperiled if the cost of living grew beyond the means of ordinary citizens to keep up with it.[42] On the surface, the price ceiling he proposed seemed simple enough: retailers and service providers were required to fix

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[40] "Donald Gordon, Price Boss," *Saturday Night*, January 3, 1942, 7.
[41] This story, or variations on it, appeared in many print sources ca. 1942-1944.
[42] Speech by Donald Gordon at the Retailer's Wartime Conference, April 5, 1943, LAC RG 64

their prices at a level no higher than the highest they had been during the "basic period" from September 15 to October 11, 1941. No increases would be permitted without the permission of the Board. In order to ensure that retailers and service providers did not carry the burden of the price ceiling, prices were fixed along the entire chain of production and distribution. In the case of imports, the Board agreed to pay a subsidy to offset any price increase that had occurred in the exporting country. Any unanticipated increase in the cost of living would be offset with a cost-of-living bonus paid out to workers. But what seemed straightforward in principle was, in fact, an economic experiment of unprecedented complexity, a "bottomless pit of regulation", as Christopher Waddell put it.[43]

Enforcement was the key to maintaining the ceiling, but the Board had at its disposal nothing like the tens of thousands of personnel that would have been necessary to police Canada's retailers. It was to the nation's housewives, then, that Gordon turned. In one of his first radio addresses to the nation, delivered the Friday before the imposition of the price ceiling, Gordon struck an ominous note from the outset:

> You, who are listening to these words, will be going into the fight next Monday...and make no mistake, you will be on one side or on the other. In this fight against inflation you cannot be a neutral. You will either be helping to save yourself, your family, and your country from a terribly calamity – or you will be working for the enemy.

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[43] Waddell, *The Wartime Prices and Trade Board*, 427. On the mechanics of the price ceiling, see E.J. Spence, *Wartime Price Control Policy in Canada*.

The "terrible calamity" to which he referred was inflation, and in the war against inflation, he singled out "Mrs. Consumer" for special attention:

> The housewife must be the real guardian of the law. Her job, for her country, will be to watch prices every day. She is the soldier in the battle line. She must battle against dishonesty, greed, stupidity – all the human weaknesses which are the allies of inflation and destruction. [44]

The second plank in the anti-inflation program was expressly anti-consumerist, urging consumers to rein in their spending. It was a point the Prime Minister had made in his own address a month earlier: buy only what you need, and invest the remainder in Victory Bonds. Calls for consumer restraint, as we have seen, were already fairly common, but the government had not been explicit in endorsing such a program until its officials announced the price ceiling. The ceiling came into effect on December 1st, a Monday. Sunday, December 7th, was Pearl Harbor.

Almost overnight, it seemed, women's organizations that had continued to endorse the "Buy British" and "Buy Canadian" policies dropped them in favour of slogans such as "use it up and wear it out", "make-over, mend, and make-do", and calls for conservation and thrift. Over time, these calls became increasingly strident. In its summer 1943 meeting, the National Council of Women resolved to "establish a social code that frowns upon ostentation, waste, and unnecessary spending, bearing in mind

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[44] *Radio Address by Donald Gordon*, November 28, 1941. LAC RG 64, Wartime Prices and Trade Board speeches.

that at this time a blatant spender should be considered a social outcast."[45] Above all, they emphasized that Canadian housewives had for many years cultivated the skill of economical homemaking, and now they called on them to turn these skills to public account and help to win the war. As Sanders was later to state:

> These are characteristics women have always shown in their private life in relation to problems affecting their homes. Some of the greatest unsung sages of history have to do with the way women have held their homes through depression, under the strain of war losses through strain and stress. Now your country asks us to demonstrate these virtues as a national unity for the protection.[46]

One crucial development in coordinating the efforts of voluntary women's groups and the WPTB was the creation, in early 1942, of a division within the WPTB to act as a liaison between them. Sanders was chosen as its director because of her high profile with Canadian women. The Consumer Branch of the WPTB had its genesis in meetings between representatives of some eighteen Canadian women's organizations and Donald Gordon in December 1941. Gordon had grasped at once that these organizations and their members were the logical choice to police the price ceiling. The outcome of this meeting was the establishment of a Women's Regional Advisory Committee (WRAC) in each of the Board's thirteen administrative districts. These thirteen regional committees were in turn subdivided into local sub-committees, of which there were more than 400 by mid-1943. Local committees had no fixed size or

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[45] National Council of Women, *Yearbook*, 1943.
[46] Address by Byrne Hope Sanders (1942), LAC, RG 64 Vol. 1449 File A-10-29-16 Consumer Branch Administration.

membership requirements. The Consumer Branch, in turn, was created to oversee the WRACs and report their activities back to the Board.[47] As Sanders remembered it, on her first meeting with Donald Gordon, the chairman told her, "I don't know just what your job is, Miss Sanders, nor how you're going to do it. But it's there to be done."[48] Indeed it was. Sanders and her assistants defined the Consumer Branch's mission as follows: it was responsible for price watching; it communicated rules and regulations to the public; it "channeled" consumer opinion, principally through the WRACs; it provided volunteers for ration offices; it established housing registries to help place people in temporary need of accommodation; and it encouraged nationwide conservation and thrift.[49]

By mid-1943, the Consumer Branch had become a very large voluntary organization in its own right, with nearly 11,000 members. By 1945, it had 16,000.[50] Approximately one-third of these were liaisons to local women's organizations, including the WRACs. Price control was their most urgent task, and they formed the backbone of an effort in which every Canadian housewife-consumer was encouraged to take part. To aid them in this task, the Consumer Branch printed hundreds of thousands of booklets in which housewives were encouraged to record prices from day-to-day, keeping an eye out for unexplained increases. Contact information for the

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[47] Conference on War Prices, Ottawa, December 15, 1941, LAC, RG 64, Vol. 1445, File A-10-29-1
[48] Address by Byrne Hope Sanders, LAC, RG 64, Vol. 1449, File A-10-29-16, Consumer Branch Administration.
[49] The Consumer Branch: Wartime Prices and Trade Board, LAC, RG 64, Vol. 1445, File A-10-29-1.
[50] Ibid.

local WPTB offices was included at the back of each booklet. There is every indication that these "blue books" were widely used. In a confidential report to the Consumer Branch, the Board's enforcement officer described his office as being completely overwhelmed with "a deluge of complaints" and insufficient personnel to investigate each one in a timely manner.[51] Nonetheless, it was an important aspect of the Board's public relations efforts that it appeared to take every complaint, regardless of how small, very seriously. In southwestern Ontario, Board investigators looked into a discrepancy of two cents in the cost of a half-pound bag of processed cheese.[52] In northern Ontario, a merchant was fined $50 for slicing a loaf of bread, which was prohibited under rules designed to save labour. In North Battleford, Saskatchewan, a farmer's wife complained that the price of dairy pails had risen by ten cents: the merchant was warned and lowered his prices. In Winnipeg, the Board investigated a three-cent different in the price of pork kidney.[53]

But enforcement officers found that many complaints resulted from misunderstandings about the price ceiling and, subsequently, rationing rules. In particular, consumers had to be reminded that the price ceiling did not equal price

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[51] F.A. McGregor, Enforcement Administration (presentation to the Consumer Branch, September1942), LAC, RG 64, Vol. 1447, File A-10-29-11, Consumer Branch Conferences Volume 1. According to the minutes McGregor claims that the number of complaints received by the Board "went well over 2,000,000" in August 1942 alone. This would seem to be extremely improbable, and could be dismissed as a misprint, except for the fact that yet another Consumer Branch document refers to the enforcement agency as receiving "tens of thousands of complaints *daily*". It may be that "complaints" includes ordinary queries received by WPTB branch offices and by the WRACs.
[52] *Consumer's News*, June 18, 1942, 12.
[53] Ibid., July 25, 1943, 3.

leveling or price fixing – retailers were free to compete under the ceiling. In fairness, by early 1942, there were so many rules and regulations in effect that even the Board's own personnel found it difficult to keep up with them. In response, the Consumer Branch co-created two CBC radio programs, "As a Matter of Fact" and "The Household Counsellor", that were intended to provide homemakers with updates on WPTB regulations, and began to produce a regular publication, *Consumer's News.* Distributed by Consumer Branch volunteers, *Consumer's News* was intended to keep homemakers abreast of the rules, and to explain and rationalize changes when they occurred. *Consumer's News* was targeted at housewives and distributed to them by the Consumer Branch's liaison officers. Circulation eventually reached 318,000 (one third of the issues were in French), making it the most widely distributed periodical in the country.[54] There is no way of knowing how well liked it was or how far its message penetrated into the minds of readers. No doubt many readers found it useful but also tiresome. Amidst useful advice for navigating the labyrinthine world of WPTB regulations, it also pestered and nagged consumers unrelentingly, and its essential message was a contradictory one. It repeatedly emphasized that the sacrifices that consumers were asked to make were comparatively small ones, especially compared to those made by fighting men and civilians overseas, but it also argued that they were of monumental importance in winning the war.

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[54] LAC, RG 64, Vol. 1444, Consumer Branch Records.

Some of the other duties undertaken by Consumer Branch volunteers proved to be of unexpected urgency, such as the laborious task of enumerating Canadians for their ration cards in 1942 and helping to staff the six hundred ration offices established in communities across Canada. Coupon rationing of selected foodstuffs — sugar was the first — began in July 1942, the thirty-fourth month of war. It began in the United States the same month, the eighth month of the war for Americans. Britons, of course, had been coping with a very strict rationing regime since 1939.[55] Once again, we are reminded of the surprising fact that food rationing, which comes so readily to the fore in most home front histories, did not even begin in Canada until the country had been at war for nearly three years. Board officials had in fact recognized the necessity for rationing ever since the imposition of the price ceiling. Obviously, price controls were untenable if shortages of certain staple foods led to panic buying, hoarding, speculation, and black markets. The six-month gap between the imposition of the price ceiling and the beginning of food rationing was a result of the time required to get the administrative machinery up and running, rather than

[55] In matters concerning rationing and orders suspending the production of certain goods altogether, authorities on both sides of the Canada-US border were always eager to ensure that they operated in tandem, lest a cross-border black-market emerge. On rationing in the U.K., see Amy Helen Bell, *London Was Ours: Diaries and Memoirs of the London Blitz* (New York: I.B. Tauris, 2008), 47-80 and Zweiniger-Bargielowski, *Austerity in Britain*, especially 9-59 and 99-150.

uncertainty over whether or not rationing would be necessary.[56] Coupon rationing of sugar was followed by coffee and tea rations in August and butter in December.[57]

In most cases, rationing was not so much intended to reduce consumption of the goods in question as to ensure a more equitable distribution than the free market could provide. Nonetheless, it was sometimes claimed, even by Board officials, that the rationing of coffee, tea, and sugar was necessary because these imports took up shipping space needed for war materiel. But this explanation was neither credible nor necessary. In the first place, it was within the government's power to reduce the importation of any commodity to whatever level it deemed necessary and, secondly, Board officials erred in assuming that rationing measures needed elaborate justifications. As they would discover, rationing was not always or uniformly unpopular. In principle, at least, it was socially leveling in a way that the free market was not since, everyone, regardless of rank or station, received the same ration. Polls indicated that most Canadians accepted the necessity of rationing (for some goods more than others), and continual requests for the extension of rationing to other goods that had periodic or local shortages, such as canned fruit, vegetables, and clothes, emerged from the WRACs.[58] Participants in the WRACs complained about the size of rations (including, on occasion, that rationed portions were too big for

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[56] Waddell, *Wartime Prices and Trade Board,* 429-430.
[57] On the administrative background to the introduction of rationing, see: Waddell, *Wartime Prices and Trade Board,* 429-438. "Tea, Coffee Rationed in Canada," *Globe and Mail* August 3, 1942, 1.
[58] LAC, RG 64 Vol. 1447, file A-10-29-11, Consumer Branch Conferences.

single people or small families); they complained about abusers of the ration system – even though all the evidence suggests that huge numbers of people broke the rules when it served their interests to do so; and they complained about the irritation of handling ration books and coupons, but they hardly ever complained about rationing in principle.[59]

Butter rationing, for instance, followed an enormous number of demands for its adoption. More direct agitation was a factor as well: there was a near-riot in November 1942 when a mob of three hundred women beset a succession of Toronto stores, demanding butter, and had to be turned away by police.[60] While the Board blamed consumers, alleging that some eight million pounds of butter were being hoarded, and the food administrator, J.G. Taggart, insisted in mid-November that there would be no butter rationing for "at least six months", a coupon rationing scheme came into effect on December 20th.[61] It was a remarkable example of the pressure that consumers were capable of bringing to bear, and indicative of the fact that the real goal behind rationing — the equitable distribution of goods — was popular with many consumers.

Nonetheless, Board officials and various wartime propagandists saw fit to remind consumers frequently that the rationing regime imposed on them was far less

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[59] LAC RG 64 Vol. 1447 file A-10-29-11 Eastern Ontario Conference May 18-May 19, 1943.
[60] *Toronto Telegram*, November 28, 1942, 1.
[61] "8,000,000 Pounds of Butter Said Held in Cellars," *Toronto Daily Star*, November 18, 1942, 1; "Butter Rationing Starts Today," *Globe and Mail*, December 20, 1942, 1. At several Consumer Branch conferences Byrne Hope Sanders claimed that agitation from the WRACs through the Consumer Branch had been instrumental in bringing about butter rationing.

severe than the one suffered by Britons. In this regard, at least, they were entirely correct, and Britons posted or relocating to Canada noticed the difference. One Welsh war bride, arriving in Canada in 1944, could scarcely believe the amount of food Canadians had, even under the strictest of wartime conditions. On her trip west, she was later to recall, "The first meal on the train was breakfast, and they served me six slices of bacon and two eggs. Imagine, two eggs and all that bacon! I ate everything put in front of me."[62] In Canada, the initial coffee and tea rations permitted everyone aged twelve and over enough for about a dozen cups of each per week, and there was nothing to stop anyone from getting an extra cup (though no more than one per sitting) at one of the country's proliferating diners and restaurants.[63] Coffee and tea rations were increased in September 1943 and again in May 1944, and then eliminated altogether in September 1944, barely two years after they had begun. Admittedly, the half-pound per week sugar ration required a significant reduction in personal consumption and engendered genuine hostility and resistance. This was in spite of the fact that the Board made additional rations available for canning and jarring for the 97 percent of households that required them.[64]

Meat rationing was discussed for several months before it was imposed in 1943. Beef and pork production had increased since the beginning of the war but

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[62] Jean Bruce, *After the War* (Don Mills: Fitzhenry and Whiteside, 1982), 23.
[63] *Consumer's News*, July 3, 1942, 9.
[64] Consumer Questionnaire Analysis Report No. 2, LAC, RG 64, Vol. 1448, File A-10-29-12, Consumer Branch Consumer Panels.

could not keep pace with the demands of both the domestic market (including the armed forces) and soaring export requirements to fill British orders. In many major cities in central Canada and the Maritimes meat shortages became acute in late 1941 and early 1942.[65] By mid-January 1942 many butcher shops had extreme difficulty in obtaining supplies. There was a broad consensus in the press that an extensive black-market had sprung up to fill the gap. At one point, Ottawa intervened to secure twenty million pounds of beef from wholesalers and slaughterhouses in order to guarantee supplies for the armed forces, but rationing was the only long-term solution.[66] Meat rationing came into effect in May 1943, with the aim of reducing individual consumption by 15 to 20 percent. According to most estimates, it did not even accomplish that, but it did ease the distribution problems and fewer instances of panic buying and meat markets selling out occurred thereafter. Rations still permitted a hefty portion of about two pounds per person per week of beef or pork, depending on the cut purchased, while poultry, game bird, venison, rabbit, and fish were not rationed at all, although admittedly the war severely hampered the Atlantic fishing industry.[67] At one point, some buzz was generated concerning the alleged epicurean delights of muskrat as a substitute for beef and pork, but there is no evidence that demand for this dish took off.[68]

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[65] "Meat Shortage Is Most Acute in Big Cities," *Hamilton Spectator*, January 20, 1943, 1.
[66] "Rationing of Meat Plan Said Strong Possibility," *Globe and Mail*, January 5, 1943, 11.
[67] *Consumer's News*, April 28, 1943, 1-4.
[68] "Epicures Like Muskrat Meat," *Globe and Mail*, April 26, 1943, 7.

For the sake of administrative ease, the rules permitted the same quantity of meat for every member of the household – including infants and young children, who presumably could not consume their weekly allotments.[69] In all likelihood, then, families with young children probably saw an increase in their consumption of beef and pork, and for most others the substitution of a meatless meal or an additional night of chicken would have sufficed to make up the difference. According to the Combined Food Board, the total calories of meat available per person dropped from 450 in 1943 to just 430 in 1944 (and subsequently to 400 in 1945), but these numbers still remained well above the 340 calories available per person in 1940.[70] Estimates from the Department of Agriculture arrived at a similar conclusion, finding that apparent per-capita consumption of beef was just over 54 pounds in 1940, rose dramatically to just over 69 pounds in 1943, and fell only to 67 pounds in 1944.[71] All the while, meat market sales continued to grow, albeit at a reduced pace.[72]

The administration of rationing posed enormous logistical and enforcement challenges, as there were any number of ways that people could bend or break the rules. Hoarding was especially discouraged — propaganda routinely likened it to sabotage — even if it amounted to no more than adding this week's allotment to any

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[69] *Consumer's News,* April 28, 1943, 3.
[70] Combined Food Board, *Food Consumption Levels in Canada, the United Kingdom, and the United States* (Ottawa: King's Printer, 1946), 12.
[71] Hedley F. Auld, *Canadian Agriculture and World War Two: A History of the Wartime Activities of the Department of Agriculture and Its Wartime Boards and Agencies* (Ottawa: Canada Department of Agriculture, 1953), 112.
[72] *Historical Statistics of Canada,* Series T1-24.

unused portion of coffee, tea, or sugar from the previous week. Unused ration coupons, for example, were supposed to be discarded. Tea drinkers were not permitted to swap their rations with coffee-drinkers, although there was no reliable means of policing what went on within families or between trusted friends and neighbours. Suffice to say that very few ration coupons went unused. Meat and butter rationing posed the greatest administrative and enforcement problems. Coffee, tea, and sugar were imported and quantities could be regulated at the point of entry, but the nation's supply of meat and butter was produced by countless thousands of individual farmers who were much harder to police. Farmers who slaughtered their own livestock or produced their own butter were supposed to surrender the appropriate number of rationing coupons to the nearest ration office, but enforcement depended almost entirely on the honour system.[73]

Consumer's News included a monthly sampling of punishments meted out to rule-breakers, and most newspapers and magazines carried similar stories on an almost daily basis. Criminal prosecutions for infractions of rationing rules grew steadily. There were 1201 in 1943; 3663 in 1943; and 4166 in 1944, and these figures do not include the thousands of prosecutions, usually for gasoline and tire-related infractions, made on behalf of the controllers of the Department of Munitions and

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[73] On the procedural issues related to rationing, see Waddell, 427-501 and Yves Tremblay, "La Consommation Bridee: Congrole des prix et rationnement Durant la Deuxieme Guerre mondiale," *Reveue d'histoire de l'Amerique francaise* 58 (4) 2005. Meat rationing rules are described in detail in *Consumer's News*, April 28 1943.

Supply.[74] Needless to say, prosecutions would have represented only a small percentage of the total number of infractions that occurred, and there is abundant anecdotal evidence to suggest that people bought, sold, traded, bartered, raffled, and made gifts of their ration coupons on a regular basis.[75] One man in Toronto was fined $100 because he managed to secure a ration card for his dog.[76] Imputations of hoarding were especially commonplace. A writer for the Consumer Branch produced a rather wan one-act play, *Waiting for Mary*, on this very theme. One of the central characters is an Austrian immigrant (now a patriotic Canadian); having witnessed the economic catastrophe that befell his native country in 1919, he cannot understand why so many Canadians hoard today. The lesson was clear: even Hitler's countrymen could see how bad it was to hoard rationed goods.[77]

Rationing and occasional local shortages imposed greater burdens on grocery shopping and meal planning. For those who could afford it, dining out relieved some of the pressures, although restaurants, too, were subject to quotas under rationing rules. Only one cup of coffee or tea could be served to each guest, Tuesdays were officially declared "meatless", and sugar was served only on request – the bowls were removed from tables to reduce the risk of theft. For those who preferred to prepare their meals at home, consumer magazines, ladies' columns in newspapers, and a

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[74] Wartime Prices and Trade Board, *Year End Reports*, 1942-1945.
[75] On this, see Keshen, *Saints, Sinners, and Soldiers*, 94-120.
[76] *Consumer's News*, October 9, 1942, 6.
[77] Ella Monckton, *Waiting for Mary* (Consumer Branch, WPTB: Ottawa, 1943), 8. A copy of the play can be found in LAC, RG 64 Vol. 1446, File A-10-29-7, Consumer Branch Educational Program Vol. 1.

whole host of wartime cookbooks offered "Victory recipes", with tips on how to stretch rations further. But these recipes and cookbooks also stand as a reminder that the extent of consumer deprivation on the Canadian home front was and is easily exaggerated. Purity Flour Mill's January 1945 *Purity Cook Book*, for instance, contained 875 recipes constituting a very wide range of dishes – everything from traditional English roast beef with Yorkshire pudding to more exotic dishes such as lobster sandwiches with pickled chutney. It also included more than two hundred desserts, although admittedly many of them would have pressed a mid-sized family's weekly sugar ration to the limit.[78]

For all the talk about food rationing, the empirical fact is that Canadian food production grew by leaps and bounds over the course of the war, and apart from some temporary and regional shortages, civilians had a large and broad selection of foods to choose from. While the total number of farm acres under cultivation in Canada remained roughly static from 1939 to 1945, farm productivity underwent a monumental increase.[79] The gross value of Canadian agricultural production increased from just under $1.2 billion nationwide in 1939 to $2.5 billion by 1944. In Saskatchewan, the war boom brought about an almost complete reversal of the province's Depression-era misfortunes. In 1937, the gross value of Saskatchewan's farm output was a mere $92 million; by 1944, it had bounded seven-fold to $624

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[78] *Purity Cook Book* (Toronto: Purity Flour Mills, 1945).
[79] Auld, *Canadian Agriculture and World War Two*, 42-43.

million.[80] National wheat stocks increased from 23.5 million bushels in 1938 to 579 million bushels in 1943; in the same period, oat stocks increased from 9 million to nearly 29 million; flaxseed stocks grew *thirty-one* times from 119,000 bushels to 3.7 million.[81] In terms of livestock, beef production doubled, from 645,000 pounds in 1939 to 1.1 million pounds in 1945; pork production nearly tripled, from 625,000 pounds in 1939 to 1.5 million in 1944; poultry production jumped from 152,000 pounds in 1940 to 200,000 in 1944 [82]

Granted, a substantial portion of the growth in food production was in order to meet the enormous expansion of British demand for Canadian foodstuffs. In 1943, the value of Canadian food exports to the UK exceeded that of munitions and weapons stores.[83] Nonetheless, the reports of the Combined Food Board indicate that the quantity of food available for domestic civilian production continued to increase as well, from an estimated average of about 3,000 calories per day in 1940 to just under 3,300 in 1944.[84] Of course, these figures only indicate the quantity of food available and do not reveal how much food people were buying or actually eating, nor do they account for inequities in distribution. Judging from the volume of complaints

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[80] *Historical Statistics of Canada*, L83-87.
[81] *Canada Year Book*, 1945, 210.
[82] *Historical Statistics of Canada,* Series L233-242. It should be noted that these figures do not include Canadians' "victory gardens", planted in backyards across the country, which were undoubtedly a substantial source of produce for many families.
[83] The value of food exports to the United Kingdom in 1943 was $230,000,000 versus $211,000,000 for munitions. *Canada Year Book* 1945, 552.
[84] Combined Food Board, *Report*, 1946, 12. The Combined Food Board was an intergovernmental body established to monitor British, American, and Canadian food supplies.

received by the WRACs and the thousands of prosecutions served out for various rationing-related infractions, it is evident that a great many consumers did not believe that they were getting their fair share. However, the wartime boom in grocery store and meat market sales gives us additional reason to believe that most Canadians were, at the very least, getting a bigger share than ever before. Grocery store sales increased $584 million in 1939 to $1.04 billion in 1944.[85] Admittedly, the Board had allowed for greater-than-average inflation in food prices, but even accounting for this increase, these figures suggest that Canadians were buying (and presumably eating) a greater percentage of available food stocks than had been the case at the beginning of the war.

But what about the nutritional quality of that diet? Perhaps no single issue so galvanized voluntary women's organizations as nutrition. In 1940, the National Council of Women adopted the improvement of public health, with a particular emphasis on "the importance of a correct diet", as second only in importance to the promotion of national unity on its program of activities.[86] Over the course of the war, the Council helped to sponsor thousands of lectures on proper nutrition. Here again was a cause ready-made for women's organizations. The rural Women's Institutes had been founded for the express purpose of disseminating "domestic science", and

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[85] *Historical Statistics of Canada*, Series T1-24.

[86] National Council of Women, *Yearbook* 1940, 55. The other major aspect of improving public health was, not surprising, the campaign against venereal disease. On this, see Keshen, *Saints, Sinners, and Soldiers*, 121-144.

nutrition was never far from the agenda of the IODE, Y.W.C.A., and a host of other groups.[87] Nutrition was, moreover, a cause inextricably bound up with consumerism. Women had long been responsible for buying and preparing food; with the advent of nutritional science they assumed the additional responsibility of assuring the nutritional quality of the food they served. Once again, we find an existing cause to which the war gave greater urgency. In a CBC radio address announcing a nationwide nutritional education program, Edna Guest, the convener of the National Council of Women's health and nutrition committee, called the "scientific understanding of the food necessary to retain good health and good morale" the "second line of defense".[88] Countless articles in consumer magazines stressed the same point. *National Home Monthly* began to run a monthly column its editors called "On the Kitchen Front", while many companies, as part of institutional good-will campaigns, offered free booklets of "Victory" recipes.

The war years also saw unprecedented government activity in the realm of nutritional education and study, much of it in coordination with women's groups. The National Council of Women's request that a nutritionist be appointed to the Department of Health led to the creation of a Division of Nutrition Services, under

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[87] On the Federated Women's Institutes, see Linda Ambrose, *For Home and Country: The Centennial History of the Women's Institutes in Ontario* (Erin, ON: Boston Mills Press, 1996).

[88]Edna Guest and Ethel Chapman, *An Experiment in Applied Nutrition for Canadian Communities* (Toronto: West Toronto Printing House, 1943), 14. Guest, a medical doctor, had been vice-president of the Canadian Social Hygiene Council, an expressly eugenicist group. See Angus McLaren, *Our Own Master Race: Eugenics in Canada, 1885-1945* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1990) and Velma Demerson's memoir of her direct dealings with Guest, *Incorrigible* (Waterloo: Wilfrid University Press, 2004).

the direction of Lionel Pett, a medical doctor and biochemist from the University of Alberta.[89] Pett and his colleagues undertook more than a dozen wartime studies to assess the impact of the war on nutrition. These surveys measured diets against two nutritional standards. Prior to 1942, they used the Canadian Dietary Standard, adopted in 1938 by the Canadian Council on Nutrition, a division of the Department of Pensions and Health.[90] In 1942, in the interests of standardization on a North American basis, the Council replaced this initial standard with a slightly modified version of the Recommend Daily Allowances (RDAs) used in the United States, which was used as the basis for study for the remainder of the war.[91]

Researchers undertook Canada's first-ever nutritional surveys in 1939. The surveys, conducted among lower-income families in Halifax, Quebec, Toronto, and Edmonton, gave empirical support to what nutritionists suspected: Canadian families were not so much undernourished as poorly nourished, and that there was an urgent need for education on matters of nutrition. While the diets of most families surveyed were adequate in terms of caloric intake, protein, and fat (although less so for women than for men), researchers found that most families had serious vitamin and mineral deficiencies, of which a shortage of Vitamin C — an indication of the lack of citrus

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[89] Guest and Chapman, *An Experiment in Applied Nutrition*, 3.
[90] Aleck Samuel Ostry, *Nutrition Policy in Canada, 1870-1939* (Toronto: UBC Press, 2006), 98-99.
[91] E.W. McHenry, "Determination of Nutritional Status," *Canadian Public Health Journal*, 32 (5) May 1941, 231-235; "The Construction and Use of Dietary Standards," *Canadian Public Health Journal*, 36 (6) July, 1945, 272.

fruit in the Canadian diet — was usually the most severe.[92] Four much larger surveys conducted in late 1942 and early 1943 reached much the same conclusion: people were eating enough but not the right kinds of food. Of those surveyed, some 36 percent were not getting enough milk; 55 percent not enough fruit; 50 percent not enough vegetables; 85 percent were not getting their recommend 3 to 4 eggs weekly.[93]

Wartime nutritional researchers in Canada were well aware that their science was in its infancy, and they made continual efforts to devise better and more accurate survey instruments. One consequence of shifting methodology is that it is often difficult to compare the results of one study with another. Nonetheless, the findings of several studies bear closer examination, and in one case consistent methodology was employed over time. In January 1944, researchers replicated a dietary survey undertaken two years earlier, among students at a high school in East York Township, near Toronto (see Table 1.1, below). The 1944 survey found a marked improvement in the students' diets, and concluded that rationing, which had come into effect since the original survey, had "not caused any deleterious effect upon the food supplies of the group."[94]

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[92] L.B. Pett, "What's Wrong with Canada's Diet?" *National Health Review* 19 (36): 1-7. See also the original studies, published in the *Canadian Public Health Journal*

[93] L.B. Pett, *Recent Dietary Surveys in Canada* (Ottawa: Department of Pensions and National Health, 1943), 9.

[94] Helen P. Ferguson and E.W. McHenry, "A Nutrition Study in East York Township: Repetition of Dietary Studies After Two Years", in *Canadian Public Health Journal*, 35 (5) May 1944, 245.

Table 1.1. Percentage of East York Township Students With "Excellent" or "Good" Nutrient Intake, 1942 and 1944

	Girls		Boys	
Category	**1942**	**1944**	**1942**	**1944**
Calories	80	92	83	89
Protein	92	90	94	97
Calcium	70	80	74	94
Iron	77	84	86	97
Vitamin A	90	92	94	99
Thiamin	23	45	20	28
Riboflavin	80	80	77	82
Vitamin C	5	35	25	37
Overall Score	**70**	**92**	**86**	**97**

Granted, some serious deficiencies remained: nearly half of all students had a poor Vitamin C intake – a reflection of the shortage of good fruits so often alluded to in the WRAC panels. In addition, two-thirds of boys reported fair or poor intake of thiamin (Vitamin B1) – a sure sign that they were not eating their vegetables. But the overall picture is remarkable: diets had improved in almost every instance, apart from a very small but not detrimental decrease in protein for girls. But with 90 percent of girls and 100 percent of boys reporting good or excellent protein intake, the study's authors concluded that meat rationing, too, had not had a negative impact on the nutritional quality of their diets.[95]

Unfortunately, as this was the only instance of a wartime nutritional study attempting to measure changes over time, no definitive conclusion about the impact

[95] Ibid., 246.

of the war on the nutritional quality of Canadian diets is possible. At the very most, it can be claimed that there is no evidence that diets got worse, from a nutrition standpoint, and that there is some evidence that diets improved. It is worth noting, for instance, that the number of deaths in Canada directly related to nutritional deficiencies, while low in any case, declined still further during the war, from 81 in 1940 to 42 in 1944.[96] It is also true that some studies, such as one undertaken at Ste. Anne de Bellevue convent in Quebec in 1943 and a 1944 study of farmers at Ile Perrot, Quebec, concluded that the sample groups were well fed. Girls at Ste. Anne de Bellevue were actually somewhat better off than their counterparts in Ontario in 1944, and the farmers at Ile Perrot had the best overall results of any group assessed in Canada during the war.[97] On the other hand, surveys in Ontario and New Brunswick high schools in 1944 and 1945 concluded that serious vitamin deficiencies remained in their students' diets.[98] In those cases where diets were found to be good or improvements can be shown to have occurred, it is impossible to say how much of this was a consequence of the dissemination of information on nutrition, rather than of improving economic circumstances that made more food available to consumers.

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[96] L. B. Pett and F.W. Hanley, "A Nutrition Survey Among School Children in British Columbia and Saskatchewan," *Canadian Medical Association Journal*, 56 February 1947, 188.
[97] Flora M. Webster and Margaret S. McCready, "A Dietary Survey in Farm Households at Ill Perrot, Quebec," *Canadian Journal of Public Health*, 36 (4) April 1945, 152-154.
[98] H.J. Leeson, et. al. "A Study of Nutritional Conditions in a Group of Urban Children," *Canadian Journal of Public Health*, 37 (3) March 1946, 87-102; Jean F. Webb and Florence B. Swan, "Nutritional Aspects of a School Health Study in Marysville, New Brunswick," *Canadian Journal of Public Health*, 37 (9) September 1946, 399-406.

Finally, while the surveys from the war years are not comprehensive enough to reveal much about regional or class variations in diets, they do suggest a highly gendered division of food within families. Family and school surveys almost invariably found that females were, on average, less well fed than boys. According to the East York Township studies cited above, the improvement in girls' diets was, on a percentage basis, greater than that of boys, but their diets nonetheless had more and greater deficiencies in every category but one (thiamin). In three categories the girls' scores in 1944 actually lagged behind the boys' 1942 scores. Among anthropologists, it is a virtual truism that male heads of households tend to claim a larger share of their family's food – a division of resources that is sometimes called "the breadwinner effect."[99] To a lesser degree it applies generally to male children in the family. The efforts undertaken by women's organizations and the National Health Council to raise nutrition awareness narrowed, but failed to close the gender gap, in nutrition deficiencies. Wartime propaganda stressed that the war was being fought for the cause of human emancipation, and heaped gratitude on women for their contributions to the war effort. Nonetheless, there is every indication that, as far as food distribution in families was concerned, old inequities remained firmly intact.

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[99] On this, see Helen Ross, *Love and Toil: Motherhood in Outcast London, 1870-1918* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1993), 32-33.

While Byrne Hope Sanders and her executive directors progressively expanded the scope of Consumer Branch's activities, it had been convened in the first place to act as liaison between the Board and the Women's Regional Advisory Committees. Over the course of the war and into the first year of peace, Sanders attended innumerable regional conferences where representatives of the local WRACs voiced the concerns and grievances of their committees. Members of local WRACs met at their own convenience and their activities were remarkably spontaneous and decentralized. They reported to the Consumer Branch through its regional conferences but did not answer to it. Inevitably, some jurisdictional confusion resulted – the local WRACs acted as a kind of catch-all for complaints that were, in some cases, more properly the domain of the Board's enforcement division. The "blue books", WRACs, and the enforcement apparatus of the WPTB provided vast numbers of women with a means of disciplining retailers in what was otherwise a seller's market. Numerous complaints emerged from small-town and rural WRACs claiming that farmers seldom obeyed the price ceiling, professing ignorance of the Board's rules. In towns and cities, especially in Quebec, the most common complaint was that many merchants flaunted regulations, even to the extent of openly displaying prices above the ceiling. Some retailers, they claimed, actually threatened to "blacklist" whistleblowers. It was no small threat to the many consumers who depended almost exclusively on local shops and stores for their needs, especially after the imposition of gasoline rationing made longer shopping trips impracticable. It is not clear how often

this actually occurred – any merchant who made such a threat risked very serious punishments. But the fear of earning the displeasure of local merchants seems to have been real nonetheless, as evidenced by the enforcement branch's most frequent complaint: that the majority of complaints it received from consumers were submitted anonymously, which made follow-up very difficult.[100]

But this is not to say that women were united in praise of the Consumer Branch and the WPTB. At least some WRAC conferences seem to have degenerated into a forum for the airing of grievances about the inequities of certain aspects of government regulation. In her addresses to these conferences, Sanders always praised the women of Canada for their tireless efforts in maintaining the price ceiling and obeying rationing rules. In the meetings that followed, the members of the regional committees often expressed their belief that the price ceiling was often *not* holding, and more carefully they asserted their right to feed and care for their families in whatever manner they felt was appropriate, even if it put them at odds with regulators. They supported the Board and its rules when they seemed to work to their advantage, but were its most strident critics when they felt that it did not. This was especially the case in small towns and farm areas, where accusations that the Board was a "racket" and the Consumer Branch no more than a sop for discontent sometimes emerged. The suspicion that the Board sometimes operated in favour of private industry over the public welfare seems to have been fairly pervasive. The size of the

[100] LAC, RG 64, Vol. 1447, A-10-29-11, Consumer Branch Conferences Vol. 2.

sugar ration was the subject of unremitting complaints, even in spite of the release of additional sugar rations for the purpose of canning or jam and jelly making, and many participants objected that soft-drink companies seemed to have no limit on their supply of sugar (in fact, they did) while ordinary housewives did not have enough to make the quantity of preserves they wanted to. "You can't spread Coca-Cola on bread," one WRAC liaison caustically observed.[101]

If the WPTB's consumer relations efforts were only a mixed success, Board members could at least report a resounding victory in price controls. Official figures suggest a growth in the overall cost of living no more than 2.8 percent between 1942 and 1945. If true, this would be the lowest inflation rate in any of the major combatants.[102] Ever since December 1941, Donald Gordon and his directors had issued a steady stream of missives assuring Canadians that the ceiling was holding, but urging further vigilance lest the system break down. But skepticism about the effectiveness of the price ceiling was voiced everywhere from the WRACs, to the conservative *Toronto Telegram* (always a thorn in Mackenzie King's side), to the pages of the CCF's official party organ, *News Comment*. Admittedly, the Board had permitted a great many increases in the prices of food, but the crux of the argument

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[101] LAC RG 64, Vol. 1447, A-10-29-11, Northern Ontario Regional Conferences, Consumer Branch Conferences Vol. 2.

[102] Granatstein, "Canada" in *Oxford Companion to the Second World War*, 183. For a discussion on the legitimacy of the Board's claims, see Waddell, 211-214.

that inflation had not been checked was based on the widespread belief that many goods had declined in quality but not price. Since a reduction in quality but not price represented a de facto form of inflation, the Board promised that any decline in the quality of goods would be matched by a reduction in price. In practice, however, this proved very difficult to enforce. The Board did employ quality inspectors, but "quality" was often very subjective, and in most cases the Board refused to agree that various economies and materials substitutions that it imposed on manufacturers (the removal of cuffs from men's pants, for instance) constituted a diminishment in quality. The Board also insisted that it was rigorously inspecting goods to ensure that their quality was maintained – this was, in fact, the subject of another one-act play, *Libel or Label?*, that made the rounds of country fairs and community gatherings in 1944.[103]

Once again, it is difficult to determine how much truth there was in claims such as these, but polls and consumer surveys indicated that the majority of consumers believed them to be true. A survey commissioned by the Board in 1945 found that two-thirds of women believed that they had purchased goods that seemed very poor quality given the price they had paid, but this was a common peacetime complaint as well.[104] Board investigators found many of the complaints to be

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[103] Harriet Parsons, *Libel or Label?* (Ottawa: Consumer Branch, Wartime Prices and Trade Board, 1943). The play can be found in LAC, RG64, Vol. 1446, File A-10-29-7, Consumer Branch Educational Program Vol. 1.

[104] Consumer Questionnaire Analysis, Report No. 2, Statistics Branch, WPTB, LAC, RG 64, Vol. 1448, A-10-20-12, Consumer Branch Panels. The statisticians who analyzed the report seemed to believe that it indicated a belief in the degradation of goods in wartime, but in fact the question did not ask

unfounded or the fault of the consumer herself misusing or abusing the product in question. It seems probable that many instances of diminishing quality did occur, but in matters concerning quality, as in matters concerning prices, some women deployed the enforcement apparatus of the WPTB in an expression of discontent in which the wartime circumstances were incidental. [105]

Nothing in this chapter should be construed to suggest that Canadian women did not also receive and respond enthusiastically to appeals to take up jobs in such nontraditional vocations as war industries and in the armed forces. The story of how civilian women were mobilized into a vast labour army that filled the factories, and then were cast back into doldrums of an oppressive suburbia after victory, is central to nearly every account of the Canadian home front. Without doubt, hundreds of thousands of women did join the paid labour force, especially in the last half of the war, and some forty thousand in all joined the armed forces. But the size of women's movement into the *paid* labour force is not as great as is sometimes suggested.[106] In 1939, there 575,000 women in Canada's paid labour force, a participation rate of just under 16 percent. In 1944, there were 935,000 – a rate of about 22 percent.[107] In

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consumers if they believed that quality of goods was declining, only if they believed that they had, "purchased any articles that seemed to you to be of especially poor quality for the price you paid."

[105] LAC, RG 64, Vol. 1447, A-10-29-11, Consumer Branch Conferences Vol. 3.

[106] See, for instance, Jennifer Stephen's recent *Pick One Intelligent Girl*, which begins by stating that the rate of women's participation in the wage economy doubled during the war. In fact, neither the absolute numbers of women in the paid labour force nor their rate of participation doubled.

[107] Dominion Bureau of Statistics, *Canadian Civilian Labour Force Estimates 1939-1941*. Ottawa, 1957. Figures for females employed in war industries taken from Department of Labour, *Report*, 1946, 89.

short, for every adult woman who took up paid employment outside the home during the war there were five or six who did not.

For hundreds of thousands of Canadian women, voluntary activities in local branches of organizations such as the National Council of Women, the IODE, the Federated Women's Institutes, and the Women's Regional Advisory Committees of the Consumer Branch of the Wartime Prices and Trade Board formed the core of their war effort. In their wartime speeches and pamphlets and radio broadcasts, representatives of women's organizations would dwell, not upon the thousands of women in war industries or in the armed forces, but upon the contributions made by the millions of women who were the nation's housewives. A great many of these contributions were closely related to matters of consumption: buying British, and subsequently defending the price ceiling, obeying rationing rules, and spreading information about nutrition. But the existence of a black market and widespread violations of the rationing rules, the innumerable complaints that emerged from the WRACs about the Board, the continued growth of per-capita consumer sales, even after 1941, suggests that the leadership of major Canadian women's organizations was often out-of-touch with the everyday lives of ordinary Canadian women. Everyone agreed that the duties of wife, mother, and consumer were critical to victory, but there was never any consensus on how those duties ought to be undertaken. But if a consensus view on what constituted patriotic consumption was to emerge from anywhere, it was most likely to emerge from the advertising industry, and that industry's efforts to advance a rationale for consumerism in wartime will be the subject of the next chapter.

Chapter Two
Business as Usual: Adworkers Confront the War, 1939-1941[1]

During the last war many well-meaning but misguided bodies believed the way to win was to start a self-denial campaign. A man was almost ashamed to be seen in a new suit of clothes...now, all this has been changed.

> *The Canadian Printer and Publisher*, January 1940[2]

Now is the time to live abundantly...the soldiers away from home want to feel that at home life is pursuing its normal course so that they will come back to a world they know rather than one that is changed.

> Lillian Foster of the *Toronto Telegram* to the Women's Advertising Club, Toronto, February 1940[3]

By 1939 advertising had long since colonized — its many critics might have said "vandalized" — the whole expanse of Canada's cultural landscape, a conspicuous reminder of conspicuous consumption. Canadians encountered advertising in newspapers and magazines, along the highways and in theatres, on the radio and on streetcars. "Almost daily the encroachment of the advertiser into the common round becomes more marked," Robert Legget lamented in *Queen's Quarterly*. "The blue sky is befouled with calligraphic smoke; even the pleasant sounds of the street are apt to be drowned by the blatant cacophony of an itinerant loud speaker."[4] But where Legget saw "one of western civilization's wasting sores"[5] most Canadian

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[1] Credit goes here to Russell Johnston, who uses the word "adworker" throughout *Selling Themselves* in order to avoid the sexist and imprecise "adman". I have borrowed the term from him.
[2] "Business Picks up on East Coast," *Canadian Printer and Publisher*, January 1940, 38.
[3] "See More Advertising for Home Products," *Marketing*, February 3rd 1940, 9.
[4] Robert F. Legget, "Advertising in Canada," *Queens Quarterly* 1940, 209.
[5] Ibid., 210.

businesspeople saw a symbol of national progress, and few saw it more clearly than the stakeholders in newspapers and magazines. Advertising was their bread and butter. Some of them even confessed that in economic terms the editorial content of their periodicals existed for the sole purpose of drawing an audience for advertisers. "I am," *Saturday Night*'s editor B.K. Sandwell confessed, "one of the best-known parasites on the advertising body."[6]

Self-effacing though the joke might have been (Sandwell was speaking to a conference of adworkers), it was essentially correct. *Saturday Night*, like most magazines, relied on advertising for roughly half its revenue. For newspapers the figure was closer to 75 percent.[7] In 1939, *Maclean's*, whose 260,000 subscribers made it the country's most widely-read magazine, typically ran to eighty pages, thirty or forty of them advertising.[8] The first wartime issue of *Chatelaine*, Canada's most widely read women's magazine, had over fifty pages of advertising, and these figures reflect a year when advertising linage, like the economy in general, had not yet fully recovered from the Depression.[9] Moreover, the modern consumer magazines such as

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[6] "Advertising Justified by Its Usefulness," *Marketing*, November 10, 1941, 3.

[7] For an early article concerning the financial dependence of periodicals on advertising, see Harold Innis, "The Newspaper in Economic Development," *Journal of Economic History* 2 (December 1942), 1-33.

[8] *Maclean's* circulation from *Lydiatt's 1940 Canadian Market and Advertising Data*, December 30 1939. In the 1930s *Lydiatt's Book* began publishing as an annual supplement in *Marketing*. *Maclean's* was Canada's most popular general magazine in terms of subscription sales. However, several daily newspapers and the venerable farm paper, *The Family Herald and Weekly Star*, surpassed its readership.

[9] A typical issue of *Maclean's*, May 15, 1939 had eighty pages, including the inside covers. Of these, the equivalent of thirty-seven were advertising (equivalent because not all advertisements took up a complete page.) On advertising not having recovered from the Depression, see "Linage," *Marketing*,

Chatelaine, Mayfair, and *Canadian Homes and Gardens* had nearly erased the distinction between editorial and advertising content altogether. With feature articles focusing on fashion, automobiles, the latest domestic appliances, and the appropriate décor for the modern home, such magazines existed mostly to help readers choose products – the continuation of shopping by other means. Whenever possible, layout editors complemented feature articles with related advertising, and they had long since mastered "backing", the practice of dismembering an article and strewing it throughout a magazine, forcing readers to pick their way through a commercial wilderness to finish it. Writers in the advertising trade press even admonished newspaper editors for failing to fully exploit this technique. "Why are stories always played on page one?" Carrol Lake asked in the *Canadian Printer and Publisher*. "The big revenue ads are always inside. Unless the readers are drawn inside the paper, those ads will not be read." In Lake's opinion, the problem with newspapers and magazines was that they featured too much editorial content. "I do not care what the occasion," he wrote, "there is no news story that is worth more than a column of reading space today."[10]

Still, Canadians seem to have had an immense appetite for news. On the eve of war, approximately 113 English and French daily newspapers, 750 weeklies, and 275

January 25 1941, 6. The article reported that national advertising linage in 1939 remained "one-third shy of the 1929 mark."

[10] On this, see, for instance: Carrol A. Lake, "Should inside Pages Be Sacrificed?," *Canadian Printer and Publisher*, February 1940, 42.

magazines published in Canada. Most households subscribed to at least one of them, and a great many took American magazines as well.[11] During the Depression, newspaper readership had remained very high, and readership of Canadian magazines had nearly doubled. In part this was because of a hefty tariff that R.B. Bennett's Conservatives had levied on American magazines, cutting their Canadian circulation by more than two-thirds. When the resurgent Liberals killed the tariff in 1935, the circulation of American magazines bounced back, but not at the expense of Canadian publications.[12] In late 1940, Ottawa banned a variety of American pulp magazines such as *True Detective Mysteries* (part of a combined effort to balance the trade deficit and unbalance the smut trade) but most other American mass-market magazines remained a major presence in Canada, with the biggest of them rivaling the subscription sales of the most popular home-grown magazines, *Maclean's* and *National Home Monthly.*[13] In 1940, *the Saturday Evening Post, McCall's,* and *Ladies Home Journal* boasted very respectable circulations of approximately 150,000 each (figures that would only increase over the course of the war) and the Canadian

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[11] See *Lydiatt's 1940* and "A Willing Press," *Canadian Printer and Publisher*, December 1941, 35. These figures do not include scholarly and trade journals.

[12] "Cost of Advertising in Canada Slightly up since Five Years Ago," *Marketing*, February 24 1940, 2. Circulation of the seven leading national magazines increased from 671,358 in 1931 to 1,383,450 in 1939.

[13] "U.S. Publishers Protest Canada's "Pulps" Embargo," *Marketing*, February 15 1941, 3.

edition of one American magazine, *Liberty*, had the highest single-copy (newsstand) sales of any magazine in the country.[14]

American magazines tended to be even more advertising-intensive than Canadian ones. A given issue of *Ladies Home Journal*, for instance, might have incorporated over a hundred pages of advertising. This is not to suggest, however, that Canadians had any need to look longingly to the United States for products they could not buy at home. Not only did strict currency exchange limits make legal stateside shopping far less practicable, but most major brand-name products were available on both sides of the border anyway. Canadians drove Buicks and drank Coca-Cola that they kept cool in General Electric refrigerators, and wartime shortages of such products did not afflict Canadians any sooner than they did most Americans. Moreover, on average, only about one-eighth of advertising in Canadian magazines actually originated in the United States, as Canadian subsidiaries of American parent companies tended to be responsible for their own advertising.[15] Canadians who read both American and domestic periodicals received mutually reinforcing advertising messages from manufacturers who did business on both sides of the border.

Advertising was attuned to the thoroughly modern, urban consumer, but even farmers received their share of it. In 1931 the census had reported for the first time

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[14] Circulation of Canadian magazines: *Lydiatt's 1940*. Circulation of American magazines: "Canadian Circulation of American Magazines," *Marketing*, September 14 1940, 10. *Liberty* was very unusual for publishing a Canadian edition with substantially different content than its American counterpart.
[15] Kiehn, "Overwhelming Bulk of Advertising in Canada Is Canadian Produced," *Marketing*, October 21 1944, 10.

that the majority of Canadians lived in urban areas.[16] Over the next decade the country's population increased rather ponderously, but the Depression gave many Canadians the incentive to move to the city in the hopes of finding work, and by 1941 the urban population outnumbered the rural by a more than a million.[17] It was an historic change. "An incalculable thing has happened to Canada," Bruce Hutchinson reflected in *Macleans*, "the whole historic balance of the country is shifting."[18] But if Canada was transforming — however slowly — into a nation of cities, many Canadians retained a romantic attachment to its small towns, farms, and wilderness, and the nation's writers, poets, and painters jumped at every opportunity to get hazy-eyed about the waning of the pastoral life. "I am *cheated* of life to please," the poet Lyon Sharman reflected:

> The upholstered god of ease...
> Who will turn me outdoors into life?
> I envy the lumberman in the wood,
> The cowboy galloping over the widening plain,
> The farmer cutting his grain:
> I covet their hardihood.[19]

Here was a vision of Canada that no adworker could abide: antimodern, rustic, contemptuous of luxury, atavistic even. It was, of course, a hopelessly sentimental

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[16] There seems to be some dispute about this, but according to *Historical Statistics of Canada* the matter is clear. Not until 1931 was the majority of the population urbanized. *Historical Statistics of Canada*, Series A15-19. According to 1931 census definitions, "urban" constituted living in a municipality with a population of 1000 or more.

[17] Ibid., 35. In the 1931 census 5.6 million Canadians were found to live in urban areas and 4.8 in rural. In 1941 6.2 million lived in urban areas and 5.2 in rural. This represents a growth of 12% for urban versus roughly 9% for rural areas.

[18] Bruce Hutchinson, "What Goes on Here," *Maclean's*, July 1, 1941, 10.

[19] Lyon Sharman, "The Rebel", *Canadian Poetry Magazine*, June 1937, 35.

view of rural life, and one which discounted the extreme hardship often found in the nation's small towns and countryside. It did, however, contain one kernel of truth. In 1939 the gospel of "the upholstered god of ease" was only just beginning to reach beyond the cities. Adworkers were confronted with the steadfast fact that most of Canada's debt-laden farmers were not "consumers" in the modern sense of the word. Rural electrification, an enormous and expensive venture, especially in the vast, sparsely populated expanses of the prairies, proceeded at a glacial pace, and most of the nation's farmers relied on generators for electricity if they had it at all.[20] Apart from automobiles and, to a lesser extent, radios, most farm families owned few of the modern conveniences such as electric stoves, refrigerators, washing machines, vacuum cleaners, or even such basic amenities as bathtubs and showers that were already commonplace amongst urbanites.

But it was for precisely these reasons that farmers became an attractive target to advertisers once their incomes began to grow by leaps and bounds after the war began: they represented an untapped market. Ronald MacEachran, editor of the *Financial Post*, predicted that the whole Canadian market could become "more citified" as national magazines and radio broadcasts penetrated into rural areas and the mobility of modern life increased because of widespread car ownership. What farmers needed, MacEachran insisted, was exposure to more advertising. Advertising

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[20] *Eighth Census of Canada*, Vol. IX Housing (Ottawa: Dominion Bureau of Statistics, 1941).

could persuade them that "mod cons" were indispensable, just as Canadians in the nineteenth century had had to be persuaded that they needed toothpaste.[21]

So from the point of view of the advertiser, at least, the differences between urban and rural consumers seemed to be breaking down. Such was the thinking behind a series of wartime ads placed by the Agricultural Press Association in the trade papers. Representing such popular farm papers as the *Farmer's Advocate* and the *Canadian Countryman*, the APA assured potential advertisers that the modern farmer (or at least his son) was "no longer a country bumpkin": he was "alert", "well-informed", "keenly aware", and wanted the same products as his city cousins.[22] Along similar lines the venerable *Family Herald and Weekly Star*, whose readership was surpassed in size only by the biggest daily newspapers, predicted that war would bring "a radical improvement in the economic position of Canadian farmers"[23] which it most certainly did. Wartime advertisements in the trade papers depicted farmers receiving salesmen with open arms, or even meeting with bankers on friendly terms.

Of course, print was not the only means by which Canadians were appealed to as consumers. The number of homes with radios tripled in the 1930s. By 1941 three-quarters of Canadian households had radios, and in most cities the figure approached

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[21] Ronald A. MacEachran, "Characteristics of the Canadian Market," in *Selling Tomorrow's Production*, ed. E.F. Beach (Montreal: McGill University Press, 1944), 25. The speech was given earlier.
[22] "This Is the Farmer's Son (Advertisement)," *Marketing* 1944, 10.
[23] "The War and the Farmer (Advertisement)," *Marketing*, September 16 1939, 3.

100 percent.[24] Radios had even begun to appear in cars, and manufacturers had started to market portable radios for the cottage or beach. Historian Mary Vipond has described how advertising was so integral to Canadian broadcasting that even advocates of a public system admitted it was a necessity. Advertising "spots" and sponsored radio programs underwrote the operating costs of private and public stations, and gave local and national advertisers the opportunity to be heard over the din of commercial American broadcasts that the Canadian public found appealing, at least in part, precisely because of the advertising.[25]

In broad strokes, then, Legget was correct: advertising had become an omnipresent part of Canadian life. A small but highly professional industry sold it, sustained it, and through innumerable conferences, meetings, and luncheons, continually sought new and better ways to create it.[26] In 1941 there were some forty-nine advertising agencies operating in Canada, almost all of them in Toronto and Montreal. Some were very small – just a handful of adworkers in a cramped office, clustered around some drawing boards and perhaps a telephone – but collectively they employed nearly 1200 people. Wartime would bring consolidation to the

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[24] "*Radio Homes in Canada 1941*," (CBC Radio Canada, 1944), n.p.
[25] Mary Vipond, *Listening In: The First Decade of Canadian Broadcasting, 1922-1932* (Montreal: McGill-Queens University Press, 1992), 284.
[26] On the professionalization of the advertising industry, see Russell Johnston, *Selling Themselves.*

industry. Some small agencies folded, others were absorbed by bigger ones, but new agencies opened, too, and by 1945 there were fifty-six operating in Canada.[27]

Adworkers were the middlemen in an enormous commercial enterprise. Newspapers, magazines, and radio stations competed ferociously in the trade papers for the advertiser's dollar, upon which their survival depended. In 1939 advertisers in Canada spent just over $380 million on national advertising campaigns alone – an enormous sum of money, three times greater than the nation's military expenditure that year and equal to nearly three-fifths of the entire federal budget.[28] Food and beverage manufacturers spent the most, almost $115 million, but the outlay of advertising dollars relative to sales in some other categories was astounding. Advertising expenditure by manufacturers of beer, wine, and spirits, for instance, totaled $25 million on sales of about $100 million.[29] For their services in 1939, agencies billed their clients $30 million. Advertising was big business. In the opinion

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[27] The number of agencies declined to forty-one by 1944 (before roaring back to fifty-six firms with 1600 employees in 1945). The size of the advertising workforce was roughly static for most of the war, while advertising firms' total billings and gross revenue steadily increased. Number of firms, size, billings, and gross revenue 1941 and 1945: "Advertising Agencies 1950 and 1951" (Ottawa: Dominion Bureau of Statistics, 1951). For 1944: "Advertising Agencies in Canada, 1944" (Ottawa: Dominion Bureau of Statistics, 1945).

[28] "Canadian Advertising Volume Higher Than Was Expected," *Marketing*, May 4,1940, 1. Canadian government expenditures are from *Historical Statistics of Canada*, Series G26-44. Advertising billings are from *Advertising Agencies in Canada* 1944, n.p.

[29] Advertising expenditure by category: "Advertising Expenditures in 1939," *Marketing*, August 3-10 1940, 8. Retail value of cars and trucks: *Facts and Figures of the Automobile Industry 1939* (Toronto: Canadian Automobile Chamber of Commerce, 1940), 3. Retail sales of alcoholic beverage outlets, *Historical Statistics of Canada*, Series T1-24.

of its critics, it was too big, generating needless expenses that businesses passed onto the hapless consumer.[30]

In this modern, urban, industrial Canada of the twentieth century, adworkers claimed a special place for themselves. As Roland Marchand, the pioneering historian of American advertising, observed, adworkers in the interwar years saw themselves as the modern world's apostles and more: they were its champions, guardians, and councilors, too, since they claimed to possess unique insight into consumers' anxieties and the cure for them all. Above all, they possessed a boundless faith in progress and the capacity of the free enterprise system, with advertising as its herald, to solve social problems, charting a course to the future without leaving what was desirable about the past behind.[31] In Canada, their counterparts breathlessly hailed the country's modernization with its ever-expanding industrial economy and increasingly bumpkinless farms. Like their American colleagues, Canadian adworkers emphasized that modern mass society required an informed and highly sophisticated consuming public, much as constitutional government required a literate, informed, responsible electorate. Advertising was the educational arm of modern industry, and adworkers took up this didactic mission with a quixotic zeal. Educating consumers was more than a job – it was a calling.[32]

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[30] See, for instance, J.H. Simpson, "In Dispraise of Advertising," *Queen's Quarterly* 1932, 326-40.
[31] See Roland Marchand, *Advertising the American Dream*, chapters 1 and 2.
[32] See, for instance, Howe Martyn, "In Defence of Advertising," *Dalhousie Review* 1933-34, 336-44.

Of course, it served the business interests of Canadian adworkers to exaggerate the extent of the country's modernity and the wants and needs of its consuming public. In reality many Canadian households in 1939 had little to spare after the month's necessities of food and rent were taken care of, and lived in conditions that could hardly be described as "modern".[33] On the eve of war probably half of Canadians could reasonably be described as poor, and unemployment remained in the double digits.[34] But the advertising industry's preoccupation with the pace of change was not mere puffery. Since the Great War, many Canadians really had witnessed an extraordinary, bewildering, and often worrying transformation of the country they had known, and they could find evidence of industrial and technological progress everywhere they looked. For the poet Verna Loveday Harden, modernity had endowed Canadians with a godlike command of the natural world:

> ...we have chained the very elements
> to do the bidding of our lofty will;
> the sea is ours; we fly among the clouds;
> the pantings of our mighty engines fill
> the quiet valleys with their brazen voice;
> the heavens and the earth our servants are;
> we owe no servitude to other gods
> who walk as gods ourselves[35]

Paradoxically, the 1930s had been a decade of both Depression and modernization. It is often forgotten that the majority of Canadians had retained their jobs even through

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[33] "Canadian Family Living Expenses Show Similarity in Main Items," *Marketing*, May 20 1939, n.p.
[34] Average unemployment rate in 1939 was 13%. *Historical Statistics of Canada*, Series C47-55.
[35] Verna Loveday Harden, "All Valiant Dust," *Canadian Poetry Magazine*, October 1939, 18.

the darkest days of 1932 and 1933. Poor though many Canadians remained, many others were considerably better off in 1939 than they had been ten years earlier. Certainly many more Canadians owned cars, radios, electric refrigerators, stoves, and toasters at the end of the Depression than at its beginning.[36] Cars in particular had transformed the pace of life and the spatial character of cities and rural towns since the First World War. In 1918 there had been barely 150,000 passenger cars in all of Canada. A decade later there were a million, and an ever-expanding network of paved roads and highways to drive them on.[37] Half of Ontario's homes had cars, a rate of ownership nearly equal to the national average in the United States and many times higher than anywhere in Europe.[38] Even in Quebec, which had the lowest per capita rates of automobile ownership in the country, people were much more likely to own a car than they were in Great Britain.[39] Not surprisingly, provincial governments positively raked in the money from gasoline taxes: in Ontario the gas tax provided forty percent of the government's revenue.[40]

Cars were, of course, only one indication of a rapidly changing country. In 1939 and 1940 alone more Canadians took more trips on airplanes than in the entire

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[36] See a discussion in Robert Bothwell et.al. *Canada 1900-1945* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1987), 257-258.
[37] *Facts and Figures of the Automobile Industry 1939*, 20.
[38] *Eighth Census of Canada*, Vol. IX, Housing.
[39] *Facts and Figures of the Automobile Industry 1939*, 19, 26. In Quebec the average number of persons per motor vehicles was 15.4. In Great Britain, which had the highest motor vehicle registration outside of North America, the average was approximately one vehicle per 18 persons.
[40] Ibid., 3.

decade of the 1920s.[41] Writers envisioned a day in the not-too-distant future when the personal airplane would replace the automobile as the dominant mode of transportation. In 1937, the founding of Trans-Canada Airlines and the first transcontinental flights in Canada brought this dream closer to reality.[42] Meanwhile, American films and radio broadcasts changed the way Canadians thought about entertainment. In 1939, three-quarters of Canadian families owned radios and there were an incredible 137 million paid admissions to movie theatres.[43]

Adworkers credited themselves with having played a central role in bringing about these extraordinary changes. Such views were exemplified in a series of trade press advertisements for the *Star Weekly* newspaper that were illustrated by Walter Yarwood, later a founding member of Painters 11. Yarwood's ads depicted a bleak, Dickensian existence endured by Canadians before the advent of modern advertising. In one, a grim-faced woman slaves over a wash-basin, her life "a dawn-to-dark battle with the scrub board and the mop, the hand wringer and the old-fashioned kitchen range." But then, the ad declares, "came a great change": advertising, "to educate Canadian women in a brand-new school of freedom from back-breaking hard labor."[44] Another ad in the series, illustrating the "clutter of bins and barrels" of nineteenth century stores, makes the connection more explicit: "...And then came advertising"

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[41] *Historical Statistics of Canada*, Series S236-39. Approximately 300,000 passengers were carried in 1939 and 1940 versus about 200,000 in the 1920s.
[42] Peter Pigott, *National Treasure: The History of Trans-Canada Airlines* (Madeira Park, B.C.: Harbour Publishing, 2001).
[43] *Historical Statistics of Canada*, Series T213-26
[44] "...And Then Came a Great Change" (Advertisement), *Marketing*, December 9, 1944, 3.

the tag line reads, a "partnership of progress" between manufacturers, retailers, and adworkers that gave all Canadians "a higher standard of healthy living."[45]

Figure 2.1. Adworkers credited themselves with initiating the expansion of the modern consumer society and the prosperity that had (allegedly) freed Canadians from lives of toil and drudgery.

Probably the most systematic attempt to attribute Canada's urban and commercial development to advertising came in 1940 when H.E. Stephenson and Carlton McNaught, two adworkers for Canada's biggest agency, the Montreal-based McKim Limited, published *The Story of Advertising in Canada.* In this uncritically

[45] "...And Then Came Advertising" (Advertisement), *Marketing*, November 25, 1944, 5.

triumphalist account of the industry's history, Stephenson and McNaught outlined an argument already commonplace in the trade press: advertising had been the prime mover in the Dominion's transformation from a colonial-minded, parochial, and agrarian society to an independent, forward-looking, industrial, and commercial nation ready to assume a dominant role on the world stage. Canada's economic development since the late nineteenth century, they argued, had been encouraged, underwritten, and otherwise facilitated by advertising. It was advertising that had made the availability of goods known to consumers, educated them about the precise nature of a host of modern maladies, and then presented them with a range of solutions. In helping consumers to make informed buying decisions, advertising had generated greater sales for business, provided incentives for technical innovation, expanded production, created economies of scale, rationalized mass production with further savings to consumers, and resulted in an explosion in the number, type, and quality of consumer goods available. Almost the entire expansion of the Canadian economy and the nation's standard of living in the prior fifty years owed itself to advertising, they claimed. When the economy had suffered, during the Depression, for instance, it had been propped up by advertising and prevented from more rapid recovery only by the interference of well-meaning but misguided politicians whose social welfare policies had increased tax burdens, reduced consumer purchasing power, and prevented the economy from rebounding on its own.[46]

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[46] See Harold Edward Stephenson and Carlton McNaught, *The Story of Advertising in Canada, a*

Such views were not unique to adworkers: with only slightly less conviction they were widely held in the business and economic press. Writing in the University of Toronto's *Commerce Journal*, political economist Samuel Stocking claimed that Canada's standard of living owed more to advertising than to anything else, with the possible exception of "steam, gasoline, and electric power"[47] Even Harold Innis, who harbored grave concerns about the influence that profit-driven media would have on the free exchange of information, argued that in securing the financial well-being of newspapers, advertising had played an essential role in the expansion of the free press in North America. He worried that fascism loomed if advertisers abandoned newspapers for the more ephemeral medium of radio.[48]

In article after article in the trade press, adworkers and marketing experts returned to these themes. Advertising, they insisted, was far more than an informational service that businesses offered to consumers. In preserving the independence of the press and in playing a key role in securing material prosperity of the nation, advertising was, as one adworker boasted, "the spark plug of democracy."[49] Advertising actually extended the rather ordinary freedoms of political democracy by granting the consumer sovereignty in the marketplace: the economy itself functioned

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Chronicle of Fifty Years (Toronto: Ryerson Press, 1940). Harold Innis took issue with Stephenson and McNaught's account of the country's industrial development in a review published in The University of Toronto's *Commerce Journal*. See his review in *Canadian Journal of Economics and Political Science*, (7) 1941, 109-112.

[47] Samuel B. Stocking, "The Value and Significance of Advertising," *The Commerce Journal* 1941, 68.

[48] Harold Innis, "A Note on the Advertising Problem," 1943, 65-66.

[49] "Phare's Classes Resume," *Marketing*, January 18, 1941, 12.

democratically – consumers "voted" with their pocketbooks. Advertising performed the special role of providing Canadians with the information they needed in order to make educated decisions in their selection of goods, just as the news media gave them the information they needed to be effective citizens.[50] Speaking to the Advertising and Sales Club of Toronto in 1940, advertising executive R.W. Reynolds put it this way:

> When Mrs. Jones is shopping, she is not buying in a wilderness of products...she shops with standards in mind. Mrs. Jones is an educated buyer and the cost of that education has been paid by advertising as an integral part of modern business.[51]

If any business was to be viewed with suspicion, he went on, it was the one that did *not* advertise. Businesses that did were putting their wares on display for all to see, in the imaginary shop window of advertising. What did non-advertisers have to hide?[52]

Of course, hyperbole of this sort engendered critical responses. While Canadian adworkers in the late 1930s and early 1940s were almost certainly not reading the critical Marxism of the members of the Frankfurt School, who by then had relocated to Columbia University but were still publishing exclusively in German, they did from time to time refer contemptuously and condescendingly to "university professors", identifying them as the source of a body of intellectual opinion that was

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[50] Frances Hall, "The Education of Consumers," *Public Affairs* 1940. Hall succinctly summarizes the theory of "consumer sovereignty" but, it should be noted, dismisses it most contemptuously.
[51] "Paying Cost of Consumer Education Is a Big Part of Advertising's Job," *Marketing*, February 3, 1940, 3.
[52] J.C. Kirkwood, "Non-Advertisers Are Poor Trustees of the Capital They Are Employing," *Marketing*, April 5, 1941, 14.

critical of the mass consumers society.[53] Moreover, they saw fit to defend themselves on many occasions from the related although less theoretically sophisticated argument that advertisers were the modern equivalent of traveling hucksters and snake-oil salesmen, foisting worthless goods on a hapless and gullible public. Philip Spencer articulated this view in a 1940 article for the *Canadian Forum*:

> In only a few years whole nations have taken to smelling their armpits and underwear suspiciously – they're B.O. conscious. We decry this. We laugh at it. Yet this advertising-created incubus drives millions of people to the soap counter and the deodorant counter.[54]

On the contrary, adworkers insisted: no chicanery was at work, only honest persuasion in the consumer's own best interests. Adworkers pointed with pride to their own efforts to "clean up" the industry in the form of self-regulation and support for "truth in advertising" legislation that had made it illegal to publish false claims knowingly in ad copy.[55] Indeed, the House of Commons had broadened portions of the criminal code pertaining to fraudulent advertising in 1939 and had done so with the support of the industry, although *Canadian Printer and Publisher* noted with some amusement that the regulations applied only to commercial advertising – false promises made in political advertising were not covered. "Nobody believes them anyway," was the editors' wry observation.[56]

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[53] See, for example: "Much Advertising Activity Planned in Spite of Uncertainties for 1940," *Marketing*, December 30, 1939, 1.
[54] Philip Spencer, "Does It Sell the Stuff?," *Canadian Forum*, October 1940, 215.
[55] See, for instance: "95 Per Cent Advertising Is True," *Marketing*, May 4th 1940, 4. Russell Johnston discusses the origins of the "truth in advertising movement" in Johnston, *Selling Themselves*, 84-87.
[56] "Closing Down on False Advertising," *Canadian Printer and Publisher*, July 1939, 32.

Also concerning to adworkers was an emergent "consumer movement", allegedly linked to the Communist Party, that lobbied for expanded government regulation of the advertising industry.[57] Canadian adworkers had viewed the ascendancy of the New Deal in the U.S. with great concern, noting that the advertising industry in the United States had been assailed through the 1930s by New Dealers who demanded accountability for the sometimes extravagant claims the industry made.[58] "Business in the United States has been very much on the defensive," a writer in *Canadian Advertising* observed in 1939. "It has been under attack by the government."[59] He cautioned Canadian adworkers that they should promote the virtues of free enterprise at every opportunity in their own self-defense. Fortunately, the consumer movement, another observer noted, had thus far "cut little ice" in Canada.[60] Apart from regulations, which varied from province to province, concerning alcohol advertising, and federal legislation concerning "truth in advertising", Canadian adworkers operated under fewer constraints than their American counterparts.[61] What concerned adworkers in late 1939 early 1940 was that the outbreak of war was sure to result in a vast expansion in the government's

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[57] "Consumer Groups Tools of the Communist Party," *Marketing*, December 16, 1939, 8.
[58] On this, see Frank W. Fox, *Madison Avenue Goes to War.* Fox emphasizes, though probably exaggerates, New Deal era efforts to regulate the advertising business in his second chapter.
[59] James Cowan, "Public Relations: Penetrating Discussion of Need in Canada to Offset Suspicion in Public Mind toward Business," *Canadian Advertising*, April 1939, 12.
[60] E.W. Reynolds, "Advertising Has Grown in Prestige, Winning Fight against Heavy Odds," *Marketing*, April 13 1940, 43.
[61] Cowan, 12.

regulatory powers – in the wrong hands (in the hands of a party such the C.C.F., for instance), such powers could spell doom for the industry.

Another concern was a body of opinion *within* the business community, which held that most advertising was a needless expense passed onto the consumer. Lively debate about the efficacy of advertising and whether or not it was a positive investment for business was carried on in the pages of such journals of opinion as *Queen's Quarterly*, *Dalhousie Review*, and *Canadian Forum*. [62] "Many higher executives ... still regard advertising as a necessary evil, if not a plain out-and-out evil," the editors of *Canadian Advertiser* had noted in July 1939.[63] Indeed, a figure no less august than Henry Ford himself had for many years harbored immense suspicions about the utility of advertising.[64] Moreover, for many in the old generation of business leaders, a man's personal success had always depended on sobriety and hard work, industriousness and thrift, and above all a willingness to delay gratification. In 1937, Alfred P. Sloan, the outgoing president of General Motors, described the profit-motivation not as a means to material comfort, but as an urge for greater accomplishment. "The anxieties, responsibilities, the necessity of living the life of the cause rather than one's own life could not possibly be compensated for in any

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[62] See, for instance, Martyn, "In Defence of Advertising."; Hall, "The Education of Consumers."; Legget, "Advertising in Canada."; Stocking, "The Value and Significance of Advertising." op. cit.
[63] "Editorial," *Canadian Advertising*, July 1939, 4.
[64] Marchand, *Advertising the American Dream*, 7.

material way," he said.[65] But what would become of such values if the new consumer ethos emphasized the soft pleasures in life, the dreaded "upholstered god of ease" that Sharman sought to escape, with its gospel of leisure and immediate self-gratification underwritten by credit buying at the expense of long-term security?

Moreover, how could slothful people fight a war? It was not a question that could easily be dismissed. Reflecting on the occasion of the first Christmas of the Second World War, *Marketing* columnist John C. Kirkwood wrote of humanity's "natural tendency to be slothful – to settle down in ignoble content." Modern life and its conveniences could free people from toil and drudgery but he feared that, freed from strife, struggle, and competition altogether, Canadians might "indulge their gross nature" like the "illiterate peoples of the world." For Kirkwood, sustained advertising was the solution to this problem. It would ensure that people would never be content with "satisfying existing wants." Rather, it would appeal to Canadians' "higher nature" — the aspiration for a better life that was possessed only by literate people — uncovering "their unperceived and unfelt wants" for "finer things of social life." [66] Kirkwood conceded that this aspiration for "finer things" would most often be expressed in material terms: a desire for better homes, better cars, better clothes, and the like. But it was only through the acquisition of material comfort that it would be

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[65] Quoted in: Heather Robertson, *Driving Force : The McLaughlin Family and the Age of the Car* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1995), 289.
[66] J.C. Kirkwood, "Business Is the Blesser of Mankind and Creator of a Finer Social Life," *Marketing*, December 23, 1939, 4.

possible to actualize non-material desires for "the highest culture" and "spiritualism in the highest degree". All this, of course, was attainable only if business was left free to elevate the standard of living without the encumbrance of government regulation. Since the aspirations of civilized people are infinite, Kirkwood reasoned, there would be no possibility of exhausting them, provided that advertisers continued to incite desire "to the point where possession becomes one's purpose." Hence there was no danger that people would slip into the complacency and frivolity that Sloan feared. Rather, advertising would help people achieve material, moral, and spiritual self-actualization; it would build national prosperity; it would continue to ensure that the press could perform its vital role of safeguarding the free exchange of information.[67] In the world of advertising, all things were possible.

Such high-minded idealism, however, sat uneasily next to the more mundane preoccupations of the ads themselves. In April 1940, *Marketing* carried a cautionary story about a Spanish woman who had toured Canada and the United States shortly before the war. On the crossing from Europe she confessed certain worries to another passenger. What would North Americans be like? Based on the advertising in their magazines, she had concluded that they would be unendurable – malodorous, foul-breathed, constipated, and physically infirm.[68] If advertising was to be believed — and of course adworkers insisted that it was — the Spanish woman had made a

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[67] Ibid.

[68] "Foreigners Get Very Grotesque Picture from Some of Our Very Modern Copy," *Marketing*, April 6 1940.

reasonable supposition. Colgate, for instance, warned that "76 percent of all people over the age of 17 have bad breath."[69] Lifebuoy soap advertisments included "scientific facts about 'b.o.'", such as the "fact" that the human body's two to three million sweat glands, working overtime in the face-paced modern world, generated "1 to 3 pints of perspiration *daily*."[70] Lysol warned that overburdened housewives often neglected feminine hygiene to the detriment of their marriages. In advertising, modern life seemed fraught with such stresses and was less forgiving of those who failed to attend to them. But it also offered the educated consumer solutions to such anxieties including, as we shall see, those attending war itself.

By 1939, national advertisers had long since abandoned the purely "informational" format of nineteenth and early twentieth-century advertisements that had straightforwardly described the physical properties of goods and told readers where they could buy them, an approach to advertising sometimes referred to as "salesmanship in print."[71] As has often been observed, by the 1920s a very different kind of advertising had emerged, one that aimed to exploit non-material motivations for consumption. Adworkers sought to bring the inanimate world of consumer goods alive by vesting goods with social significance not directly or necessarily related to

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[69] "Everybody Knew It but Ellen (Advertisement)," *Maclean's*, April 15, 1941, 33.
[70] "A Hot-Weather Offender (Advertisement)," *Maclean's*, August 15, 1940, 31.
[71] Marchand, *Advertising the American Dream*, 10.

the actual properties of the commodities themselves.[72] In the world imagined in advertising, commodities became a passport into a world where modern consumers' anxieties about personal health (and the health of their families), social status, household and workplace responsibilities, and even love and romance could be resolved through consumption.[73] Oftentimes the commodity itself played a minor role in advertising compared to what it promised. Automobiles provided not just efficient transportation but fun, freedom, and social recognition; appliances did not just relieve the drudgery of housework but promised actual female emancipation; personal hygiene products — the particular obsession of 1930s advertising, as the Spanish traveler noticed — were essential ingredients in courtship, romance, marriage, successful friendships, business relations, and so on.

Roland Marchand has described how advertising helped acculturate early twentieth-century Americans to the urban, industrial, and technological society in which they suddenly found themselves, and sought to assuage their anxieties about the rapidly emerging mass society. [74] What advertising promised Canadians, wherever they lived, was a better future through consumption. But it almost never came across as encouraging frivolity, much less hedonism, as some of its critics

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[72] On this see, for instance: T.J. Jackson Lears, *Fables of Abundance: A Cultural History of Advertising in America* (New York: Basic Books, 1994), Chapter Seven, 196-234. Marchand, *Advertising the American Dream*, 1-24. William Leiss, Stephen Kline, and Sut Jhally, *Social Communication in Advertising : Persons, Products, and Images of Well-Being* (Scarborough, Ont.: Nelson Canada, 1990), 153-55.

[73] Leiss, Kline, and Jhally, *Social Communication in Advertising*, 153-55.

[74] Marchand, *Advertising the American Dream*, especially 1-24.

contended. Indeed, what strikes the modern reader most forcefully about the period's advertising is its gravity. Advertisements occasionally featured comical characters but the intentionally funny or self-mocking advertisements so familiar to audiences in the early twenty-first century were unheard of in the 1930s and 40s. Advertising was a serious business. Advertised products addressed social matters of real importance – or at least adworkers would have people believe that they were. It heralded a more efficient, less burdensome, in short, more modern way of living. As Marchand observed, we may glibly dismiss the solutions to modern problems that advertising proposed, but we should not be so dismissive of the problems themselves nor the desire to solve them.

Overwhelmingly, women were the intended audience for advertising. As women took on a greater range of responsibilities in the coming war, an even greater percentage of advertisements would be targeted towards them. It was for this reason, perhaps, that women were somewhat better represented in the advertising profession than in most others. It was hoped that they could offer some insight into the most unpredictable aspect of the market, the female shopper herself, whose nature often remained elusive. Many male adworkers conceived of women as fundamentally irrational and emotionally impulsive, capable of making sensible choices only if properly persuaded to do so. In the world of advertising, marital breakdown, unruly children, and disorganized homes were almost invariably the fault of a woman's poor or uninformed buying decisions.

Broadly speaking, such was the nature of national advertising in Canada and the philosophy of Canadian adworkers when war erupted in September 1939. But a further comment must be made about the relationship between the Canadian and American advertising industry, a relationship that preoccupied writers in the trade press. Canadian adworkers had always had an attenuated relationship with their American counterparts, viewing them as unwelcome competitors when American agencies expanded operations into Canada but also as a source of creative inspiration.[75] In the interwar years Canadian agencies had followed in the wake of American innovation, borrowing ("plagiarizing" was the indelicate word advertising executive Thornton Purkis used) concepts Americans had adapted, often rather haphazardly, from applied psychology and the new "science" of market research.[76] At an industry conference in Atlantic City in 1940, B.K. Keightly, advertising manager of Canadian Industries Limited, told the American audience that Canadian adworkers were indebted "beyond all words" to them for their "inspiration and example, precept and practice."[77] It was this creative debt that led Harold Innis to complain about Canadian adworkers' comparative "immaturity". But adworkers responded that their creative genius was in transposing American innovations to the vagaries of the Canadian market and its buying public. Canadian and American markets, a writer in

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[75] Johnston, *Selling Themselves,* 268-69.
[76] Thornton Purkis, "The Trends in Advertising," *Canadian Advertiser*, Second Quarter 1940, 7.
[77] "Canadian Advertisers Win Awards in D.M.A.A. "Fifty Leaders" Contest," *Marketing*, October 12, 1940, 4.

Canadian Advertiser mused, are like ham and eggs: "generally and advantageously associated...but they are hardly the same thing."[78]

Obviously it served the interests of Canadian adworkers to exaggerate the extent of the differences between the two markets. In reality, most Canadian consumers who could afford it wanted the same things that Americans did. After all, they read many of the same magazines, drove the same cars, and even listened to many of the same radio programs. But the war, when it came, gave adworkers' claims about the uniqueness of the Canadian market greater credibility. War really did effect changes in the Canadian marketplace and Canadian consumers felt the war's influence, both good and bad, to a greater extent than Americans did until they too were at war. In addition, the war forced Canadian adworkers to adapt and innovate for themselves. The United States was not yet involved, so there were no American models of war-related advertising to follow, while advertising from the Great War was that of another age, offering adworkers little in the way of inspiration or direction.[79] Canadian adworkers would have to apply their own talents to the unique circumstances of this strange new war, where amidst much talk about the need for a strenuous war effort very little actual sacrifice was made for the first two years of the war.

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[78] Cowan, 12.

[79] American adworkers showed a keen interest in the impact that war was having on Canadian advertising. For instance, Ian Macdonald, general manager of the Bureau of Advertising for the Canadian Daily Newspaper Association, gave a talk on this topic for American attendees at the Fall 1941 Newspaper Advertising Executives Association in Chicago. See *Marketing*, October 25, 1941. I explore this issue further in chapter three.

In the first year of the war, "business as usual" and "carry on" were the rallying cries of the business community. Of course, in comparison to the Depression, there was nothing usual at all about the huge economic boom that followed the outbreak of war. Rather, "business as usual" was an exhortation to continue business practices without fear. *Marketing* reminded its readers that panic had swept over the business community and buying public in August 1914.[80] In those uncertain times, the editors pointed out, many firms had cancelled their advertising and long-term plans were shelved. But the public forgot businesses that failed to advertise throughout the Great War, the editor of *Canadian Advertiser* warned, and those firms never regained lost buyers.[81]

When national advertising linage experienced a dramatic slump in September 1939, with fewer ads placed and many pulled at the last minute, and with the major dailies reporting instances of panic buying, advertising industry leaders were galvanized with renewed purpose. Speaking to the Montreal Advertising and Sales Club in October, Spalding Black, advertising manager for Canadian Industries Limited, proposed a wartime agenda for the ad industry. Advertising would be the home front equivalent of the leaflet raids the RAF was now conducting over Germany, only with the goal of strengthening rather than weakening morale. Its most immediate task was to allay fears, avert panic buying, and promote economic

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[80] "Business Disruption by War Can Be Held at a Minimum," *Marketing*, September 2, 1939, 1.
[81] "We Would Like You to Know: A *Canadian Advertising* Editorial," *Canadian Advertising*, October 1939, 4.

stability by assuring consumers that there was no imminent danger of shortages.[82] Furthermore, the editors of *Canadian Advertising* hoped, Canada's role in the war would be mainly an economic one and, therefore, advertising could assume the vital role of "maintaining the regular business life of the country."[83] With the techniques of scientific mass persuasion at their disposal, adworkers could assuage the consuming public's wartime anxieties, bolster retail sales, and strengthen the economy for the coming struggle. If life on the home front was attended by uncertainty and the potential for widespread economic disruption, it was also rife with opportunities for forward-looking adworkers to seize and exploit – for the benefit of themselves and the nation as a whole. Over the next year a succession of articles in the trade press repeated the point. In peacetime, advertising had brought prosperity. In wartime, it would defend it.

But how, precisely? With confidence, adworkers predicted that one consequence of the war would be more advertising, since wages would increase and with them, consumer demand. But in the early months of the war they also shared a virtual consensus that advertising copy should not refer to the conflict. *Marketing* quoted one senior advertising executive who said: "In not one single case are any of our clients planning any copy theme that ties us with the war or war activities." Another remarked, inaccurately, that even British advertisers had rejected war

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[82] Spalding Black, "Advertising Can Help to Win the War," *Saturday Night*, October 28, 1939, 14.
[83] "We Would Like You to Know: A *Canadian Advertising* Editorial," 4.

themes as unduly pessimistic.[84] Byrne Hope Saunders made the same observation to the Women's Advertising Club of Toronto. "Advertisers," she said, "are not going to employ patriotic appeals of war to sell their products."[85] Within a year, they would be doing precisely that, but in the interregnum between the fall of Poland and the Battle of Britain the most striking fact about advertising in *Maclean's* and other national magazines in Canada is the almost total absence of any reference to the war. Had the Spanish woman returned she might have concluded, based on advertising, that Canadians were not yet at war. On occasion, an oblique or mild metaphorical reference to the war appeared. Nabob coffee promised buyers "no war profiteering" in its prices. Steeplechase Cigarettes assured customers that its product would retain its "pre-war quality", which is to say, the same quality found three weeks earlier.[86] But direct, thoroughgoing "war copy" was not to be found. In this, national advertisers reflected the "business-as-usual" consensus, although the appearance of an advertisement for Italian vacations in the September 15, 1939 issue of *Maclean's* was probably a reflection of press deadlines rather than the tourism industry's determination to "carry on" as if the war had never begun.

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[84] "1940 Daunts Very Few Advertisers Say Canadian Advertising Agencies," *Marketing*, December 30, 1939, 4.
[85] "See More Advertising for Home Products." *Marketing*, February 3, 1940, 9.
[86] "War Note Sounds in National Copy," *Marketing*, September 30, 1939.

Figure 2.2. The urge to avoid "war copy" in the first year of the war was so great that it sometimes led to embarrassing juxtapositions between advertising and world events. This advertisement for DeSoto was published in May 1940, the month Germany invaded the Low Countries and France. [87]

A confluence of circumstances made the "business-as-usual" ethos more tenable than it might otherwise have been: the King government's initial commitment to a war of limited liability, the eight-month period of virtual non-aggression that the British press dubbed "the sitzkrieg" and the public called "the phony war", and the general growth in economic prosperity that coincided with the beginning of the war. Unemployment fell, retail sales went up, and a year-end poll conducted by *Marketing* found that only 5 percent of advertisers planned to spend less in 1940 (and those were mainly exporters whose foreign markets had been cut off

[87] "Enjoy Life!" *Maclean's*, May 15, 1940, 27.

by the war), while nearly 40 percent planned increased advertising budgets, citing consumers' greater purchasing power.[88] But the catastrophe that befell the Allies in the summer of 1940 seems to have occasioned a transformation in the advertising copy and artwork. Advertisements began to appear that focused on the material needs of soldiers. The implicit recognition was that the armed forces constituted a large market for practical gifts, and they urged consumers to do their patriotic duty by buying them for their loved ones in uniform. In *Maclean's* the first explicitly war-themed advertisement, a very small appeal for a product called "Mentholatum" appeared on August 15, 1940, nearly a year after the war began. It promised relief in some unspecified fashion for "dozens of minor ailments" including "head-colds, sunburn, bruises, sprains and cuts, burns and scalds, tired and aching feet and other conditions."[89] A decidedly more sophisticated, full-page advertisement for Parker Pens appeared a month later, promoting the Parker "Active Service Set Pen and Pencil", which was designed to meet uniform regulations. Such a gift would, the copy promised, encourage the boys overseas to "write more often", thus fulfilling their needs and the needs of civilians on the home front (see Figure 2.3, below).[90] Similarly, Ronson lighter advertisements from the early part of the war marketed their lighters as gifts "for your soldier – for your sailor" but also promoted "Ronson table-lighters" for "every room in the home."[91]

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[88] "1940 Daunts Very Few Advertisers Say Canadian Advertising Agencies," *Marketing*, December 30, 1939, 4.
[89] "Mentholatum," *Maclean's*, August 15, 1940, 31.
[90] "Get Them to Write Often," *Maclean's*, September 15, 1940, 4.
[91] "For Your Solider - for Your Sailor: Ronson," *Maclean's*, November 1, 1941, 63.

Figure 2.3. The earliest war-themed advertisements recognized that soldiers were a potential market for useful items, and encourage patriotic civilians to buy for them.

In these early war-related advertisements one finds, in embryo form, one of the most enduring themes of wartime advertising: that carefully considered buying was a patriotic contribution to the war effort. But expressly war-related advertisements remained rare in national magazines throughout 1940 and even into early 1941. When references to the war appeared they were usually in some metaphoric or incidental way. Some advertisers incorporated the bellicose language of war into their advertising copy without making specific reference to the war itself. "Enlist for

the war on germs" (no accidental pun, to be sure) was Lysol's new message.[92] Life-Savers gave their rather cloying comic-strip advertisements of the pre-war period, which depicted young lovers brought together by their mutual affection for the mints, a more contemporary feel by depicting the young man in uniform. So many advertisements took to portraying a character in uniform that the government banned the use of Canadian military uniforms for commercial advertising purposes. Advertising artists stayed within the limits of the law by drawing uniforms inexactly.[93]

In no year were the paradoxes of Canada's wartime consumer economy so evident as in 1941. After inflation, retail sales that year were a remarkable 20 percent higher than in 1939. Passenger car production and sales had fallen off somewhat from 1940 but remained quite brisk. Paid admissions to movie theatres broke the 150 million mark and restaurants did twice the business they had in 1939. Canadians were in the midst of a two-year consumer spending boom that, relatively speaking, is probably the biggest in Canadian history. Certainly in relative terms it far outstripped the supposed surge of guiltless mass consumption that immediately followed the war: adjusted consumer spending increased by about nine percent between 1946 and 1948, for instance. But 1941 was also the year that King's government, alarmed by the

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[92] "Enlist for the War on Germs (Advertisement)," *Maclean's*, April 15, 1941, 28.
[93] *Men's Wear Merchandising*, November 1, 1940, 29.

beginning of an inflationary cycle, began in earnest to attempt to rein in consumer spending; it was the year in which the production of most durables ceased; and it was the year that ended with the imposition of the WPTB's regime of wage and price ceilings.

It was therefore a year in which the "business as usual" ethic was subjected to serious pressure. Free-market evangelists such as John Kirkwood continued to preach the "carry on" gospel, but throughout most of the advertising industry it was a period of coping and adjustment as the government demanded progressively greater sacrifices and planned the mobilization of the economy for a protracted military struggle. In Parliament in late February, C.D. Howe, the all-powerful minister for the Department of Munitions and Supply, actually accused the *Financial Post* of being "the number one saboteur of Canada" for its consistent criticism of the government's industrial mobilization plans. Without naming them, Howe implied that many other business publications were guilty of the same.[94] The *Financial Post* was owned by John Bayne MacLean's MacLean Publishing Company, as were the majority of the nation's trade papers and *Maclean's* itself. Howe's comments were therefore greeted with widespread condemnation (nowhere more strenuously than in *Maclean's*, where the editors, without naming Howe, stated that if anyone was guilty of sabotage it was "the type of official who fawns, alibis, wangles, and wheedles to hold a job he's not

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[94] For a summary of the press reaction to Howe's comments, see: "Press Answers "Sabotage" Charge," *Canadian Printer and Publisher*, March 1941, 41.

competent to fill") but they were nonetheless a clear sign that King's government was losing patience with the "business as usual" ethos.[95]

So it is not surprising, then, that even as retail sales skyrocketed, the advertising industry began to discuss seriously whether or not the war might actually imperil the existence of national advertising for commercial purposes altogether.[96] Already the government had closed certain advertising-related tax loopholes. Confronted with excess profit taxes, many businesses had planned to expand their advertising budgets, thus incurring an additional, tax-deductible business expense. But in January the Dominion Income Tax Department had announced that no deductions would be permitted for "unwarranted" advertising increases.[97] Were other regulations coming? Certainly the trade press paid a great deal of attention to the enormous constraints under which the British advertising industry operated and wondered what the future might bring for Canadian firms.[98]

But there were other troubling questions as well. Should firms that had converted entirely to military production continue to advertise? Could luxury be justified when the boys overseas were risking their lives? Was commercial advertising patriotic when the government was urging Canadians to plough their earnings into

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[95] "Editorial," *Maclean's*, March 15 1941.
[96] B.W. Keightley, "Wartime Advertising Essential," *Canadian Printers and Publisher*, June 1941, 23-24.
[97] "Legitimate Wartime Expenditure for Advertising," *Canadian Printer and Publisher*, January 1941, 30.
[98] See, for instance: Thornton Purkis, "British Advertising in Wartime," *Canadian Advertising*, Second Quarter 1941, 5-7. Chapter three will consider the circumstances under which British, American, and other Allied advertisers operated.

Victory Bonds? Ironically, however, in the advertising industry's view the most immediate peril was the fact that the war had put most retailers in such a *favorable* position. Would retailers conclude that advertising was unnecessary in a seller's market where the biggest problem was not failing to sell merchandise but failing to have enough merchandise to sell? At conferences, seminars, meetings, luncheons, and in all manner of articles published in the industry's trade journals, the issue of whether or not it was desirable or even possible to continue to advertise was raised – rhetorically. Of course the only possible answer was "yes" – no industry ever willfully suspended its operations during the war. Prewar justifications for the advertising were adapted quite readily to wartime circumstances. Commercial advertising could and should continue, they argued, because in this time of crisis consumers needed guidance in making appropriate buying decisions more than ever. But these discussions also betrayed a realization that the consumer economy, however strong it might have seemed at the moment, was about to undergo radical changes to which advertising would have to adapt creatively.[99]

One example was John Kirkwood's interpretation of the government's Victory Bond slogan, "serve by saving". This was, Kirkwood claimed, really a plea for consumers to spend *more*. Since saving more necessarily meant earning more, he

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[99] "Those Who Discontinue Advertising May Wake up to Find Market Gone," *Marketing*, April 5, 1941, 4.; See also: "10 Reasons for Continuing Advertising Urged at O.A.A.A. Annual Meeting," *Marketing* (1941): 12, "How to Advertise When Oversold," *Canadian Advertising*, Third Quarter 1941, 5-9.

reasoned, it followed from logic that the sources of employment for so many Canadians — manufacturing, advertising, distributing, selling, or servicing merchandise — would have to operate on a progressively more profitable basis. What that meant, he concluded, is that advertising budgets and expenditures had to be increased rather than lessened so as to induce the public to buy, retailers to stay in business, and manufacturers to keep producing consumer goods. "More pressure," he wrote, "must be applied to consumers to buy foods and clothing, furniture and furnishings...luxury and indulgence products."[100] While this certainly fell into the category of creative adaptation, it was also a perspective that became less tenable — at least publicly — over the course of the year that followed. In the first two years of the war, most of the demand for war materiel in Canada had been met either by mobilizing idle industrial capacity, of which there had been a great deal at the end of the Depression, or by creating new industrial plants and workshops to meet the demands for highly specialized equipment such as airplanes and tanks. But as the demands of the expanding Canadian and Commonwealth armed forces for war materiel grew, the conversion of industrial capacity to war production and, more critically, the strategic allocation of raw materials for military needs accelerated. It became evident by late 1941 that most consumer durables were going to become

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[100] J.C. Kirkwood, "Buying Less Means Producing Less and Will Curtail Sinews of War," *Marketing*, March 1, 1941, 10.

unavailable "for the duration" and that serious shortages of semi-durables and some soft-goods were inevitable.[101]

The advertising industry's realization that it could no longer afford to be blasé about the war was reflected in changes to advertising design. In the summer of 1941 automotive ads, for instance, began to allude to the timeless styling and guaranteed durability of the 1942 models, a clear reference to the possibility (that did not become a reality until January 1942) that passenger car production might cease and that one's new car might have to last for a long time indeed.[102] War-themed advertisements became more frequent and patriotic appeals more explicit. Advertisements for practical gifts for soldiers on active duty remained the most common kind of war-related advertising. Increasingly, however, advertisements began to allude to the war-related needs of civilians on the home front. Owning a Sparton brand radio-phonograph, for instance, would "help you 'do your bit' entertaining the service boys".[103] Frigidaire advertisements emphasized the savings to families who owned an electric refrigerator: $10.70 monthly according to "a survey of 58,590 women". While the appeal to economy was one of the oldest advertising techniques, what was new was the suggestion that these savings could be ploughed into Victory Bonds (the advertisement included the slogan "Serve by Saving: Buy War Savings Certificates" in

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[101] On this, see chapters six and seven.
[102] "See and Drive This New Dodge: Built to Last a Long, Long Time!," *Maclean's*, November 1, 1941, 7.
[103] "These Spartons Help You "Do Your Bit" Entertaining the Service Boys," *Maclean's*, September 15, 1941, 46.

the bottom corner) and hence directly serve the interests of the consumer and the war effort simultaneously.[104]

Increasingly, advertisements for Victory Bonds and other kinds of war savings (advertisements produced, ironically, without charge by Canada's advertising agencies) began to demand not mere thriftiness from Canadians but outright sacrifice. Probably the most strident such example to date appeared late in November 1941. It quoted Kipling's 1914 poem "For All We Have and Are" (written after the catastrophic Battle of Mons): "No easy hope...shall bring us to our goal / but iron sacrifice / of body, will, and soul." In case anyone missed the point, the copy went on to state:

> All the dollars Canadians can spare are not yet in the fight. Some are spending less, but many are not. Many have not yet faced the need for sacrifice – for self-denial...ours is the softest job of all, and yet we are slacking in it.[105]

In 1942, such advertisements, issued by a range of government agencies, would become commonplace. But no prior governmental appeal had so explicitly demanded an end to frivolous consumer spending. "Serve by saving" had been a mild slogan compared to the new one: "*Sacrifice* to buy more War Savings Certificates".

In the face of such pressures, could commercial advertising "carry on"? What some critics had seen as a wasteful business expenditure and a needless cost passed

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[104] "Save Now! More Than Ever before, with Frigidaire," *Maclean's*, March 15, 1941, 7. It is not clear what survey the advertisement is referring to.
[105] "Sacrifice to Buy More War Savings Certificates," *Maclean's*, November 15, 1941, 3.

onto the consumer in peacetime became a threat to national survival in wartime. Even Samuel Stocking of the University of Toronto, a pro-advertising evangelist in the mould of John Kirkwood, proposed that advertising ought to be placed at the government's disposal for the duration of the war.[106] Speaking earlier in the year at the conference of the National Association of Industrial Advertisers, B.K. Sandwell said that, in wartime, advertising could only justify its continued existence if it somehow advanced the war effort.[107] It was about to get its chance. December 1st 1941 was Monday, the day the price ceiling came down. Sunday was December 7th – Pearl Harbor. "Business as usual" was over.

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[106] "Thinks Advertising Defenses Are Weak," *Marketing*, June 5, 1941, 12.
[107] "Advertising Justified by Its Usefulness," *Marketing*, November 10, 1941, 3.

Chapter Three
Business as Unusual: Securing a Place for Wartime Advertising

Our readers will require no argument to convince them of the unpardonable waste that continued advertising is causing, waste that compares so strikingly with the sacrifices being made by most of the citizens of this land.

"Advertising and the War", *Canadian Forum*, October 1942[1]

They, more than any others tell us how to live, how to get from life its supreme possibilities, how to attain the altitudes of our dreaming. Our national advertisers are not just profit-chasers and fortune hunters; they are, in all truth, civilizers.

John Kenneth Kirkwood, *Marketing*, December 1942[2]

'Business as usual' was over. Or was it? "We need something better and more vigorous than that," Paul Garrett, director of marketing for General Motors, said to a Canadian audience in late 1941. "We need business as unusual."[3] By December 1941 it was obvious that business was going to be unusual regardless of what adworkers wanted or needed. Not only had the price ceiling descended — accompanied by dread warnings from the WPTB about the calamity that would follow its failure — but rationing, it seemed, could not be far off.[4] From the perspective of Canadian consumers, the most significant change was the suspension, for the remainder of the war, of the production of durables such as radios, toasters, vacuum cleaners, stoves,

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[1] "Advertising and the War," *The Canadian Forum*, October 1942, 218.
[2] "Kirkwood Speaking," *Marketing*, December 15, 1942, 15.
[3] "Seven Sound Reasons for Maintained Advertising in a Seller's Market," *Marketing*, October 25, 1941, 8.
[4] For predictions on the imminence of rationing, see, for example: "Backstage at Ottawa," *Maclean's*, January 15, 1942, 11, 37.

refrigerators, and above all passenger cars. Since the Great War these things had become an indispensable part of life for millions of Canadians. Suddenly the appliance-department shelves in Eaton's, Simpson's, and the Hudson's Bay Company were empty, and strict regulations governed the sale of the few remaining passenger cars. In the wake of these changes, commercial advertising linage in national magazines began to drop. In March 1940, automotive advertising alone had accounted for a third of the advertising linage in *Maclean's*. In March 1942 there was none.

It seemed like a crisis to Canada's adworkers. In September 1939 they had taken up the mantle of "business as usual" with evangelical zeal, believing that the key to victory lay in economic prosperity, just as they believed that free enterprise, with advertising as its herald, had been the key to the nation's economic and cultural development since Confederation. But grandiloquent rhetoric about advertising's role in national progress aside, everyone in the industry knew that advertising's real job was to move merchandise. So what would happen if there were no merchandise to move? What place for advertising then? No longer could the industry's leaders answer this question with the steady confidence that they had exhibited at the beginning of the war. "Our agency goes into 1942 with its automobile advertising, silk stocking advertising, (and) partial payment advertising down to the irreducible minimum," said an anonymous adworker to *Marketing* in January, responding to a survey that found that only one advertiser in nine planned to increase their advertising budgets in

1942, compared to one-quarter who planned to reduce them.[5] "I for one would hesitate even to hazard a guess as to what is going to happen to advertising in 1942," another adworker remarked. "Frankly, I am very much afraid."[6] Such fears were only compounded by rumors that the government intended to severely regulate or even order a stop to commercial advertising altogether.[7] *Saturday Night's* P.A. Richards put the matter bluntly: "The government thinks there is too much advertising being done, and it intends to curtail it."[8]

A few free-market ideologues remained unflappable, however, believing that if the Depression had demonstrated anything it was that opportunity attended upheaval for professionals savvy enough to take advantage of it. John Kirkwood, for instance, quoted approvingly from an advertisement that took umbrage with pessimists who pitied the 1942 New Year's babies: "Why should you feel sorry for that kid? Because he was born into a world that seems to be tumbling about his head? That's a lot of nonsense...that kid is born into the greatest opportunity a fresh crop of humans ever faced!"[9] Later that year, Maurice Brown of the Coldcaught-Brown

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[5] "Many Uncertain Factors Becloud Advertising Outlook for New Year," *Marketing*, January 3 1942, 2. The poll found that 23.3 percent planned reduced expenditures versus 11.6 percent planning increased spending. 16.6% were undecided, and the remainder planned to maintain their 1941 expenditures.
[6] "Most Agencies Agree Advertising Will Continue as Normal in New Year," *Marketing*, January 3 1942, 6. The actual content of the article entirely undercuts its optimistic title.
[7] "Advertising Expenditure," *Canadian Printer and Publisher*, April 1942. Also: "Many Rumours of Casualties in Advertising Are Unfounded," *Marketing*, March 14 1942, 3.
[8] P.A. Richards, "Editorial," *Saturday Night*, March 1942.
[9] John C. Kirkwood, "Libraries Discourage Book Sales and Make Bookselling Precarious Calling; Kiddies Born in 1942 Are Lucky," *Marketing*, January 31 1942, 19.

Agency echoed Kirkwood's optimistic appraisal of the situation. Speaking at a conference of the Canadian Association of Advertisers, he mused:

> It is among the mass of people where a great morale-building job needs to be done, and every day makes this urgently more necessary. Thousands upon thousands of Canadians are now drawing, what by comparison with past earnings is "big money", and inasmuch as the tax burden does not yet rest heavily upon them, the temptation is to spend freely.[10]

While such assessments were unusual in an industry that was for the most part wrestling with unease and uncertainty throughout1942, Kirkwood and Brown's optimism was not entirely misplaced. Consumers really did have more money than ever to spend; it was simply a question of getting them to spend it on something. In this regard, the experience of radio advertisers proved to be instructive. Consumer durables had seldom been advertised on the radio (radio advertisers assumed that consumers would not buy durables that they could not actually see) so broadcasters barely perceived their loss. Instead, they focused on those soft goods and semi-durables whose production was not seriously effected by the war: foodstuffs, drugs, tobacco, soap, and household cleaning products. In early 1942, radio advertising revenues were higher than they had ever been.[11] Moreover, as Glen Bannerman, President of the Canadian Association of Broadcasters, observed in February 1942, radio advertisers had a new and wealthy client: the Canadian government, which had at last "recognized (radio) as an advertising medium worthy of being paid for its

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[10] Maurice Brown, "Challenge to Canadian Advertising," *Canadian Printer and Publisher*, December 1942, 24.

[11] "Radio Advertising at All-Time High," *Marketing*, January 17 1942, 10.

services along with other media." Indeed, Bannerman observed, "prior to 1941 practically no Government advertising campaign took broadcasting into consideration, now practically no Government advertising campaign is planned *without* taking broadcasting into consideration"[12] Print adworkers, too, found that the government had become an important new client, and under the circumstances not even free market evangelists such John Kirkwood objected to federal make-work programs of that kind.

But if the circumstances did not foreclose all hope, it was nonetheless evident to every adworker that the stock answers from 1939 to questions about the role of advertising in wartime were no longer tenable — at least not as they were originally presented. This was a very different economy, mobilizing for war on a gigantic scale, and the government was insisting in the most emphatic ways that consumer spending must be curtailed in favour of war savings. Already the cost of the war had exceeded almost everyone's expectations. In 1941, military expenditure totaled $1.3 billion, almost forty times what it had been in 1938. In 1942 it would be twice that — more money than had been spent on the armed forces in all the years since Confederation put together.[13] Modern war was staggeringly expensive, and no one could predict what further sacrifices the government might compel from Canadians to pay for it.

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[12] "Marked Growth in Radio Advertising Reported at C.A.B. Annual Convention," *Marketing*, February 14 1942, 6.

[13] For 1941 and 1942 military expenditure, see: Stacey, *Arms, Men, and Governments*, 532. For pre-war military expenditures, see: *Historical Statistics of Canada*, Series G26-44.

The government's increasingly strident and even accusatory propaganda, however, provided at least some indication. In 1940 and for most of 1941 the WPTB and other agencies had been content with such comparatively placid slogans as "serve by saving". Suddenly in 1942 they began accusing spendthrift consumers of outright treason. In July, for instance, the National War Finance Committee placed an advertisement (Figure 3.1, next page) in *Maclean's*, *National Home Monthly*, and several other magazines, depicting the disembodied visage of Adolf Hitler whispering into the ear of a woman about to open her purse. "Go on," he says, "spend it. What difference will it make?" "Canadians," the ad copy goes on:

> the time has come when every nickel, dime, or quarter you spend needlessly is money spent in the cause of our enemies! Now, more than any time since this war began, national THRIFT is essential....from now on, resolve that needless spending is out. [14]

A famous American propaganda poster of the same era depicted Hitler riding in the passenger seat of a sedan under the tagline, "When you drive alone, you drive with Hitler." Now Ottawa had a parallel message: when you go shopping, you go shopping with Hitler. It was a hard-line adopted in the face of retail sales that continued to grow, albeit at a reduced pace compared to the boom of 1940 and 1941. In May 1942, retail sales were nearly 35 percent higher than they had been in the corresponding month two years earlier.[15]

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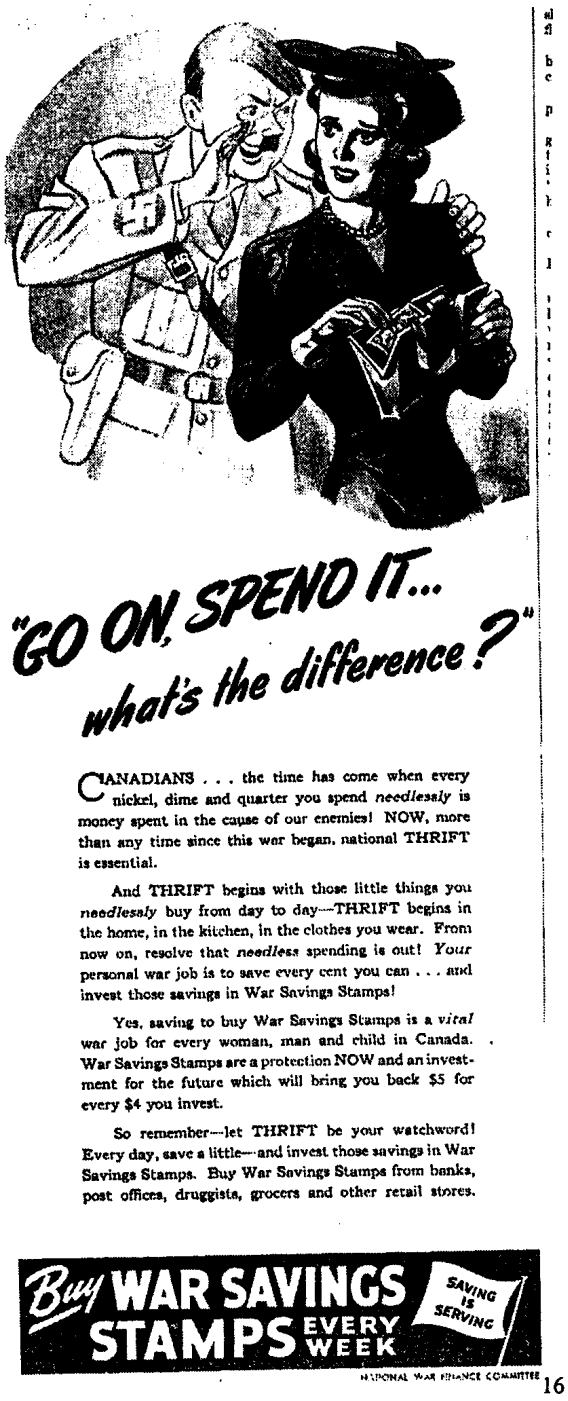
[14] "Go on Spend It...What's the Difference?" *Maclean's*, July 1, 1942, 28.

[15] "Monthly Index of Retail Sales in Canada 1929-1942," (Ottawa: Dominion Bureau of Statistics, 1943), 4.



[16]

Figure 3.1 Government propaganda urged Canadians to plough their earnings into War Savings Bonds and Stamps, and they did. But retail spending continued to increase, even in spite of shortages and rationing. With the return of full employment, most Canadians had enough money to spend and save at the same time.

[16] "Go on Spend It...What's the Difference?." (Advertisement) *Maclean's* July 1st, 1942, 28.

The Hitler advertisement was one of the government's better anti-consumerist messages, despite the illustration's rather boyish looking Fuhrer, and it ran in magazines and newspapers throughout the summer of 1942. But it was the advertisement's first appearance in *Maclean's* that rather comically underscored the tension between the government position — "national thrift is essential" — and the reality of a consumer economy that had, in terms of the number of dollars actually being spent, reached a level unprecedented in Canadian history: coincidentally, on the same page as the "Hitler ad", were two other advertisements. One was for "Koneray" brand pleated skirts, imported from Woolrich, England (despite the U-Boat peril), and the other for built-to-order cottages for the summer vacation season.

We do not know what *Maclean's* readers thought about the juxtaposition of advertisements for such obviously non-essential commodities with propaganda accusing frivolous consumers of aiding Hitler, but the community of adworkers certainly was aware that contradictions such as these were potentially very embarrassing. The fear of accusations of unpatriotic wastefulness was palpable throughout the trade press. "After the war," a typical warning in *Canadian Advertising* read, "when pent-up emotions are released, the cry 'profiteering' will again be raised, and business will be called upon to defend itself against unjustified

accusations."[17] Confronted at the end of 1941 by a government whose position was that "business as usual" was over and that needless consumerism was the equivalent of sabotage, adworkers were pressured to find new ways to justify the continued existence of commercial advertising. Finding a way to negotiate the narrow channel between legitimate non-military business activity and what advertising's critics called unpatriotic selfishness would preoccupy adworkers for the remainder of the war.

While commercial and corporate advertising had offered little comment on the war in its first year and had only just started to in its second, war-themed advertising was commonplace by 1942. In the last three years of the war hardly any national advertisement failed to refer to the war in some way. Some commentators noted that a perceptible change in ad copy had begun almost immediately after the price ceiling came down in December 1941. "Ad writers live in a topsy-turvy world," a writer for *Business Week* mused in January 1942. "So much has the world played havoc with the laws of time and space that copywriters now turn out such eye-arresters as '10 Ways to Avoid Buying New Tires' or 'If Your Electric Washer Will Do, Don't Buy Our New Model.'"[18] The editors of *Marketing* envisioned "thirty ways" adworkers might rescue their industry. Some of these were familiar from the early years of the war ("improve and maintain morale") but others were new, reflecting the rapidly changing circumstances. Advertising could, for instance, "explain shortages in

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[17] "Where Will Your Business Stand after the War?," *Canadian Advertising*, First Quarter 1941, 137.
[18] Quoted in "Canadian Advertisers Spend Freely Urging People to Avoid Buying," *Marketing*, January 31, 1942, 12.

stores" and, as the *Business Week* writer had observed, sometimes even "ask consumers not to buy" – at least not now.[19]

One indication of the change in marketing strategies can be found in the visual appearance of Canadian advertisements after late 1941. Advertisements emanating from American agencies could be and frequently were artful and elegant. The back page of *Maclean's,* for instance, was reserved for almost the entire period from 1942 to 1945 for a succession of striking, full-colour *Coca-Cola* advertisements, drawn in the style of Norman Rockwell, depicting Allied soldiers sharing bottles of Coke with the locals on fighting fronts around the world. The tradition of producing visually arresting advertising was deeply rooted in the creative culture of the leading American agencies, despite a tendency towards what Roland Marchand describes as less dignified and more straightforwardly blunt during the Great Depression.[20] But Canadian advertising had always been more starkly utilitarian than American, and never more so than during the war itself. In part this reflected naturally occurring stylistic differences between Canadian and American adworkers (the lack of creativity that so troubled Harold Innis and other critics), but it also reflected a desire within Canada's relatively small advertising profession, cognizant of the threat of regulation, to "cut the frills" at a time when the government was insisting that everyone had to

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[19] "30 Kings of Wartime Advertising Being Used in Canadian Campaigns," *Marketing,* April 25 1942, 18.

[20] See Roland Marchand's chapter on advertising during the Great Depression in *Advertising the American Dream,* 285-333.

do so. From an esthetic standpoint, war-themed commercial advertising produced by Canadian ad agencies tended to be bluntly serviceable and not much more.

But it was commercial advertising nonetheless and, in its own way, it was ingeniously conceived. Adworkers converted a myriad of wartime anxieties into rationales for consumption. They easily co-opted the government's rhetoric of conservation, thrift, and self-sacrifice while tacitly arguing that spending rather than saving was the essence of home front service, employing patriotic language even though their underlying message expressly contradicted the propaganda line. Beneath commercial advertising's patriotic veneer the real agenda was what it had always been: to move merchandise. Beginning in 1942, one overarching concept, never expressly stated, not even in the remarkably frank articles on wartime marketing published in the trade press, underpinned virtually all wartime commercial advertisements. In hundreds of advertisements with innumerable variations, advertisers claimed that buying their product was neither wastefulness nor extravagance: it was a contribution — perhaps even a sacrifice — that consumers could make on behalf of the war effort. While some advertising executives bridled at the thought of using the war as an argument for, rather than against sales ("In the Garbage Pail Lies the Future of Nation," was one agency president's derisive dismissal

of such ads), it nonetheless became the mainstay of wartime commercial advertising techniques.[21]

Since the Great War, annual Remembrance Day ceremonies and the thousands of war memorials that had been erected in every city and town in Canada had imbued Canadians with a profound sense of the inherent nobility of sacrifice, and a belief that the willingness to sacrifice was the measure of loyalty to one's country. In the Second World War, recruiting posters, Victory Bond advertisements, and all manner of patriotic propaganda increasingly employed the discourse of sacrifice, emphasizing that in modern war the home front operated symbiotically with the fighting front. Victory was impossible, the argument went, if Canadians at home did not support the boys overseas through the most strenuous effort and self-sacrifice. While commercial advertisers had very different ideas about what constituted "sacrifice", they did not deny the centrality of the home front in the great struggle against Hitlerism. On the contrary, advertising depicted a home front where one's personal failings had consequences that extended to the front lines. A commonplace ailment such as irregularity might, in peacetime, affect the quality of a man's work, with consequences for himself or his family, but in wartime it did all that and hindered munitions production, too. Similarly, carelessness about her appearance might spoil a young woman's opportunity for romance, but in wartime it undermined the morale of

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[21] "Objects to Dragging in the War in Advertising Copy," *Canadian Printer and Publisher*, May 1942, 40.

soldiers. Since curtailing consumer spending was one plank in the WPTB's anti-inflation program, and given the chorus of critics alleging that Canadians did not know the meaning of sacrifice and were not really "in the fight", arguing that their particular product was an exception to the general rule of conservation, thrift, and self-denial was the only strategy open to advertisers hoping to evade accusations of unpatriotic wastefulness. If the WPTB urged Canadians to buy only necessities, advertisers sought to transform virtually every commodity into one.

Was this, then, what Paul Garrett had envisioned when called for "business as unusual"? Perhaps not, but it was indicative of a significant new initiative on the part of Canadian adworkers. For years Canadian advertising agents had followed in the wake of American innovation. Now, having wrestled with the problems of war for nearly two years, they were the innovators, and American adworkers began to look north for examples to follow. A prominent American trade paper, *Editor and Publisher*, noted the "two year start" that Canadian advertising agencies had over their American counterparts in "the techniques of war advertising."[22] Similarly, an editorial in the *Detroit Free Press* praised the Canadian advertising industry for its fine example of "splendid patriotism". "With the war on it is well for Americans to learn from the experience of our neighbor Canada which has been in the struggle for two and a half years." Canadian advertisers, the editors wrote, "are serving their nation and they are keeping their people informed of their existence with a long

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[22] "*Editor & Publisher* Surveys Canadian War Advertising," *Marketing*, February 28 1942, 11.

vision to the days of peace to come."[23] The Canadian advertising industry's great innovation in late 1941 and early 1942 was the realization that the war could be an argument, not for conservation and thrift, but for actual sales, and not only in the utilitarian form of gifts for soldiers.

Presenting what the editors of the *Detroit Free Press* had called the "long vision to the days of peace to come" was one of the goals of corporate institutional advertising. Institutional advertising aimed to generate the public's goodwill and to promote brand-name recognition. It was not new when the war erupted in September 1939, but it remained something of a novelty, and institutional campaigns mounted by a given firm usually generated comment and analysis in the trade papers.[24] Canadian adworkers readily apprehended the significance of institutional advertising in wartime, especially for firms wholly converted to war production, and an immense number of articles lauding its virtues appeared in the trade papers beginning in 1941. In the eyes of the industry, advertising was already a form of friendly persuasion, a kind of benevolent propaganda, and adworkers prided themselves on possessing unique insight into the motivations of a typical Canadian consumer. Institutional advertising, they argued, could rescue the reputations of firms still suffering from the pent-up ill-will towards capitalism many Canadians felt after the Depression.

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[23] Quoted in: "Advertising Is Sound Business and Indispensable to Victory," *Marketing*, April 18 1942, 6.

[24] For example: "Publishers Foresee Many Advertisers Planning to Run Institutional Copy," *Marketing*, January 3 1942, 12.

Moreover, well-placed institutional campaigns could preempt accusations of war-profiteering that were sure to emerge from certain quarters, just as they had during the Great War.[25] "One could measure the after-the-war standing of brands by their advertising practice now," the editor of *Canadian Advertising* wrote in late 1942.[26] But institutional advertising did more than generate and maintain goodwill: taken as a whole, it offered Canadians a sustained and coherent argument about why the war was being fought, what the consequences of defeat would be, and what victory would herald. It was, moreover, an argument that often diverged from the one that government propaganda advanced. Where the government depicted a war fought for democratic institutions and the British way of life, institutional advertising stressed the virtues of free enterprise and the boundless progress made possible when the entrepreneurial spirit was given free reign. While many institutional ads reinforced the necessity for further sacrifice, especially in relation to the two sacred causes the government had given onto Canada's consumers — maintaining the price ceiling and buying Victory Bonds — they underscored that such sacrifices were only temporary delays in consumerist gratification.[27]

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[25] See, as examples: Richard P. Dodd, "National Defense and Company Defense," *The Canadian Printer and Publisher*, May 1941, 45. Wellington Jeffers, "Declares Advertising Is a Vital Service," *Canadian Printer and Publisher*, November 1942, 32. and Elton Plant, "Don't Break the Buying Habits of Your Customers," *Canadian Advertising*, Fourth Quarter 1942, 7.

[26] "Plan Your Advertising to Help Win the War," *Canadian Advertising*, Third Quarter 1942, 5.

[27] For a further discussion of institutional advertising in the last three years of the war, see chapter four.

But if the themes, motifs, visual iconography, and justification of peacetime advertising proved relatively easy to transpose into wartime, so too did the arguments of advertising's critics. In particular, critics readily adapted the peacetime argument that advertising promoted extravagance and wastefulness to the circumstances of total war. Moreover, after the annihilation of two Canadian battalions at Hong Kong in December 1941, and a succession of disasters for British arms in the first half of 1942, disasters that many Canadians felt as though they were their own, the commercial exploitation of the war by advertisers seemed unpardonably crass to many commentators. C.D. Watt complained in the *Canadian Forum* that advertisers were with one hand "urging John Canuck to support the war effort, while with the other they are still trying to encourage him to go on a buying spree" and he called on the government to "crack down on this continued pseudo-patriotic advertising".[28] Less than two months after the heroic but ill-fated raid on Dieppe, the editors of the same magazine lamented the "unpardonable waste that continued advertising is causing, waste that compares so strikingly with the sacrifices being made by most of the citizens of this land."[29] By maintaining consumer demand, they claimed, advertising diverted labour and resources to nonessential production, undermined the government's efforts to combat inflation, and generated competition for Victory Bond sales. Along similar lines, a writer in a major Canadian daily went so far as to remark

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[28] C.D. Watt, "The War and Advertising," *Canadian Forum*, May 1942, 47.
[29] "Advertising and the War," 218.

that Canadians had thus far "been spectators of this war...spectators to Britain's agony", a fault he laid at the feet of those "cursed by the spirit of advertising" into wanting to preserve "our way of life" — the consumer way of life — when survival required material sacrifice.[30]

But the most impressive and widely quoted of all attacks on wartime advertising were mounted by an enormously popular and influential American journalist, Dorothy Thompson, whose syndicated column, *On the Record*, was carried by the *Globe and Mail*.[31] Thompson, whom *Time* called "the second most influential woman in America" (Eleanor Roosevelt was first), used her column to fire frequent broadsides at what she derided as a decidedly lackadaisical Allied war effort. As a frequent visitor to Canada and speaker on CBC radio, she often took aim at Mackenzie King's government for its unwillingness to enact conscription for overseas service. In October 1942, Thompson's most vitriolic screed against the consumer culture was excerpted with something like aggravated astonishment throughout the business press. The United Nations, Thompson wrote in her weekly column, are losing the global struggle because a generation of hedonistic mass consumerism has produced citizens incapable of enduring the sacrifices necessary to wage total war. Decades of

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[30] Quoted in: John C. Kirkwood, "'Forget Me Not' Advertising Keeps Consumer True to Absent Product," *Marketing*, November 7 1941, 10. The notion that Canadians were spectators in the war rarely was expressed after Dieppe.

[31] Thompson was the wife of novelist Sinclair Lewis and an enormously popular columnist. Such was the extent of her popularity and influence that Katherine Hepburn played a character based on Thompson in the movie *Woman of the Year* in 1941. An early anti-fascist, Thompson had been expelled from Germany in 1934 after criticizing Hitler and the Nazi regime while serving as Berlin correspondent for *The New York Daily Mail*.

"super-salesmanship," she alleged, had instilled false needs in the buying public by creating fears and social anxieties and then offering solutions to them. A weak-willed citizenry not merely unaccustomed to sacrifice, but unwilling to actually make it, was the entirely predictable outcome, she argued. By contrast, the citizens of the Axis suffered no such afflictions: they were accustomed to deprivation. "The world," Thompson wrote, "is being given a shellacking by Japs who live on a handful of rice and a little fish; by exactly that generation of Germans who were undernourished in their childhood" while only the Russians "who for twenty years have sacrificed consumer goods in order to build a great industry" were seriously defending it. Only by making comparable sacrifices could the Allied powers win the war, and Thompson, like most other critics of advertising, called upon the government to further restrict the consumer economy.[32]

While the government was opposed to needless consumer spending, the public pronouncements of Parliamentarians and government officials gave the advertising industry little sense of whether or not the government was opposed to advertising altogether. In February 1942, an official statement from the WPTB called for "the elimination of extravagant marketing practices", without defining what, precisely, such practices were. In May, Donald Gordon himself went so far as to remark that

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[32] Dorothy Thompson, "War May Be Lost by United Nations Because of High Standard of Living," *Marketing*, October 3, 1942, 6.

"the system of free enterprise is at an end."[33] But in the summer of 1942 Byrne Hope Sanders wrote an article in *Canadian Advertiser* in which she defended the virtues of continued advertising, provided that it served both the purposes of the advertiser and the war effort.[34] In September, John Atkins, the WPTB's administrator for printing and publishing, assured the industry that "normal advertising, when it serves to sell goods or services in reasonable quantities and in a manner consistent with wartime regulations" was permissible and would not be restricted. Moreover, Atkins defended the continued use of institutional advertising. "In a period when war needs have withdrawn so many goods and services from civilian use, advertising may be used by many manufacturers and retailers to maintain the reputation, trade marks, and their assets of goodwill."[35] This did not quell accusations and criticism that emerged from Parliament. While serving on a Commons subcommittee concerning newsprint shortages, Joseph Bradette, a senior Liberal M.P. from the riding of Cochrane (and later Deputy Speaker of the House), expressed his "shock" over such newspaper "extravagances" as double-page advertisements. He suggested that newspapers should be reduced in size — starting with advertising.[36] The industry's reaction to this

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[33] Marketing practices: "Advertisers Befogged by Terminology of Wartime Prices and Trade Board," *Marketing*, February 14 1942, 7. Gordon's remark: "Explains Donald Gordon's Statement 'Competitive System Must Go'," *Bookseller and Stationer*, May 1942, 12.
[34] Byrne Hope Sanders, "What the Women of Canada Expect of Advertising Today," *Canadian Advertising*, Third Quarter 1942, 8-13.
[35] "War Economy: Statement of Advertising Policy by Printing Administrator," *Canadian Printer and Publisher*, October 1942, 31-32.
[36] Wellington Jeffers, "Declares Advertising Is a Vital Service," *Canadian Printer and Publisher*, November 1942, 32.

remark was mild compared to the alarm expressed throughout when in late 1942 Mackenzie King himself declared before the House of Commons: "Advertising is clearly not necessary to promote sales, nor is it justifiable if sales and consumption are to be curtailed." WPTB officials assured the advertising industry that the Prime Minister had been referring only to the advertising of alcoholic beverages (the banning of which was the one serious concession the federal government would make during the war to lingering prohibitionist sentiment) but this was not clear from the context.[37] It was impossible for adworkers to dismiss such talk as mere hyperbole, especially when the government had enacted a slate of highly restrictive tax regulations concerning advertising in the summer of 1942. One way private businesses had sought to minimize, if not actually circumvent, the impact of excess profit taxes was with inflated advertising expenditures, since this would result in higher operating expenses and hence lower profits. But the Revenue Department had anticipated the use of such a loophole, and disallowed "abnormal" advertising budgets for tax purposes.[38] Advertisers protested that wartime circumstances virtually mandated higher expenditures, noting that, for instance, gasoline rationing had virtually eliminated the traveling salesman, forcing his replacement with print advertising. Moreover, they protested that American advertising continued to flow,

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[37] "Prime Minister Clarifies Advertising Reference," *Marketing*, January 2, 1943, 1.
[38] "Advertising Regulations Clarified," *Canadian Printer and Publisher*, August 1942, 19-20. Abnormal was defined as more than 10 percent above the amount spent annually in the period from 1936 to 1939.

without hindrance, into Canada, giving unfavorable advantages to certain brands, but the Income Tax Division of the Department was unmoved.[39]

Where might such regulations end? Morgan Eastman, a Toronto advertising executive, wondered if such regulations were "inspired by the breath of the big bad wolf — personified by the C.C.F. — hot on the neck of our government."[40] Throughout 1942 and 1943, the trade papers carried frequent articles dealing with the plight of advertisers overseas, looking, perhaps, for a hint of dread things to come if the government decided, despite apparent promises from the WPTB, to put severe restrictions on the publication of advertising. In the United Kingdom, and in most other Commonwealth nations, advertisers operated under very serious constraints. In Great Britain, very severe shortages of goods had the twofold effect of reducing consumer expenditure while simultaneously creating a seller's market where surviving retailers felt little compulsion to advertise: everything they had sold anyway. In addition, paper shortages resulted in regulations on the size and content in advertising. A writer in the British trade journal *Advertiser's Weekly* noted that British advertisers were compelled to make do with a half-column where they "used to spread over whole triple or double columns."[41] Only half of British advertising

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[39] "Advertising Tax Ruling," *Canadian Advertising*, 3rd Quarter 1942, 7, 15.
[40] Quoted in "Advertising and the War," *Canadian Forum*, October 1942, 218.
[41] "British Advertising "Dehydrated" By Smaller Space and Higher Rates," *Marketing*, August 14 1943, 12.

agencies survived the war.[42] In Australia, advertising linage declined 50% in 1941.[43] Shortfalls in the importation of American newspaper pulp resulted in severe cuts in the size of Australian publications. Only small and simple advertisements were permitted, and the printing of show cards was banned outright. Further regulations barred copywriters from employing words such as "glamorous", "exciting", "stimulating" and phrases such as "a must"; illustrators were forbidden from depicting consumers enjoying a product, and all advertisements were required to give consumers advice on how to prolong the life of their product. Commercial poster advertising had to be unillustrated altogether.[44]

But regulations of this kind never materialized in Canada. The closing of tax loopholes in 1942 marked the most intrusive government regulations imposed on the Canadian industry. While the concerns of the advertising industry were by no means unjustified — in several instances the government had reversed policies in response to unforeseen events — it is nonetheless the case that the records of the WPTB, the one agency that might have taken action to regulate, restrict, or even ban advertising outright, reveal no indication that any serious discussion about the possibility ever took place. It must be recalled that many of the Board's directors and administrators were drawn from the very industries that they were given authority over. While they

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[42] Chas W. Stokes, "Less Than Half of British Agencies Have Survived Ravages of Wartime," *Marketing*, August 20 1944, 10.
[43] "Retail Advertising Drops 50% in Australia," *Marketing*, October 25 1941, 15.
[44] "Advertising in Australia," *Men's Wear Merchandising*, September 1 1943, 34-35. Also "Australian Advertising in the War as Seen by Sydney Agency Principal," *Marketing*, May 2 1942, 13.

endured accusations from the likes of John Kenneth Kirkwood and the editors of the relentlessly critical *Toronto Telegram* that they were out to stifle free enterprise, the allegations from the C.C.F. — that they were, in fact, generally pro-business in their decision making — was much closer to the truth. Whenever possible, they attempted to minimize the impact of necessary regulations on the very industries that had employed them in the past and would again after the war was over. Byrne Hope Sanders, for instance, having formerly been editor of a magazine dependent on advertising for three-quarters of its revenue, could hardly be expected to support an outright ban on advertising. Several other administrators were equally resistant to any effort to curtail advertising. John Atkins, administrator for publishing and printing, acknowledged in an internal memorandum that any mandatory reduction in advertising would threaten the public service performed by the free press.[45]

Granted, Donald Gordon did instruct the Board's Division of Simplified Practice, whose job it was to seek out and implement economies in the manufacturing, marketing, and selling of commodities, to formulate a policy on the role of wartime advertising. In the event, the policy that it articulated is one that might easily have appeared in any mid-war issue of *Canadian Advertiser* or *Markerting*. It began by acknowledging that all of the nation's resources must be

[45] LAC, RG 64 Vol. 1443, Consumer Branch Records, John Atkins to R.C. Bertram (Division of Simplified Practice), April 27, 1942.

directed to the task of waging war, but observed that advertising could be "harmonized with the war effort." Government and industry, the policy said,

> are pressing advertising into service as an effective method of informing and convincing the public that in a democracy greater efforts and sacrifices must be volunteered than totalitarian states can impose by dictatorship. In normal times the persuasive influence of advertising reflects the freedom of choice of a free people, and even in the present crisis war objectives and much war financing have been made possible by appeals to the patriotism and thrift of the people of Canada. Modern advertising accomplishes the task performed in earlier centuries by royal proclamations. It explains the meaning of the necessity of new laws, taxes, loans, rationing plans, and other governmental measures. Canadians are showing themselves willing to accept and obey all such demands on their loyalty, but frequent reminders and admonitions are often necessary to overcome unawareness of urgent needs.[46]

As we have seen, such pronouncements were of small reassurance to many adworkers, who knew that more serious restrictions might be no more than a further Allied defeat away. It seems probable that if the war had gone worse in late 1942 and early 1943 than it actually did the government might have demanded greater sacrifices. But a succession of Allied victories in the year that followed — at Midway, El Alamein, Stalingrad, and on the North Atlantic when the German navy withdrew its U-Boats in May 1943, marked an extraordinary reversal in the fortunes of war.

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[46] LAC, RG 64 Vol. 1443, Consumer Branch Records, "The Place of Advertising in a War Economy" n.d. Given the context it seems probable that this policy was enacted in May or June of 1942.

After further victories in the summer of 1943, some optimistic commentators in Canada began to predict that the war was entering its terminal phase.[47]

Consequently, discussion about the role of advertising in wartime disappeared from the trade papers in 1943, and critics turned their attention to other matters. Perhaps it seemed pointless to argue about the role of advertising in a war that might soon be over. Instead, the dispute turned to the question of what role advertising would have in reconversion and peacetime. Moreover, the gloom that had gripped so many adworkers in early 1942 gradually gave way to cautious optimism and then something like jubilation as it became evident that the state of the consumer economy was not so bad as to imperil the existence of advertising, as they had feared. Not only did severe government regulations not materialize, but consumer spending continued to grow despite everything. Out of sight of the general reading public, advertisements in the trade papers were often remarkably forthright about the favourable economic circumstances. As early 1944 advertisement (Figure 3.2, below) for the *National Home Journal* put it: "To Market! To Market! With Money to Spend!":

> The war has created thousands of new prospects for advertisers. Women have assumed new responsibilities, filled new jobs, and have gained new buying power. Women look for advice and guidance on the biggest, toughest buying job of this or any other generation. Start selling to this powerful woman market now, now while they are more receptive than ever before.[48]

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[47] Predictions that the war would end in 1944 became commonplace in 1943. Probably the worst offender of overly optimistic military prognostication was *Maclean's* Douglas Reed, who in 1943 rarely let a column go by without predicting that the war would end within a year.
[48] "To Market! To Market!," *Marketing*, January 8 1944, 2.

TO MARKET! TO MARKET! WITH MONEY TO SPEND

New Prospects have been Created . . .

The war has created thousands of new prospects for the advertiser. Women have assumed new responsibilities, filled new jobs and have gained new buying power. Start selling this powerful woman market *now*. Now while they are more receptive than ever before.

The CANADIAN HOME JOURNAL is a woman's magazine that talks a woman's language. Its recommendations are believed in and acted upon. Women look to the CANADIAN HOME JOURNAL for advice and guidance on the biggest, toughest, buying job of this or any other generation. Any product sold to women will sell more readily when they are in a mood to buy. The CANADIAN HOME JOURNAL puts them in that buying mood.

Mr. Advertiser—have your product represented whenever possible in the pages of the CANADIAN HOME JOURNAL. It's a sure way to see that your message is constantly before the eyes of thousands of Canadian women in all parts of the country. You'll reach the homes with extra purchasing power.

★ "First"—Woman's Magazine by Advertisers' choice for 15 successive years.

Canadian HOME JOURNAL

What they are reading in the January Journal

"What kind of a world are we fighting for?" Eleanor Roosevelt leaves us with an inspiring message in this exclusive interview . . . On page 16 Aileen Adams talks to "Teens and Twenties" . . . "Will women go back to the kitchen?" A thought-provoking article speculating on peacetime readjustment . . . Katherine Caldwell Bayley, our Home Bureau Director, has advice for "Health-wise" shoppers, with a two-page spread illustrated in appetizing full color! . . . In "Headlined for Smartness" the Modern Home Department reveals decorative possibilities for the bedroom . . . our beauty editor explains a new hair-do "Muslin", inspired by

Figure 3.2 Not the message we associate with the home front, but manufacturers, retailers, and advertisers had to negotiate the tension between the official line ("serve by saving") and the reality of consumers spending more money than ever before.

The decline in advertising linage that so alarmed adworkers at the beginning of 1942 proved to be nothing more than a temporary downturn, a period of adjustment following the end of consumer durable production. New kinds of advertisements, new customers, and institutional advertising campaigns revived advertising linage by the end of 1942. In *Maclean's,* for instance, advertising linage not only recovered in 1943, it significantly exceeded the levels of the first two years of the war:

Table 3.1 Advertising Linage in *Maclean's* 1938-1945 (in column inches)[49]

Year	Total Magazine Linage	National Advertising	Government and Military Ads	Ads as % of Total Linage	Ratio National to Gov't Ads
1938	73,646	27,571	292	37%	94:1
1939	71,766	27,935	162	39%	172:1
1940	74,746	31,005	135	41%	230:1
1941	74,736	31,775	432	43%	74:1
1942	68,796	26,034	1458	39%	18:1
1943	76,248	32,548	1565	43%	21:1
1944	78,540	35,159	2067	44%	17:1
1945	81,648	37,344	1474	46%	25:1

[49]Data on advertising linage for *Maclean's* was not readily available. I therefore undertook to measure it for myself. Published bi-weekly, *Maclean's* was the mostly widely circulated national magazine in Canada during the Second World War and seemed a fit subject for this analysis. A full-page in *Maclean's* occupied 54 column inches, a half-page 27.5 column inches, and so forth.

As the table demonstrates, apart from the temporary decline in 1942, total national advertising linage in *Maclean's* steadily increased until 1945. Not surprisingly, advertising as a percentage of total magazine linage followed a similar pattern. Over the course of the war, *Maclean's* sold a progressively greater volume of advertising space and did so despite the loss of most automotive and automotive-related advertising. Moreover, the results for *Maclean's* are consistent with the general picture of national advertising reported in *Marketing, Canadian Advertiser,* and other trade publications.[50]

In part, advertising's recovery owed itself to the explosion in the number of institutional advertisements published beginning in late 1941. In *Maclean's,* for instance, institutional advertising linage in 1943 was 700 percent greater than in 1940. However, it is not the case that institutional advertising by itself somehow "saved" the advertising and publishing business in wartime Canada, as Frank Fox claims that it did in the United States.[51] As the table below demonstrates, commercial advertising continued to constitute the overwhelming majority of advertising that appeared in *Maclean's* during the war:

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[50] By contrast, a study in *Canadian Advertising* concluded that advertising linage in Britain's leading eight dailies was halved between July 1940 and December 1941. See *Canadian Advertising,* First Quarter, 1942, 16.

[51] See Frank W. Fox, *Madison Avenue Goes to War,* chapter four.

Table 3.2. National Advertising Linage by Category In *Maclean's*, 1939-1945
(in column inches)[52]

Date	Commercial Advertising	Institutional Advertising
1939	27,010	837
1940	29,659	986
1941	30,695	1080
1942	22,793	3241
1943	25,507	7041
1944	27,030	8129
1945	30,521	6823

At no point did institutional advertising account for more than one-quarter of the magazine's total advertising linage. Another striking fact is that while the government of Canada became one of the biggest single advertisers, advertisements placed by government agencies never constituted more than 5 percent of the total advertising linage in *Maclean's*. In short, readers of *Maclean's* were subjected to as many purely commercial impressions at the peak of the war effort in 1944 as they had been in 1939. Given the surprising persistence of commercial advertising and the enormous increase in goodwill advertising, it is clear that from an advertising standpoint, *Maclean's*, and probably most other national magazines, had never had it

[52] Sometimes the distinction between an institutional ad and commercial one was rather subjective, especially late in the war when advertisers began to make specific reference to the future availability of certain goods. For the purposes of this survey, advertisements were defined as institutional if they did not serve an immediate commercial purpose.

so good. This is not to suggest that the same was true for the Canadian consumer, but the persistence of so much national advertising does suggest, at the very least, that the war did very little to curtail the willingness of advertisers to market themselves and those goods that were still available.

The continuation of commercial advertising should not be construed as evidence that adworkers did not want to "do their bit", only that, as apostles of free enterprise, they were not fully in accord with the government's position on how Canadians at home could best serve a nation at war. Modern readers may find the commercial exploitation of the war distasteful, as did many of wartime advertising's contemporary critics. But it would be wrong to think that advertisers and adworkers were the willful saboteurs that their critics accused them of being, even if they quite consciously sought ways to imbue personal consumption with the moral character of the great crusade against Nazism. Adworkers saw no necessary conflict between their self-interest as businessmen and the interests of Canadians as a whole, nor indeed between moderate consumption and the war effort. On the contrary, they had always maintained that the national interest and self-interest were functionally connected. The businessman who pursued personal gain elevated his fellow Canadians by the wealth he generated and, perhaps more importantly, through the example of entrepreneurship and industriousness that he provided. When confronted with accusations of "unpardonable waste", the adworker could point to the

extraordinary efforts of Canada's businesses. Was it not free enterprise, after all, that was producing the implements of war, without which victory was impossible?

In this sense, the principle on which the "business as usual" ethos had been built — that a free society drew its strength from free enterprise — had not become extinct, it had evolved in order to survive. But just as the peacetime rhetoric that described advertising as "the blesser of mankind" was often belied by the rather mundane concerns of actual ads, so too was the claim that advertisers were waging a parallel war on needless consumption frequently undercut by the advertisements that they actually produced. The advertisements themselves, and how the war circumstances were refracted through the adworker's creative lens, will be the topic of the next chapter.

Chapter Four
Movements, Great and Small[1]: Advertising to Win the War and Secure the Future

As a free people, we possess a 'secret weapon' forever lost to Hitler; a weapon subtle, yet so powerful it is speeding the day of his destruction. That weapon is advertising.

Marketing, June 14th 1941[2]

"Buck up, Bill! There's a war to be won!"
"Two wars, Jack. The big one, and my own private bout with constipation."

Kellogg's *All Bran* advertisement, ca. 1943[3]

Advertising was a big business in wartime Canada, but the community of adworkers that produced it was very small. Most of them plied their trade for small agencies in Toronto and Montreal, imitating their American brethren and imitating each other. Notices in the trade papers and innumerable conferences, luncheons, and award banquets kept them acquainted with one another. They had observed the outbreak of war and the unrelenting expansion of government authority over all aspects of the domestic economy with trepidation. But amidst their fears that the wartime security state might evolve into an anti-business social security state, many adworkers sensed that the moment was alive with opportunities. "Advertising will still be needed to do its accustomed job of promoting individual goods, services, and institutions," Carleton McNaught wrote in *Canadian Printer and Publisher*, "but over and above this it will, I

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[1] I am indebted to Colin Read for suggesting this title.
[2] "Secret Weapon," *Marketing*, June 21, 1941, 23.
[3] "Buck up, Bill!," *Maclean's*, February 15, 1943, 41.

think, be called upon to fill a vitally important role in shaping the ideas of people on all sorts of issues."[4]

Historian Roland Marchand has painstakingly described how American advertising in the 1920s and early 1930s offered readers an assortment of "parables" and "visual clichés" about modern life that became part of the middle class's practical vocabulary of consumer-related symbols.[5] Similarly, wartime advertising in Canada deployed a small number of marketing strategies organized around a handful of stock phrases and images that, over time and through continual repetition, became clichés. Some of these had been transposed from peacetime; others were responses to the particular circumstances of the war itself. A handful had even been employed during the First World War. It was in the symbolic world of advertising clichés, that the manufacturers, sellers, and consumers of goods charted their own course between the government's campaign against needless spending and the realities of a wartime economy where most people had more money to spend than ever before. But advertising's wartime clichés offered consumers much more than rationales for continued consumption. At its most fully elaborated, advertising offered a lucid and, for many Canadians, eminently palatable argument about what the war meant, how it would be won, and what winning would mean for Canadians.

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[4] Carleton McNaught, "Glancing Backward and Ahead at Canadian Advertising," *Canadian Printer and Publisher*, June 1942, 90.

[5] Roland Marchand, *Advertising the American Dream,* chapters seven and eight..

The Misguided Friend: Counselling Patriotic Behaviour in Wartime

One of the most prominent of the wartime clichés, the "misguided friend", had been a central character in advertising since the 1920s. Hundreds of interwar ads offered vignettes about a decent but ill-informed person set straight by a friend, co-worker, or family member already "in the know". In most cases, the misguided friend's problem was among those that had so scandalized the Spanish lady who had toured Canada before the war: constipation, body odour, halitosis, spouses whose affections had lagged, and any of a number of other potentially embarrassing modern problems. [6] Firmly but tactfully offered solutions were advanced from many quarters. Mothers passed old-fashioned wisdom onto modern daughters; daughters demonstrated modern savoir-faire to old-fashioned mothers; wives upbraided their husbands (husbands being the most hapless creatures of all); above all, doctors gave expert counsel on a host of contemporary maladies. There were innumerable variations. But the proffered solution was always a commodity: a brand of soap, a type of toothpaste, a revitalizing tonic, or a time-saving appliance.[7]

The misguided friend reappeared in wartime advertising, but with two noticeable differences. First, commodities were no longer the only solution to their problems. Sometimes, amidst wartime scarcity, solving the misguided friend's

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[6] This is in reference to the Spanish tourist mentioned in Chapter Two.
[7] "Nobody Makes a Pass at Me," *Maclean's*, February 1, 1940, 27.

quandary required moderating, delaying, or even temporarily suspending non-essential personal consumption. Second, wartime had elevated the misguided friend's personal problems to the realm of public concern. Suddenly, such everyday matters as spousal neglect, personal hygiene, health, and nutrition, not properly attended to, threatened to undermine the war effort. Misguided friends usually were depicted as ill-informed rather than intentionally malicious, but if their problems went undiagnosed for too long they threatened to become, however unwittingly, a drain on the war effort or, in more extreme cases, outright shirkers and de facto saboteurs.

Many advertisements, for instance, contrasted the lacklustre job performance of ill-nourished war workers with the energetic performance of the well-fed. In advertising of this kind, the misguided friend figured prominently, always poised to be corrected by some knowing co-worker endowed by adworkers with the most improbable linguistic virtuosity. In one Kellogg's All-Bran advertisement (see Figure 4.1, below) Jack, a machine-tool operator, says to a weary and pained-looking co-worker, "Buck up, Bill! There's a war to be won!". "Two wars, Jack," Bill replies. "The big one, and my own private little bout with constipation." Long hours and the rigors of war-work have caught up to him, Bill explains. "Better do what I did," Jack says, "try getting at the *cause* of your trouble. If you've got the common type of

constipation due to the lack of "bulk"-forming material in the diet, eat Kellogg's All Bran regularly!"[8]

Figure 4.1 "The misguided friend" was a central character in peacetime advertising. In wartime, the problems that ailed misguided consumers became matters of national importance.

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[8] "Buck up, Bill!." *Maclean's* February 15, 1943, 41.

With an eye to the changing demographics of the industrial workforce, Kellogg's also offered a version of the same ad featuring women working on a metal lathe ("Snap out of it Sue, there's planes to be built!").[9] Advertising depicted female war workers as particularly susceptible to a variety of infirmities, including and most particularly the never-quite-defined ravages of "trying days". "I don't want to be an Absentee – but what's a girl to do?" asks a despondent young woman in a Kotex advertisement. "We *know* how much our plant – our country – depends on us, when every minute counts! But how *can* we keep going?" In this instance, Kotex took the role of "knowing friend" onto itself, offering a free booklet entitled *That Day is Here Again,* in order "to aid these workers, and the war effort". Billed as "the answer to an S.O.S. from a war plant nurse" who had noticed female assembly line workers' frequent absences, the booklet offered advice on everything from how to curb cramps to what to do when "the stork's expected." That the advice most assuredly centered on the use of Kotex-brand products was incidental: the advertiser's stated goal was to aid the war effort. The commercial message was submerged beneath an appeal to patriotism, one which concluded — as was typical of so many wartime ads — with a reminder that victory overseas depended upon the exertions made by civilians on the home front: "Each time you stay at home – you keep our boys away from home, longer!"[10]

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[9] "Snap out of It, Sue!," *Maclean's*, March 15, 1943, 15.
[10] "I Don't Want to Be an Absentee," *National Home Monthly*, May 1944, 59.

In some cases, the misguided friend's problem was exposed not by a protagonist in the advertisement but by the omniscient narrator of advertising copy. A 1943 advertisement for Sanforized washable fabrics, for instance, depicted an elderly woman with her arms full of shopping bags (see Figure 4.2). "Saboteur!" is scrawled in bold letters across the image. "It was flannelette Grandma was after," the copy read, "but when the clerk mentioned flannelette was getting scarce, she bought the whole bolt! Grandma didn't *mean* to be a saboteur. But she is...she's a *hoarder.*" In this variation on the cliché, the misguided friend's failings are proffered as an example of unpatriotic behaviour for others to avoid. Only belatedly might readers have noticed that the advertiser was, in fact, selling something. "It's so terribly important to buy wisely," it went on. "In the case of washables, for instance...it's important to get them Sanforized if you can, to avoid waste from shrinkage."[11]

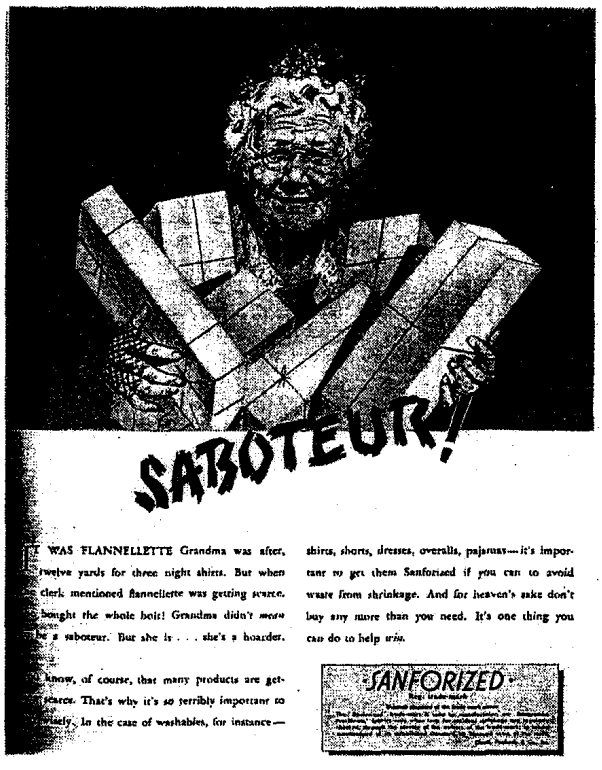

Figure 4.2 Some wartime advertising copy appeared so preoccupied with the public good that it was not always immediately apparent that a product was, in fact, being sold.

[11] "Saboteur! ," *Maclean's*, May 1, 1943, 32.

As this advertisement illustrates, misguided friends suffered from an even wider range of maladies in wartime than in peace. To such afflictions as irregularity and "trying days", the war added hoarding, spendthrift consumerism, flagging morale, and such foibles as rumour-mongering and self-interested labour agitation. But instruction in patriotic behavior – proffered, of course, by the advertiser – could rally misguided friends to the cause. An institutional advertisement by Anaconda Copper and Brass, for instance, dropped the reader into the thick of a lunchtime argument in a factory canteen. "So what if there is a ceiling on wages!" exclaims a man to his co-workers, his right hand clenched in a fist (itself a prominent advertising cliché, as Roland Marchand observed). "Maybe we are working harder, and more hours. Maybe the income tax is tough! But look! My boy's in it. He's fighting! I spent 20 years raising that kid...do you think I'd let him down now for a few dollars?"[12] The implication of such an advertisement, appearing in Canada in a year of nearly 400 strikes (four times as many as in 1939), was not trivial.[13] It offered a warning on the evils of labour agitation (advanced, significantly, by a wage-earner) while simultaneously seeking to align the firm in the public's mind with the virtue of tireless self-sacrifice on behalf of the war effort.

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[12] "So What If There Is a Ceiling on My Wages!" *Maclean's*, January 15, 1943, 22.
[13] *Historical Statistics of Canada*, Series D426-33.

Dozens of similar variations on the cliché of the misguided friend appeared in institutional advertising from 1942 to 1945. Labatt's, for example, barred from advertising alcoholic beverages by federal legislation, deployed misguided friends in a series of advertisements entitled "Ain't it the Truth", in which shirkers, hoarders, and extravagant spenders were set straight. Other misguided friends, however, were cautioned that excessive and unwarranted regulations would undermine home front morale. Labatt's itself advanced this argument in a 1943 advertisement, in which a man getting a shave and haircut expounds on the dangers of resurgent temperance and prohibition forces to his skeptical barber. "It's not prohibition they want this time, but rationing of beer, same as tea and coffee," protests the barber. "Does it make sense to you, when working men have to do with less of two beverages, to force them to have less of a third as well?" the customer replies. "Put that way, it does seem silly," the barber at last concedes, to which the customer adds: "Worse than silly — *dangerous*! It's a threat to morale on the home front."[14]

For their failure to shop wisely and conserve when necessary, for failing to keep fit, buy bonds, and respect the price ceiling, and for a host of other offences, misguided friends were tacitly and sometimes explicitly implicated in undermining the war effort. But knowing friends, and the products and firms they represented, were always present to instruct or, if need be, shame them – and by extension

[14] "A Long Time Learning," *Canadian Homes and Gardens*, January-February 1943, inside cover.

misguided readers – back onto the path of patriotic righteousness through correct consumption.

The Soldier in the Apron: The Consumer Housewife as Combatant

When public figures in Canada talked about "sacrifices" before December 1941, it was often to admonish civilians on the home front for not having made enough, as in the case of Stanley Saunders's *Come on, Canada!* As the war expanded, officials never tired of reminding Canadians at home that the sacrifices requested of them were small compared to those suffered by Britons and the millions of people under Axis occupation. But home front propaganda also made continual use of military metaphors (of which "home front" is, itself, the preeminent one) and often implied a kind of equivalence between the civilian war and the one being waged overseas. Poster propaganda and advertisements for Victory Bonds, for instance, sometimes depicted civilians serving side-by-side with soldiers in uniform, or even portrayed soldiers expressing their gratitude to *civilians* for buying bonds and making other sacrifices. In advertising, an even more explicit mythology of home front sacrifice began to take shape in late 1941 and early 1942. Central to this mythology was the portrayal of civilians and soldiers waging a parallel war against the Axis. While such characters as the misguided friend, the shirker, and the unwitting saboteur were the subject of many ads, an even more prominent cliché of wartime

advertising was the typical civilian: the businessman, factory worker, and, most especially, the housewife, transformed into a soldier through war work, conservation, and patriotic consumerism.

As discussed in chapter one, the enormity of the changes that the war brought about in women's participation in the paid labour force and the anxiety that attended these changes, temporary though they might have been, was the subject of unremitting discussion during the war. By 1943, several hundred thousand women had entered the workforce and thousands more had volunteered for service in the armed forces. But while advertisements sometimes depicted women in uniform or working in munitions plants, they remained far more likely to mount appeals to women in their more traditional roles of homemaker and consumer. In this, some historians have sensed a gender-biased reaction against the rapidity of the societal transformation in gender roles that attended mobilization.[15] Without question, many advertisers invoked traditional images of femininity and domesticity even when portraying women in non-traditional roles, but in their preference for depicting women as housewives rather than as soldiers or industrial workers they were also acknowledging demographic reality.[16] Wartime advertising underscored the WPTB's multitudinous pronouncements that the most important contribution women could make to the war effort was by being sensible consumers and patriotic housewives –

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[15] See M. Susan Bland, "Henrietta the Homemaker and Rosie the Riveter: Images of Women in Advertising in Maclean's Magazine," *Atlantis* 8, No. 2 (1983).
[16] See the discussion in Chapter One.

especially in their role as the "purchasing agent" (as *Chatelaine* put it) for their families. In emphasizing the special role of the homemaker, wartime ads reaffirmed the centrality of traditional notions of womanhood and the sanctity of the home, notions that seemed threatened in wartime both from without and from within. No doubt many sexist assumptions underpinned such beliefs, but in advertising, at least, the role of wife, mother, and homemaker was, in the most reverent words and images, depicted as a vital one to the war effort.

In 1942, Canadian advertisers began on a regular basis to use the language and iconography of war in their depiction of the homemaker's daily life. Advertisement after advertisement symbolically transfigured the wartime housewife into the woman that *Chatelaine,* in an October 1942 advertisement, called "the Soldier in the Apron". "Today's housewife," the copy read,

> is a soldier in action in her own battle dress, playing a sterling role in the fight for freedom. Other women may serve in overalls or in uniform. She serves by sustaining morale. Hers, too, is the task of feeding the nation to win the war. She is studying the nutritional values of available foods. She is learning to stretch the family dollar further, to scrutinize the values in every purchase.[17]

"Soldiers in aprons" appeared in countless advertisements. "What is the most vital war work housewives can do?" asked an advertisement for Metropolitan Life Insurance Company. "Of all the many types of war work in which Canadian women are engaged – one takes first place. Today, more than ever before, they must help

[17] "Tell It to the Soldier in the Apron," *Marketing* 1942, 7.

keep their families healthy. Physical fitness and a high level of national health are vital to Canada's war effort."[18] Similarly, "Everybody has a war job," says a woman in an advertisement for Modess sanitary napkins (Figure 5.4, below). She goes on to explain, "mine is in my house...shopping, mending, cleaning, cooking, looking after my family. To keep them healthy, well-fed, and happy is my contribution to victory" – tasks made easier when certain other worries are eased by the "downy soft comfort of Modess."[19] Snapping a crisp salute, a housewife in a Lysol advertisement implores other women to "enlist for the war on germs!" "The housewife plays a vital part in National Defense. It is as important to protect health in the home as to protect the physical well-being of the army."[20] Yet another advertisement depicted smiling housewives marching with CWACs in a long column down a suburban lane, an equation of homemaker and soldier made possible by the time-saving properties of Old Dutch cleanser.[21]

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[18] "What Is the Most Vital War Work Housewives Can Do?," *Maclean's*, October 15, 1943, 24.
[19] "I Man the Home Front," *Maclean's*, September 1, 1942, 37.
[20] "Enlist for the War on Germs," *Maclean's*, January 15, 1943, 28.
[21] Old Dutch advertisement, reprinted in *Marketing*, October 1942, n.p.

Figure 4.3 and 4.4. Left: Canada's most famous girls, the Dionne Quintuplets, transformed into soldiers by their association with Colgate. Right: the female consumer, manning the home front by virtue of patriotic consumerism.

The Pilot without Wings: Transforming the Civilian Male into Soldier

While mothers and homemakers figured most prominently in wartime advertisements, male civilians in advertising could also be symbolically reconfigured as fighting men. In such instances, however, adworkers were confronted with a significant problem: the necessity of explaining an adult male's failure to be in

uniform. Adult women justifiably could be depicted as homemakers not only because so many actually were, but also because of widely held societal expectations that they should be. By contrast, even though the majority of men of military age did not serve in uniform, adworkers had to contend with very different societal expectations about the role that men were expected to play in the war.[22] Therefore male civilians who appeared in advertisements after 1941 almost invariably were depicted in at least one of three ways. Most commonly, they appeared to be too old for military service. In others, they were fathers (sometimes single fathers) of young children. In the third, they were employed in an essential war industry in some specialized capacity. Obviously these depictions had some correspondence with reality: young, single males without children were far more likely to be in the armed forces than older men with families, or men who worked in war industries. But in advertising, at least, such men were, like housewives, transformed into soldiers of a kind. A co-operative advertisement from Canada's life insurance companies, for instance, introduced the "pilot without wings" – the father of two young children (the implication is that he is a widower). "You may not be required to fly a bomber and risk your life," the copy reads, "age and health may bar you from service on the fighting fronts, but as a family

[22] Here, admittedly, I am assuming that there was a broadly-based social expectation that males of military age should serve in the armed forces. Certainly, there was no shortage of propaganda encouraging them to do so. Having said that, we desperately need studies of gender and gender expectations on the Canadian home front.

man, you are a pilot on the home front. You face unforeseen hazards."[23] In a series of advertisements, Vitalis, a hair-care product for men, featured "men of action": scientists, engineers, plant managers, and construction foremen, doing "their bit" for the war effort from home, aided by the newfound confidence rendered unto them by Vitalis-restored hair.[24]

Figure 4.5. Most Canadian males – including the majority of military age – did not serve in the armed forces. Nonetheless, it was necessary for advertisers to create justifications for depicting men as civilians. In this rather progressive advertisement, a (single?) father is transformed into an airman by the correct choice of life insurance.

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[23] Cooperative life insurance advertisement, appeared in *Marketing*, October 1942, n.p.

[24] See, for instance: "'Men of Action' Use Vitalis," *National Home Monthly*, July 1944, 24.

Male farmers, too, were easily transfigured into soldiers. Dozens of advertisements contained variations of the phrase "food is a weapon of war." Perhaps the most explicit of all such advertisements was a May 1944 "Green Giant" advertisement that found an elderly man and a boy (his grandson, perhaps) sitting on a hilltop, gazing out over a rural vista. "It's pretty here," the old man says, "...just sun and wind and soil and us – and the lazy buzz of an early bee." Only a great artist or composer, he muses, could "paint this picture or put these sounds to music." But then, in the second panel, a new image appears: a long column of soldiers, marching off to war.

> But if you'll shut your eyes a minute, Sonny,
> you'll hear another sort of rhythm
> over some other kind o'fields...it's the
> tramp of marching men over the fields of war.
> They are fighting on those fields, not farming them.
> The seeds they plant are bullets...
> The crops they harvest are victories...
> They are fighting on those fields of war
> to save these fields of peace.[25]

On the surface, this might seem to be pushing the limits of the reader's credulity about the triangular relationship between consumer, product, and war effort. But there was no denying that the government itself regarded foodstuffs as one of

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[25] "War Spring," *Canadian Homes and Gardens*, May 1944, back cover.

Canada's foremost contributions to the Allied war. The government's own recruitment drive for agricultural workers urged Canadians to "join the farm commandos" — itself an effort to equate the civilian agricultural worker with soldiers (and in this case the most famous and romanticized soldiers of the Second World War). It seems probable, then, that little imagination was required for adworkers employed by International Harvester, for example, to cast both the farmer as soldier and his tractor as war machine in a series of war-themed advertisements. Of these, the most explicit depicts a farmer on his tractor under the tag line, "He drives a weapon." The copy goes on:

> In the fields at home, and on foreign battlefields – *farmers* are driving the machines of war. Tens of thousands of farm boys are in the Armed Forces....here at home, in history's greatest battle for FOOD, every farm machine is mobilized. This year every tractor operator drives a weapon in the war for Victory and Freedom[26]

Similarly, very little effort was required to imagine production workers as nearly the equivalent of combatants, especially if they were directly involved in the manufacture of war materiel. Such associations arose repeatedly in institutional advertising campaigns. An Anaconda Copper and Brass advertisement depicted two boys in a schoolyard fight. "My dad is so a soldier – even if he isn't in uniform!" cries one boy,

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[26] "He Drives a Weapon," *Maclean's*, April 1, 1944, 22.

threatening to punch the other. "He was in the last war, but he's too old for this one. But *that doesn't stop him from fighting!*" His father, the boy goes on, is working to "turn out all the copper for tanks, 'n ships, 'n planes, 'n everything." [27]

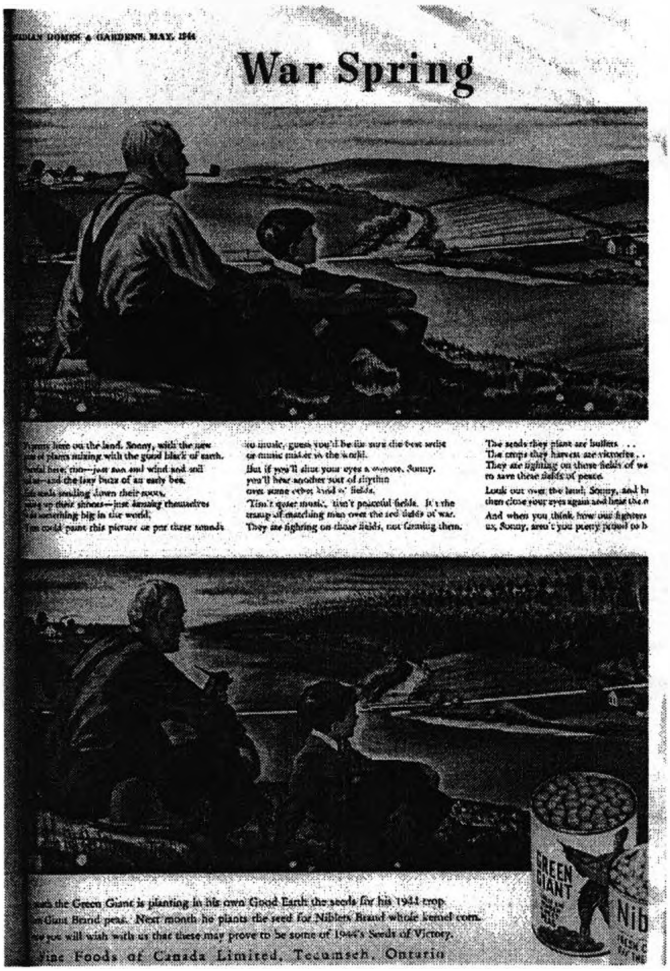

Figure 4.6. Foodstuffs were one of Canada's foremost contributions to the Allied war effort, thus it took comparatively little imagination to turn them into implements of war. Here, a farmer's field is symbolically transformed into a battlefield.

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[27] "'My Dad Is So a Soldier'," *Canadian Home Journal*, February 1943, 1.

Figure 4.7. Anxious to avoid accusations of war profiteering, firms mounted institutional advertising campaigns that emphasized their patriotic service – and the contributions to victory made by their workforce.

"Production soldiers", as one advertisement called them, were defined by their visual clichés. Male workers usually looked rugged and determined, serious but not grim. Usually they appeared just a shade too old for active service. Were they younger, they would surely be in uniform — in some ads they say just that — but,

nose-to-the-grindstone, each is determined to "do his bit". Often, with beleaguered weariness, they look up from their jobs just long enough to deliver the crucial message. International Harvester introduced readers to the "Miracle Man on the Truck Front," a service shop mechanic "whose skill and training and equipment" keeps Canada's trucks "delivering the stuff of victory", while a young girl in an ad for Perfect Circle Piston Rings exclaims to her mechanic father, "Dad, they ought to give you a medal, too!"[28] A miner in a Canadian Industries advertisement fixes the reader with a hard stare. "Our job isn't done 'til victory is won," he says. "Canada's mining men are fighting a battle of production that is helping to tilt the balance in favour of the United Nations."[29]

"Still the Weaker Sex": Advertising Depictions of Women in Non-Traditional Roles

Advertisements depicting women in such non-traditional roles as soldier and war worker, however, employed a variety of "weaker sex" clichés. While the majority of wartime advertisements featuring women portrayed them in such traditional duties as homemaker, mother, and consumer (while acknowledging that the social meaning of these duties had been altered by the war), it is nonetheless true that a significant number of advertisements reflected the changing demographic character of the workforce. Just as additional explication was due for the depiction of

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[28] "Miracle Man on the Truck Front," *Maclean's*, March 1, 1944, 8; "Dad, They Ought to Give You a Medal, Too!," *Canadian Automotive Trade*, January 1945, 3.
[29] CIL advertisement appeared in *Marketing*, October 1943, np.

any military-age man not in uniform, adworkers and their corporate clients always sought to ease the many apprehensions that attended the movement of women into non-traditional war jobs. Historian Ruth Roach Pierson has argued that all manner of social anxieties (what she calls "wartime jitters") resulted from the large-scale movement of women into Canada's armed forces and war industries. Although this migration into non-traditional occupations was for the exigencies of the war effort – and hence understood to be temporary – it nonetheless, in Pierson's view, "sharply challenged conventions in respect to women's nature and place in Canadian society."[30] Pierson's work has been criticized for overstating both the extent of these "jitters" and the backlash against women who sought out non-traditional roles to play during the war.[31] Nonetheless, in innumerable advertisements the tensions that Pierson describes, between the necessity of admitting women into the armed forces and war industries on the one hand, and the desire to retain – or at least eventually regain – more traditional demarcations of the gendered division of labour on the other, are played out. General Motors declared, in an extraordinary three-page advertisement, that "a woman's place is everywhere", but dozens of other advertisements affirmed that in the long-term, trailblazing women would return to the domestic sphere.[32]

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[30] Ruth Roach Pierson, *'They're Still Women after All': The Second World War and Canadian Womanhood* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1986), 129.
[31] For example, Diane G. Forestell, "The Necessity of Sacrifice for the Nation at War: Women's Labour Force Participation, 1939-1946" *Histoire Sociale* 1989 22 (44): 333-347.
[32] "A Woman's Place Is Everywhere," *Mayfair*, May 1943, 41-43.

Above all, such advertising assured readers that women could take up non-traditional duties without losing their femininity, a concern that was addressed by a great many wartime writers. Historian Kathy Peiss has argued that by the 1930s the application of makeup became "one of the tangible ways women in their everyday lives confirmed their identities as women"[33] If industrial war work and military service threatened the traditional identity of women, then advertisements such as these helped to reinforce it. Paradoxically, however, in so doing they helped to legitimate the movement of women, however temporarily, into nontraditional roles by vesting commodities with powers of a different sort – the power to enable the female consumer to become a soldier or war worker while remaining traditionally "feminine". "It's a reflection of the free democratic way of life that you have succeeded in keeping your freedom – even though you're doing a man's work," read the copy on a 1943 Tangee cosmetics advertisement. As always, in the realm of advertising copy, such wording as "free democratic way of life" is synonymous with consumer choice, a point that the advertisement goes on to make. "No lipstick...will win the war," it read, "but it symbolizes one of the reasons why we are fighting...the

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[33] Kathy Peiss, "Making up, Making Over: Cosmetics, Consumer Culture, and Women's Identity," in *The Sex of Things: Gender and Consumption in Historical Perspectives*, ed. Victoria de Grazia and Ellen Furlough (Berkley: University of California Press, 1996), 330. See also Tina Davidson, "A Woman's Right to Charm and Beauty: Maintaining the Feminine Ideal in the Canadian Women's Army Corps," *Atlantis* (Canada) 2001 26(1): 45-54 and Helen Smith and Pamela Wakewich, "Beauty and the Helldrivers: Representing Women's Work and Identities in a Warplant Newspaper," *Labour* 1999 (44): 71-107.

precious right of women to be feminine and lovely under any circumstances."[34] The headline on a Tangee advertisement the following year, depicting women in army, navy, and air force service uniforms, made the point even more explicitly: "We are still the weaker sex," it read. "It's still up to us to appear as alluring and lovely as possible."[35] Similarly, Blachford Shoe advertisements boasted footwear specifically "made to fit the shapely feet of Canada's CWAC's, Airwomen, and Wrens."[36] Palmolive advertisements featured the winner of a factory beauty contest, "Miss War-Worker", photographed alongside her drill press[37] ; lipsticks came in "Patriot Red"[38] and Cutex introduced "Honor Bright", a nail shade "for women at war"[39]; yet another Tangee advertisement urged servicewomen to be both "alert...and alluring", while a Helena Rubenstein cosmetics advertisement, depicting a smiling young CWAC, carried the headline, "Eager to serve...yet eager for beauty" (see Figures 5.8 and 5.9, below).[40]

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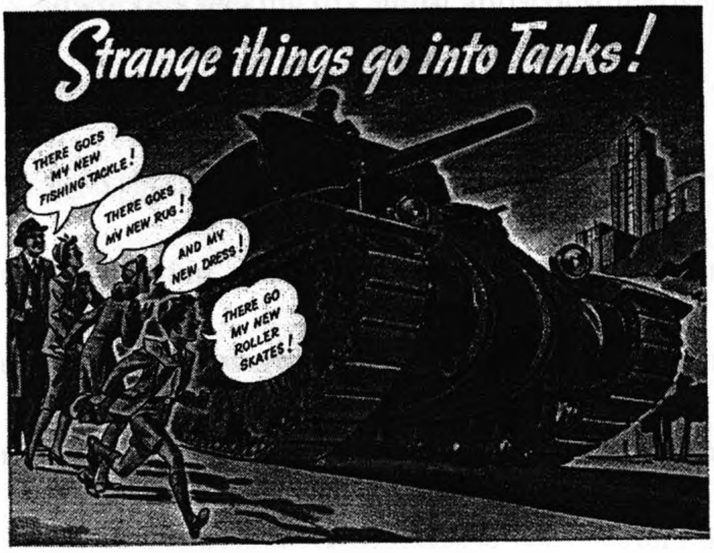
[34] "War, Women, and Lipstick," *Chatelaine*, August 1943, 4.
[35] "We Are Still the Weaker Sex," *Chatelaine*, January 1945, 45.
[36] "Made to Fit the Shapely Feet," *National Home Monthly*, April 1944, 68.
[37] "Me? Enter a Beauty Contest?," *Canadian Home Journal*, August 1943, 55.
[38] "Be Prepared: "Patriot Red", *Chatelaine*, April 1942, 44.
[39] "Honor Bright," *National Home Monthly*, September 1944, 46.
[40] "Eager to Serve," *Echoes*, Spring 1942, 2.

Figures 4.8 and 4.9. Beauty products help to assuage gender anxieties caused by the movement of women into non-traditional occupations such as soldier (left) and factory worker (right).

Very occasionally government advertisements touched on these themes as well. In one revealing Victory Bond poster, a tank rolls by an excited family. "There goes my new fishing tackle!" exclaims the father. "There go my new roller skates!" cries his son, while the mother and daughter proclaim the loss of a rug and a new dress. The copy takes up the voice of father: "We're not rich, the *only* way we can buy Victory Bonds is by going without small, personal spendings every pay-day…all the things we

wanted to buy, but *didn't*!"[41] But advertisements like these, that reinforced the official policy of mandatory — albeit temporary — consumer sacrifice stood in stark contrast to those advertisements that argued for the continuation of consumption as a means to victory.



"WE'VE talked over this fourth Victory Loan together, and we all realize what we owe to those clean-cut young lads who are fighting to keep us safe at home. We must give them the tanks, planes, guns and ships that are needed to end this war as quickly as possible—so that there may be fewer wooden crosses on lonely graves!"

"We're not rich, the *only* way we can buy Victory Bonds is by going without small, personal spendings every pay-day. That's why the tanks and planes our family helps to send will be made of strange things — rugs, dresses, fishing-tackle, roller-skates, permanents . . . all the things we wanted to buy, but didn't!"

"Maybe nobody would know if we dodged our responsibility and spent our money on ourselves. But we'd know, as long as we lived, that somebody may have died because of our complacency. So, this time, we're buying more Victory Bonds than ever."

An investment in Victory Bonds means your money is safe, and is earning good interest. All Canada's vast resources are behind these Victory Bonds. Your money will be repaid in full—there is no safer investment in the world. Buy the new Victory Bonds.

Back the Attack IV

NATIONAL WAR FINANCE COMMITTEE

BUY More VICTORY BONDS

Figure 4.10. This unusual Victory Bond advertisement expressly equated consumer sacrifice with the war effort.

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[41] "Strange Things Go into Tanks!," *Canadian Forum* 1943, 46.

"Now More than Ever": the War as Sales Argument

It is perhaps difficult for the modern reader to appreciate just how brazen the repetitious use of the cliché "now more than ever" was in wartime advertising. At a time when the WPTB and other agencies were wont to compare spendthrift consumers to traitors, adworkers seeking to combat anti-consumerist sentiments deployed the "more than ever" cliché, or variations of it, in dozens of wartime advertisements. Nothing so signified their unwillingness to comply without reservation to the "serve by saving" ethos. On the contrary, the countless examples and minor variations of this cliché were unified by an underlying theme: that the special properties that had made the commodity in question important in peacetime were needed "more than ever" now that Canada was at war. In such instances, the war was advanced as an argument in favour, rather than against, continued consumption, although never for frivolous purposes. Rather, the commodity was always held to contribute to the war effort in some indispensable way.

"Your hands need Campana's balm *more than ever*" read a typical ad, depicting a woman working on a machine tool in one corner and accepting candy from a gentleman caller in the other, her hands both lovely and protected.[42] Pepsi-Cola appealed to patriotism and thrift. "More than ever this year thoughtful women

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[42] "Your Hands Now Need Campana's Balm Protection More Than Ever," *Maclean's*, January 15, 1944, 35.

will entertain with this thrifty, delightful beverage," a December 1942 advertisement read. "In light of your patriotic duty, that practically writes an order for Pepsi-Cola."[43] Similarly, Pratt and Lambert Paint depicted a tank crew remarking, "In these times, good paint is more economical than ever."[44] Kodak portrayed a soldier on a furlough reunited with his family at Christmas time: "Snapshots never meant so much as now."[45] Predictably, dozens of other advertisers appealed to the importance of good nutrition in a nation at war. "Now, more than ever before, steady nerves and sturdy bodies are needed on the home front. To keep fit is more than a personal ideal – it is a patriotic duty" read a typical advertisement for the H.J. Heinz Company.[46] Lysol reminded readers that in a world at war, babies are "more precious than ever", and so, too, is Lysol in the war against household germs. Busy housewives, doubling as war-workers, found the "quick-cleaning qualities" of Bon Ami "twice as important" since they were now working "twice as hard."[47]

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[43] "More Than Ever This Year," *Canadian Home Journal*, January 2, 1943, 33.
[44] "In These Times, Good Paint Is More Economical Than Ever," *Canadian Home Journal*, June 1943, 63.
[45] "Snapshots Never Meant So Much as Now," *Canadian Home Journal*, December 1941, inside cover.
[46] "Foods to Keep You Fit Can Taste Delicious, Too," *Canadian Homes and Gardens*, January-February 1943, 39.
[47] "Twice as Important...Now That I'm Working Twice as Hard!," *Maclean's*, February 15, 1943, 24.

4.11. and 4.12 Far from acquiescing to governmental pleas for conservation, many firms argued that the beneficent qualities of their products were more important in wartime than they ever had been in peacetime.

Granted, many of the commodities so described were necessities such as food or useful gifts for soldiers overseas. Not even the most ascetic patriot could begrudge anyone a box of cereal or a decent pen for a man in uniform. A more challenging task for adworkers was to justify the continuation of advertising for luxury goods, such as jewellery. In such cases, advertising mounted appeals to the effect that the commodity had on reinforcing morale. "Last night, I reached across ten thousand miles and kissed you," said a beautifully illustrated advertisement for *Gruen* watches, depicting a soldier and his sweetheart embracing across the world's oceans, their love

reaffirmed even across the havoc of war. "This will be a Christmas," the advertisement went on:

> more than any other Christmas – which will call for the reassurance of human faith and understanding, for the remembrance of the sympathy and affection human hearts can hold for each other. Is there at this time any gift you could make to a loved one – half the world away, or close at home – more meaningful than a truly fine watch?[48]

Far from constituting extravagance or wastefulness, then, buying such products was actually a patriotic duty, a service — a sacrifice, even — that the consumer rendered to the nation at war. While government propaganda and a whole host of home front critics sought to discourage needless consumerism, wartime commercial advertising sought to recast Canadians' relationship to commodities in ways that legitimated their continued purchase. Suggesting that the war made the purchase of a given product, whether breakfast cereal or motor oil or jewelled watches, more rather than less important constituted the clearest possible affirmation that, for some advertisers, the "business as usual" ethos had not become a casualty of war, it had simply changed appearances. That most Canadians wanted to believe that it was possible to go on consuming while keeping one's social conscience intact is something that our generation, guilt-ridden over the environmental consequences of mass consumption, can surely appreciate. It seems probable that the "now more than ever" cliché must

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[48] "Last Night, I Reached out over 10,000 Miles and Kissed You," *Maclean's*, December 15, 1943, inside back cover.

have encouraged at least some Canadians to indulge themselves to a far greater degree than the WPTB and a host of other agencies would have approved of.

Figure 4.13. In the world of advertising, even the purchase of jeweled watches could be patriotic consumerism, provided it served the war effort in some manner. Here, the commodity restores the bonds of love and affection, even across oceans.

Victory is our Business: the Clichés of War-Themed Institutional Advertising Campaigns

Manufacturers wholly devoted to the production of war materiel faced a more vexing problem. Some of the solutions they sought – endorsing Victory Bond campaigns, explaining shortages, or elucidating on the self-sacrifice of their workforce, have already been touched upon. But institutional advertising blossomed full-blown into a veritable system of home front propaganda in the last three years of the war. Businesses mounted institutional advertising campaigns to promote brand-name recognition and to foster goodwill for themselves with the public. While government propaganda dealt with such themes as the defense of the Commonwealth and the preservation of its democratic institutions, institutional advertising offered Canadians a further argument about what was at stake in the war – the survival of free enterprise. By the 1940s the contours of the argument were familiar: free enterprise (never "capitalism" in advertising copy, as if the word were much too vulgar to use) was at the root of all democratic freedoms. It had created the prosperity in which liberty flourished, for political freedom was only possible where citizens had their material needs satisfied. War added a powerful new corollary to the original argument, namely, that the war would be won because of free enterprise. Confronted by the ingenuity of free people who were driven by the desire to defend "the finer things", the fearful teeming millions of the Axis powers and their blundering,

hidebound leaders could not possibly hope to prevail. Indeed, they could barely even comprehend the vast resources arrayed against them.[49]

Once again, advertising conveyed these broad ideas through a variety of clichés. As we have seen, misguided friends and soldiers in aprons sometimes appeared in institutional advertisements, usually as part of the wage-earning labour force or in the form of a customer who gladly postponed a purchase on behalf of the war effort. Just as ordinary civilians could be transformed into combatants by means of their relationship to commodities or their producers, so too could inanimate things be transformed into implements of war. "Hospitality – goes to war!" reads a typical example, an advertisement of Gilbey's Gin. "Gilbey's, in peacetime a symbol of friendship and goodwill...now switches to the offensive," the copy states, and goes on to explain the importance of alcohol in wartime industrial production. In another advertisement, a housewife, cooking over an old-fashioned stove, muses, "Perhaps they're bombing Berlin tonight with the metal that might have gone into my new Findlay range."[50] Ford unveiled its new models with an advertisement that read, "Watch the '43 Fords Go By!" but the 1943 Fords are revealed to be a succession of military trucks and armoured vehicles (see Figure 5.14, below).[51]

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[49] See the discussion of these themes in Chapter Two and in the conclusion.
[50] "Perhaps They're Bombing Berlin," reprinted in *Marketing*, July 1944, centerfold, n.p.
[51] "Watch the '43 Fords Go By," *Maclean's*, April 15, 1943, 37.

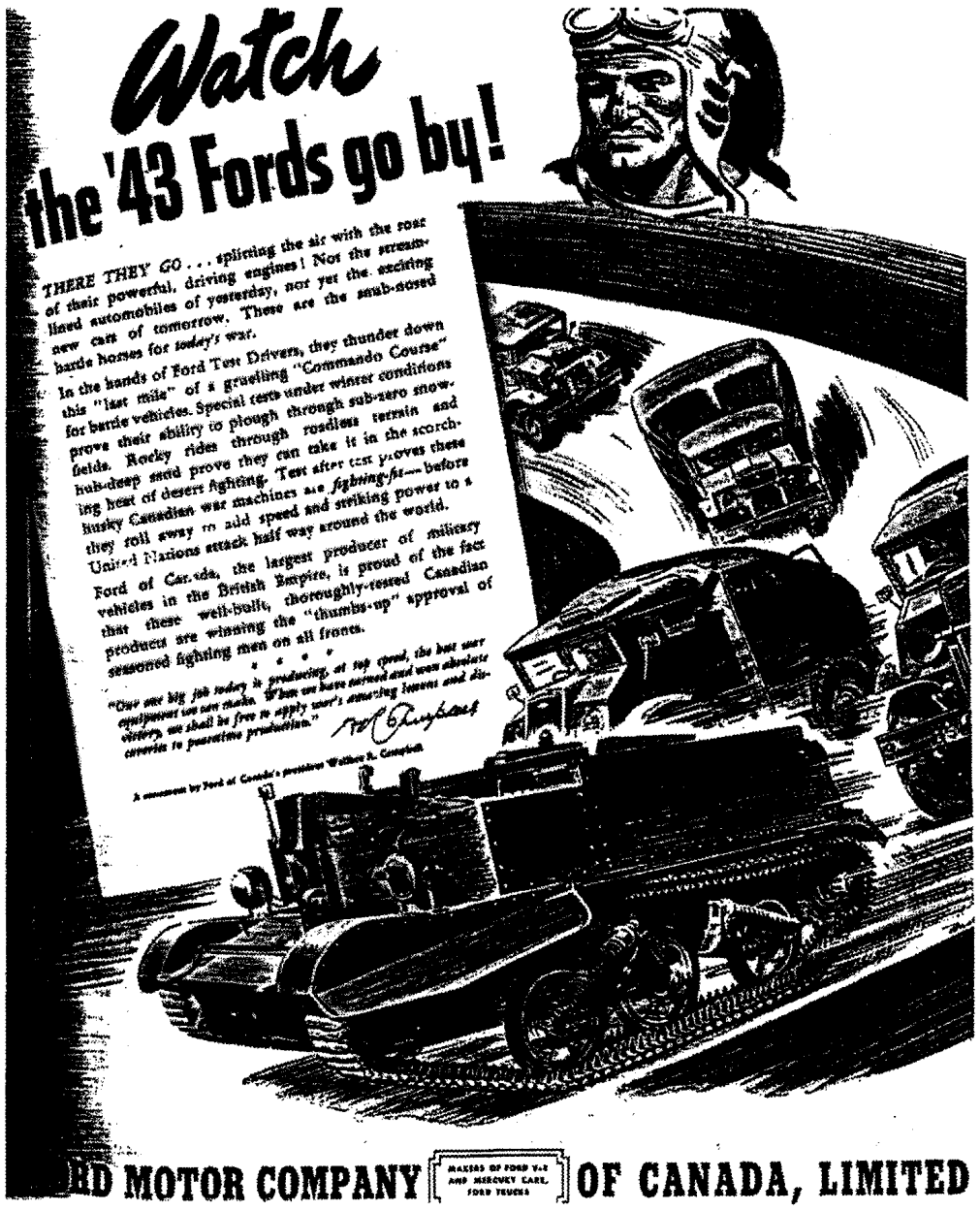

Figure 4.14. Wartime institutional advertising aimed to generate goodwill by emphasizing the important role that the advertiser was playing in securing victory.

On a purely pragmatic level, advertisements such as these informed consumers of the reason why certain products were unavailable, and promised that they would return,

better than ever, once victory was secured. More significantly, they cast the advertiser as a self-sacrificing member of the business community, a public relations move of no small significance amidst all manner of accusations about war profiteering. No mention was ever made of the financial arrangements that underpinned production, and an unwitting observer easily could be excused for concluding that firms such as Ford and General Motors had donated their output to the armed forces – but that, too, was part of the public relations agenda of firms seeking to bolster their public image.

General Motors of Canada adopted the slogan "Victory is Our Business" in late 1941. In four words the slogan captured the essence of the public image that nearly every firm engaged in the production of war materiel wished to convey: that of private enterprise waging its own war against the Axis through technical ingenuity and industrial prowess. "V used to be just another letter in the alphabet," said the copy in one General Motors advertisement. "But it has become the foremost symbol in the world...it is the rallying sign of the free. It is the target of our toil, the sole business of the nation...our only models are Victory Models." The rest of the copy described the "Victory Models" and praised the "pooled ingenuity of engineering brains" that have devised them.[52] Similarly, Dominion Rubber showed a bomber crew, forced to ditch at sea, but saved by "an inflated rubber raft that will keep them

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[52] "1943 Models for Victory," *Maclean's* 1943, 28-29.

afloat for days or weeks."[53] In another instance, the crew of a stricken merchant vessel "exposed to days of drenching rains, biting winds, and freezing cold" was saved by the new "seaman's protect suit" designed and manufactured by Dominion. Dominion, the advertisement concluded, is "a good name to remember" because "when peace comes, all our experience and resources will be devoted to making still better tires, footwear, and other products for civilian needs."[54] Gooderham and Worts distillers described how even the pain of injury itself could be banished through "the miracle of ether", of which pure alcohol was a basic ingredient.[55]

Institutional ads continually praised the ingenuity of unfettered free enterprise. By contrast, the Axis powers were described as utterly waylaid in their efforts to keep pace with the productive capacity and technical genius of their enemies. In a characteristic 1943 advertisement, entitled "Swat This Mosquito!", depicting the famous two-engined bomber of the same name, GM envisioned the victory of the system of free enterprise over the Nazi slave state in both material and ideological terms:

> Here you Axis supermen, is the plane you'd like to stop. Swift, stinging death from the skies above...striking back again and again until your war plants are flaming ruins and the foundations of your doctrines shattered....General Motors is proud to be the builder of its intricate,

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[53] "'One of Our Aircraft Is Missing'," *Maclean's*, March 1, 1943, 20-21.
[54] "Survival..." *Maclean's*, January 15, 1944, 21.
[55] "Surgeons Bless the Sleep That Banishes Pain," *Maclean's*, April 1, 1944, 31.

> all-wood fuselage...and so, in one more way General Motors gives evidence that, 'Victory is Our Business'![56]

In this case, the advertising copy is in the form of a direct address to the enemy, mocking his inability to match the power and prowess of unharnessed free enterprise. This was in itself a cliché of wartime advertising. Seagram's, for instance, addressed the Fuhrer directly, announcing in one advertisement that it had "a bushel of trouble" for him:

> As you well know, Herr Hitler, high-proof alcohol is an essential ingredient in the manufacture of smokeless powder for our shells, bombs, mines, and torpedoes...over here, Herr Hitler, we have plenty of grain and ample facilities to make almost unlimited quantities of alcohol for war...yes, Herr Hitler, you are really in trouble.[57]

Similarly, an American Caterpillar Diesel advertisement titled "Coming at you, Schicklgruber!", reprinted in *Maclean's* and several other Canadian magazines, depicted a bulldozer plowing under the ruins of the Reich while German planes go down in flames in the background. "Maybe you overlooked this machine when you planned your world conquest, Adolf," it says. "But soon you'll be seeing it in your nightmares! You said we North Americans couldn't fight. Well, we're learning."[58] Here is yet another of the hallmarks of the "Victory is Our Business" cliché exemplified: how a reluctant people took up arms in defense of the cause of freedom

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[56] "Swat This Mosquito," *Maclean's*, August 15, 1943, 27.
[57] "A Bushel of Trouble for Hitler," *Maclean's*, January 15, 1943, 17.
[58] "Coming at You, Schicklgrubber!," *Maclean's*, June 1, 1943, 23.

and, armed with the industrial might and technological resourcefulness of capitalism, were bringing ruin and defeat to the enemy on every front. Studebaker (utilizing artwork from the American parent company's advertisements but copy specifically written for Canadian magazines) praised those "carefree Canadians boys" who "only yesterday...were learning in their classrooms the fabled exploits of Alexander the Great, of Julius Caesar, and Genghis Khan" but who were now "making history themselves...almost next-door to many of the storied battlefields they read about in school" — carried, of course, in the back of Studebaker trucks.[59] In 1943, Jack Bush, an artist with the Coldcaught-Brown advertising agency (and later to be one of the foremost abstract painters of his generation), produced a series of advertisements for Ford of Canada entitled "Action Pictures", depicting Canadian troops in Ford-built Canadian Military Pattern vehicles engaging the enemy. The copy, some of it attributed to Ford of Canada president Wallace Campbell, praised Canada's "scientific warriors" who with "modern mobile equipment...take the impossible in their stride."[60] Another in the series described Canadian soldiers as being among "the best trained" and, significantly, "best-equipped striking forces in all history."[61]

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[59] "Big Studebaker War Trucks Roll Forward Where Ancient Armies Marched," *Maclean's*, February 15, 1944, 31.
[60] "The Engineers Ford a River," *Maclean's*, June 15, 1943, 27.
[61] "Crash Action for the Canadian Artillery," *Maclean's*, May 15, 1943, 18.

Much of this, of course, was fanciful but, then, advertising always had been. Most of the "Action Pictures", for instance, were published months before the Canadian army saw sustained action at all, and such advertisements overlooked the fact that the Germans had their own ingenious weapons of war: jet fighters, ballistic missiles, diesel-electric submarines, and heavy tanks that could sometimes defeat a whole squadron of Allied armor. As always, however, what mattered in advertising was not so much its depiction of the world as it was, but of the world as it should be and could be. In his pioneering study of American advertising during the war, Frank Fox explores these themes in detail and finds that they were also quite central to American advertising in that period. Given the number of advertisements placed by Canadian subsidiaries of American firms (General Motors, Ford, International Harvester, and others), it is not surprising that many Canadian institutional advertisements were indistinguishable thematically from American ones. Indeed, some of them (such as the Caterpillar Diesel ads) *were* Americans, produced by American agencies and printed in Canadian magazines. Admittedly, Canadian adworkers had been producing war-themed advertising longer than their American counterparts and, as already observed, American adworkers had paid careful attention to the situation north of the border prior to their own country's entry into the war. This in turn suggests that Canada's cultural "weight" in the United States ought not to be considered negligible.

Undeniably, it was much easier for American adworkers to allude to a widely shared set of ideals, an "American dream" or an "American way of life" – however illusory these might have been – than it was for Canadian adworkers to define a uniquely "Canadian" identity to which they might appeal. For instance, American advertisements could, and frequently did, appeal to the revolutionary spirit of their founding fathers: Washington, Jefferson, Adams, Franklin (and their heir, Lincoln), but John A Macdonald, Georges-Etienne Cartier, and Thomas D'Arcy McGee are almost never found in the patriotic appeals of Canadian wartime advertising. Certainly, William Lyon Mackenzie King never made an appearance in a Canadian institutional advertisement, even though Roosevelt and Churchill frequently did. Whatever King's qualities, no one would have counted personal magnetism among them.

Having said that, some institutional advertisements did allude to unique aspects of Canada and its history. Admittedly, some of these are scarcely recognizable to Canadians today, such as a series of institutional advertisements trumpeting the glories of that most unglamorous of metals, nickel.[62] Others, however, dwell upon those themes that have been the source of inspiration for so many of the nation's historians, poets, and painters: the nation's glorious military history, the railroads,

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[62] See, for example, the International Nickel Company advertisement, "1919: Millions of Tons of Nickel Ore," *Maclean's*, February 1, 1944, 3.

the abundance of the land, and the brave spirit of those who tamed it. The copy in one Canadian Pacific Railways advertisement is worth quoting in full:

> We have faith in Canada. We have faith her past, faith that the courage of the pioneers and the spirit which achieved Confederation and linked a continent with the shining steel of railways have laid strong foundations for national greatness and unity. We have faith in her present, in the past she is playing to save the world from tyranny...in her young men and women who serve on land and sea and in the air...in her workers, who labour for more than waves...in every man and woman and child striving for Victory....Our faith is a faith in a land we love, whose soul speaks to us from every free acre of Canadian soil...in the splendour of the Rockies at sunset, the blue mystery of Laurentian dawn, the quiet of an Ontario woodlot, the far call of prairie horizons, the sound of the surf on the Atlantic shore and the wash of the Pacific tides...our faith is a faith in her people...and by whose united effort, sacrifice and creative vigour the greater Canada of tomorrow will be built.[63]

Similarly, General Motors of Canada, always eager to distinguish itself from the American parent company, often alluded to patriotic themes: quoting "O Canada" in one colour advertisement and, in another, under the tag line "We've a War That Must Be Won!", depicting pictures of European explorers trading with aboriginals, farmers plowing fields, cities and factories, children learning the words to the national anthem, and — rarity of rarities— an image of the Fathers of Confederation at Charlottetown. All this was accompanied by the following verse:

> These are the shores our fathers found;
> To us this country is hallowed ground.
> This is the Canada we have known,
> The land we love and call our own;

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[63] "A Profession of Faith," *Maclean's*, May 1 1943, 3.

Here we have worked and here we have played;
These are the cities are hands have made;
These are the fields our plows have turned;
This is the wealth our toil has earned.
This is the fruit of our father's dreams;
Of forest and plain and mountain streams;
This is the Canada we have known,
The land we love and call our own.[64]

Admittedly, companies that undertook institutional campaigns during the war were far more inclined tocarry the official line and include messages promoting conservation and thrift since most of them had nothing to sell to the public anyway. In this respect, institutional advertising, like government propaganda, often struck an odd contrast to commercial advertising when such advertisements ran near them in national magazines and newspapers. But it requires no great leap of faith to assume what arguments their advertisements would have advanced had the production of consumer durables been maintained at some reasonable level after 1941: passenger cars carry war-workers to the factories more quickly; refrigerators keep precious food resources from spoiling; radios keep the public informed of crucial developments, ad so forth. Indeed, some of these techniques had been employed when the first pressure was placed on the manufacturers of durables in late 1941. Moreover, by late 1943, institutional advertisers were already beginning to think about selling again.

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[64] "We've a War That Must Be Won," *Maclean's*, November 15, 1941, 18.

The World of Tomorrow: Winning the War, Securing the Future

A marked transformation in the themes of institutional advertising began to occur in the autumn of 1943. With North Africa secured, Italy defeated, the U-boat menace at long last surmounted, and the Germans fighting a desperate retreat before the Red Army in the east, advertisers began to express more interest in the postwar future than in the wartime present. In this, they reflected two points of consensus in the business press: first, that wartime institutional advertising campaigns were undertaken principally to secure future business; and, second, that the war would almost certainly end sometime in 1944. As Allied victories, hard-earned though they were, mounted throughout late 1943 and early 1944, the tendency for institutional advertisements to focus on the future became all the more prevalent, and the image of the future they presented became clearer and more coherent. In advertising copy, adworkers made incessant use of the word "tomorrow". With its just-around-the-corner connotations, "tomorrow" was almost always preferred to the phrase "the future", which implied something more indistinct and distant. What "tomorrow" promised was immense. It heralded much more than the return of husbands, fathers, sons, and sweethearts. "Tomorrow" held forth the promise of a nation fit for these heroes, where uncertainty about gender roles would be resolved by the return to domesticity of any women who had temporarily left it for paid labour, and where

Canadians' concerns about economic and social security would dissolve in a world of material abundance.

Oneida silverware envisioned a day when a young woman's sweetheart would "come home for keeps", a reunion that would also mark the return of all the essential accoutrements of middle-class married life. "Crystal will gleam and silver will sparkle on a table set for two," the copy gushed. The advertisement was so popular that Oneida received several thousand requests for copies.[65] Dozens of advertisements furnished similar scenes from "tomorrow", of reunited families released from the burden of further sacrifice through a new world of lavish homes and sumptuous commodities. Many of these advertisements explicitly linked the fighting of "today" with the luxuries of "tomorrow", often through the use of a montage featuring images of the war on one side and of the consumerist future on the other. "Today his home is on wheels," says a homemaker in an advertisement for Dominion Oilcloth, thinking of her husband overseas, "but he's fighting for his home of tomorrow." Her thoughts then shift to a gleaming kitchen. "New ideas will make that home more modern, more convenient and more comfortable."[66]

Splendid new commodities were central to the "world of tomorrow". If the world fit for heroes had not only failed to emerge in 1919 but had collapsed amidst sickness, recession, and civil strife, a much better world would be delivered when this

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[65] "Soldiers Like These Advertisements," *Marketing*, September 9, 1944, 8.
[66] "Today His Home Is on Wheels," *Mayfair*, September 1, 1944, 51.

war ended — a world of universal luxury and ease, made possible by the rededication of wartime scientific and technical resources to peacetime production. As the copy in a 1943 General Steel Wares advertisement read,

> the metal can on a gas mask...Is one of the many war items being manufactured by General Steel Wares these days and nights. But in between times, General Steel Wares craftsmen make mental notes of bright new ideas...they just *can't help* dreaming up wonderful improvements for your postwar kitchen.[67]

Figure 4.15. Late in the war, many advertisements looked to a postwar world, where swords would be beaten into stoves – and other commodities.

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[67] "Meanwhile, We're Planning Your Dream Kitchen," *Maclean's*, October 15, 1943, 30.

Like many late-war advertisements, this one seems rather ambivalent about the comparative emancipation that the war had offered women. An institutional advertisement for Standard Sanitary and Dominion Radiator (manufacturers of plumbing and heating fixtures), for instance, alluded to the already iconic Rosie-the-Riveter mythology, but only to cheer the return of "Rosies" to the home. What "tomorrow", when "Rosies stop riveting", promised women was a far more desirable form of emancipation (or so the argument went): a future where "dreams come true" and the drudgery of domestic chores would be eliminated by the wonders of modern consumer appliances.[68] One hallmark of "tomorrow" was the transformation of the housewife consumer's dreams into reality. Advertisement after advertisement depicted Canadian women fawning over the "dream" homes, "dream" kitchens, and "dream" cosmetics of "tomorrow" — compensation for services well rendered but no longer required. Even "the towels of tomorrow", available in "glorious colours, charming designs, many sizes" and, significantly, "plentiful supply", would be "like a dream come true" according to one advertisement.[69]

While articles in the trade magazines sometimes counseled caution, warning that advertisers who made extravagant promises would be held accountable for them if they failed to materialize, few advertisements were content to make more plausible

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[68] "When Rosies Stop Riveting," *Canadian Homes and Gardens*, April 1944, 53.
[69] "Caldwell Towels," *Canadian Home Journal*, July 1945, 23.

promises.[70] At its most exotic, in fact, "tomorrow" resembled the science-fiction cityscapes of Flash Gordon movie serials, with towering skyscrapers, elevated trains, personal aircraft, and super-sleek automobiles with bubble tops and elongated tailfins. Goodyear depicted "tomorrow's tube" under a sleek bubble car, hurtling through an imagined future where bucolic rural splendor merged harmoniously with superhighways.[71]

Figure 4.16. At its most exotic, "tomorrow" promised futuristic automobiles made possible by the rededication of military technology for civilian purposes.

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[70] "Advertising Campaigns Urged to Offset Too Much Dream Product Expectancy," *Marketing* August 19, 1944, 8.

[71] "Tomorrow's Tube...Today," *Maclean's*, December 1, 1944, inside back flap.

Seagram's, barred from advertising alcoholic beverages, ran a series of advertisements about the plans being laid by "men who think of tomorrow" (Figure 4.17, below). Such plans included rocket planes, closed-circuit television presentations in movie theatres, and even a technological means of reclaiming some of the war's losses. One such advertisement envisioned a futuristic "salvage submarine of tomorrow" and described the "more than 40 million tons of shopping (that) have been sunk in World War II", exclaiming,

> What a treasure trove of valuable metals and non-perishable cargoes may be reclaimed...but until the day arrives when men and machines are free for such fascinating exploits, we have a lot of salvaging to do on the home front!

Tomorrow will come," the copy concluded, "but it will be all the brighter for the sacrifices we make today."[72]

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[72] "The Sea Will Give up Treasure to Men Who Think of Tomorrow," *Maclean's*, November 15, 1944, 53.

The sea will give up treasure
to *men who think of tomorrow*

Salvage Submarine of Tomorrow! . . . Already more than 40 million tons of shipping have been sunk in World War II. What a treasure trove of valuable metals and non-perishable cargoes may be reclaimed with these powerful undersea craft . . . equipped with salvaging cables and with decompression chambers for diving operations. They're coming . . . planned by MEN WHO THINK OF TOMORROW!

MEN who think of tomorrow are planning many startling post-war engineering enterprises. The salvage of deep sea treasure by giant submarines is one of the most practical . . . and profitable.

But until the day arrives when men and machines are *free* for such fascinating exploits, we have a lot of salvaging to do on the home front!

For instance, the need for waste paper has never been more urgent than it is now. Are you salvaging yours? Gigantic quantities of explosives must continue to flow across the sea. That takes glycerine and glycerine takes kitchen fats. Are you salvaging every drop you can?

There is no respite for *anybody* in the kind of a war we're waging. None for the soldier, none for those at home. None of us is through with the job until the last enemy flag comes down. And that means, among other things, buying more and more War Savings Certificates and Victory Bonds, and it means hanging on to them, too!

Tomorrow will come, as it always has . . . but it will be the brighter for the sacrifices we make today. Let us *all* be MEN WHO THINK OF TOMORROW . . . and get ready for it NOW!

THE HOUSE OF SEAGRAM

Seagram plants in Canada and the United States are engaged in the production of high-proof Alcohol. High-proof Alcohol for War is used in the manufacture of Smokless Powder, Synthetic Rubber, Plastics, Drugs and Medicines, Photographic Film, Drawing Inks, Navigation Instruments and many other wartime products.

Figure 4.17. Almost no promise was too extravagant to make about the "world of tomorrow" – a world where consumers would be compensated for their wartime sacrifices. Here, Seagram's imagines a submarine salvaging Allied ships lost in the Battle of the Atlantic.

Much of the promise of "tomorrow" concerned the continuation of economic prosperity and full employment, a response to the widespread fear that the end of the war would signal not just the resumption of peace but also economic depression as the armed forces and war industries scaled back their labour force requirements. Successive advertisements assured readers that consumer demand would fuel the postwar economy. "War savings," said one Canadian General Electric advertisement,

"will be turned to equipping homes for better living – with a host of electrical "servants" whose manufacture will provide employment for thousands of Canadians."[73] Similarly, Northern Electric promised that "tomorrow's living" would be "lighter and brighter" and accompanied by "one solid fact: you can be sure of plenty of labor...as soon as the war is over."[74] Farmers, too, would reap the benefits of wartime technology. An advertisement for International Nickel portrayed soldiers driving a jeep in one panel and farmers using the same jeep to haul a plough in the next. "Today, the army has a new mule...*tomorrow*, the farmer will harness it!"[75]

Perhaps no institutional advertisement made the promise of a brighter future more explicitly than one placed by Sanforized washable clothes in the autumn of 1943. "What's coming is plenty!" the copy read, and went on:

> Plenty of coffee, tea, bananas, butter, lard. Yes, and plenty of Sanforized washable clothes. All the things we had before it started, and others we never had. Plenty of good cheap housing – thanks to new building methods. Plenty of light practical inexpensive cars, cradles and carriages – thanks to the wartime expansion of aluminum production. Plenty of cheap fast air transportation – thanks to the rapid development of the aviation industry. Yes, it's going to be a good world – a world of *plenty* – a world worth all the sacrifice being made...it's a small price to pay for what's coming.[76]

Encapsulated in this one advertisement is the promise of a return of commodities once easily obtained, but also the promise of remarkable new goods. But

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[73] "Today's Victory Bonds Mean Tomorrow's All-Electric Kitchen," *Canadian Homes and Gardens*, May 1944, 63.
[74] "Tomorrow's Living Room," *Canadian Home Journal*, June 1945, 79.
[75] "Today the Army Has a New Mule...Tomorrow the Farmer Will Harness It," *Maclean's*, May 15, 1943, 32.
[76] "'What's Coming Is Plenty!'" *Maclean's*, June 1, 1943, 23.

the truly extraordinary claim is that the war's sacrifices constituted no more than "a small price to pay" for a future of limitless material abundance. Here, as in so many other advertisements, consumer satisfaction was proffered as compensation for everything that Canadians had sacrificed in wartime.

What's coming is . . . PLENTY!

MAYBE not this year. Maybe not next. But *sometime* we're going to win this war – and what's going to happen then is *plenty*.

Plenty of coffee, tea, bananas, butter, lard. Yes, and plenty of Sanforized washable clothes. All the things we had before it started, and others we never had. Plenty of good cheap housing – thanks to new building methods. Plenty of light practical inexpensive cars, cradles and carriages – thanks to wartime expansion of aluminum production. Plenty of cheap fast air transportation – thanks to the rapid development of the aviation industry.

It's going to be a good world – a world of *plenty* – a world worth all the sacrifice that's being made. So if you can't get some of the things you've learned to count on, don't fret about it. It's a small price to pay for what's coming.

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Right now many Sanforized fabrics are going to the Armed Forces because they more than anyone need the comfort of garments that really fit. Fortunately, however, there are still garments made of Sanforized fabrics available to civilians. When you do buy a shirt or overalls or a dress, try to get one that's Sanforized. It's just as important to avoid waste from shrinkage as to avoid hoarding.

·SANFORIZED·

Reg. Trade-mark

Cluett, Peabody & Co.

Figure 4.18. According to this extraordinary advertisement, the war's sacrifices were "a small price to pay" for the future of limitless consumer abundance that would result from Allied victory.

War-themed advertising began to disappear from Canadian newspapers and magazines even before the war had ended. By the summer of 1945, hardly any advertisements referred to the war at all. By autumn, the atomic residue of immolated buildings and bodies had barely settled over the remnants of Hiroshima and Nagasaki before the war simply vanished from advertising, almost as if it had never happened in the first place. Strangely, very little discussion of the decision to drop war themes appeared in the trade journals, as if adworkers arrived at a tacit agreement that while the war might have been waged in advertising, it would not be commemorated by it.[77] Perhaps the urge that adworkers had felt in 1939 and early 1940 — to avoid such gloomy matters as war in advertising copy — reasserted itself once the war was won. By then, however, advertising's wartime clichés had furnished the makers, sellers, and buyers of consumer goods with a rebuttal to those critics who argued that they were undermining the war effort. Did it work? Few adworkers would deny that it did, even if they knew that establishing a causal connection between a given advertising campaign and consumer behaviour would always be the Holy Grail of advertising. But there was no denying that the war had been won, and

[77] But not so fast: in 2001, General Motors of Canada ran a series of institutional television ads, recalling the contribution that GMC trucks had made towards Allied victory in WWII. Some viewers objected to this commercial exploitation of the war effort (see, for instance, "GMC and Distasteful Advertising" http://www.darrenbarefoot.com/archives/2003/10/gmc-and-distasteful-advertising.html). Commercial exploitation it certainly was, but there was nothing new about it, as this chapter and the two before it have demonstrated.

that the sellers of products were among the winners. Retail sales in 1945 were fifty percent higher than they had been in 1939, even after inflation had been accounted for.

There should, therefore, be no mistaking wartime advertising for what it was: a vast private propaganda campaign in defense of private enterprise and consumerism. The word "propaganda" is not anachronistically or judgmentally applied — it was unashamedly used by adworkers themselves to describe their efforts. Where government propagandists emphasized the defense of political liberty and of free institutions, advertisers stressed how free enterprise, and the freedom of consumer choice, were the most important freedoms of all. Admittedly, there were times of crisis when consumer choice had to be constrained and personal consumption moderated, but this only leant urgency to the task of defeating the enemy. "Buy War Bonds!" one institutional advertisement stated, "And bring back the pleasures of freedom!" These pleasures were then depicted as an avalanche of consumer goods.[78] Indeed, in advertising, among the most repellant qualities of the Axis states were the constraints they placed on free enterprise and consumer choice. As we shall see, as the discussion about postwar reconstruction began to dominate the public and political agenda late in the war, advertisers adopted a new rallying cry: that an essential "fifth freedom" , the freedom of consumer choice, was now threatened from *within* by advocates of a social welfare state.

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[78] "Buy Victory Bonds...And Bring Back the Pleasures of Freedom," *Marketing*, May 8, 1943, 12.

4. 19 The pleasures of freedom: not political rights in the traditional sense, but gasoline, tires, sugar, refrigerators, and radios. As adworkers described it, however, access to a wide variety of consumer goods *was* a political right, and one of the rights for which the war was being fought.

Of more immediate significance, however, was the societal function that advertising had played during the crucial years from 1941 to 1944. During those years, when an enormous amount of discussion about home front sacrifice was attended by comparatively little actual deprivation, when the rhetoric of "total war" was belied by the fact that more than ninety percent of the population was not in uniform, when much fanciful bluster about the Canadian army being "a dagger

pointed at the heart of Berlin"[79] was undercut by the presence of half of that army in Canada, advertising's wartime clichés had offered consumers reassurance that virtually every Canadian was somehow "in the fight." Whether it was true or not was beside the point: it was an idea that doubtlessly appealed to many Canadians on the home front. So, too, did the promise of a future made brighter by the light of material abundance appeal to many of those in a generation that had known war, want, and then war again.

Figure 4.20 Advertisements reassured consumers that nearly everyone was "in the fight." Sometimes the association between the war effort and the product stretched the boundaries of credulity. Here, Master Painter White Lead paints claims to be so white that it reminds Hitler of Russia's snow.[80]

[79] Andrew McNaughton, quoted in Brian Loring Villa, *Unauthorized Action : Mountbatten and the Dieppe Raid*, (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1994).

[80] "Master Painter White Lead," *Hardware and Metal and Appliance Dealer*, April 19, 1943, front cover.

At their most grandiloquent, Canada's adworkers were given to claiming, as John Kirkwood so often did, that they were agents of civilization rather than mere facilitators of consumer purchases. In their view, what most distinguished modern Canada from the "backward" regions of the world and, indeed, from the Nazi slave state, was the leisure, comfort, and security of the person furnished by the "finer things" that spilled forth from an advanced consumer society. No claim regarding the significance of advertising in the evolution of this world of wealth and abundance was too grandiose. Advertising, they said, had done more than bring order to the complexity and chaos of consumer choice; it had made consumer choice possible, and thus had delivered economic democracy unto the world. It is therefore not surprising that adworkers believed they could help solve the most pressing problem of their time: how to secure victory on terms most favorable to the continuation of the way of life of which they were self-appointed heralds.

More than thirty years later, the British cultural theorist Raymond Williams would coin the phrase "magic system" to describe the relationship between advertising and the consumer.[81] Adworkers themselves thought that their skills were more like those of scientists than magicians, but certainly they believed themselves vested with powers of transformation. Symbolically, they had recruited virtually every aspect of the consumer economy on behalf of the war effort. As always, all

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[81] Raymond Williams, "Advertising: The Magic System," in *Problems in Materialism and Culture* (London: Verso, 1980), 170-85.

things could be attained in the world of advertising – even victory itself. But if advertising served as a glimpse into a realm of imagination where, as Sut Jhally has observed, the ordinary world of physical realities is suspended, the actual experience of buying and selling the products could not help but be more mundane by comparison.[82] In retail stores, consumers encountered the more troublesome day-to-day reality of having to buy goods that were not all that advertising promised, and increasingly retailers themselves had fewer promises to make. How both consumers and retailers experienced and coped with the cessation of consumer durable production will be subject of the chapter that follows.

[82] On this, see: Sut Jhally, *The Codes of Advertising : Fetishism and the Political Economy of Meaning in the Consumer Society* (New York: Routledge, 1990).

Chapter Five
Prosperity Within their Reach: Consumers and Durable Goods

Canadians should be proud to do without many things which an equal peacetime prosperity would place within their reach. What a minor matter it is, after all, to have the Dominion's supply of electrical refrigerators and electrical-metal-tub washing machines further curtailed, as was announced yesterday, or to have to get along with fewer motor cars and less gasoline. The fact is that in the matter of rationing the Canadian people as yet hardly realize that they are at war.[1]

Toronto Daily Star, December 20, 1942.

The most powerful secret weapon so far brought to light by the war was found in the possession of the automotive industry. It was not a death ray or a lethal projectile of any kind, but rather a technique – the technique of mass production. It has now been shared, or is being shared, to the fullest extent with every branch of industry building the tools of war. It may well win the war.[2]

T.R. Elliott, *Canadian Geographical Journal,* May 1942.

In 1938, the Canadian writer Francis Pollock set pen to paper in an effort to imagine how the Olympian deity Apollo might have reacted to an automotive replacement for his celestial chariot:

Chromium-plated, classical, straining forward,
Homeric, Greek-limbed, aiming the fiery arrow,
Sun-God, Song-God, set in the stress of the streamline,
    Far-darting Apollo!

Set with the roar of the multiple motor behind you,
Driving you forward at more than a mile in a minute,
You clutch your lyre, your bow, in stifled amazement,
    Angry and breathless.

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[1] "No Time for Over-Confidence," *Toronto Daily Star,* December 20, 1942, 12.
[2] T.R. Elliot, "The Motor Car Industry Makes Victory Its Business," *Canadian Geographical Journal* May 1942, 299.

This is a movement that never was dreamt of in Athens.
You find yourself in a totally new environment;
Sing to me now what you think of the new twin-sixes,
Phoebus Apollo![3]

Pollock was never more than a very minor poet, but the verse is of interest because it is a reminder of a time when it was still possible to wax rhetorical about the novelty of the automobile and the "totally new environment" it had created. In 1938, an era when there had been no cars at all still resided within the compass of living memory. As late as the beginning of the First World War there had been only 40,000 passenger cars in Canada, and most of those were little more than puttering contraptions in the hands of hobbyists.[4] But by the end of the 1920s, there were more than twice that many cars in Toronto alone, and they were vehicles of real power and sophistication.[5] In the rest of Canada, there were nearly a million more cars, and their ranks were joined by fleets of trucks and buses.[6]

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[3] Francis Pollock, "Radiator Cap", *Canadian Poetry Magazine*, Volume 2, No. 2, October 1937.
[4] *Historical Statistics of Canada*, Series S222-S235. For the purposes of brevity, this chapter will use the word "cars" in place of "passenger cars", as distinct from trucks, commercial vehicles, and motor vehicles manufactured to fill military orders.
[5] Canadian Automobile Chamber of Commerce, *Facts and Figures of the Canadian Automobile Industry*, 1933, 16. The yearly editions of *Facts and Figures* contain statistics for the previous calendar year. Its figures correspond exactly with those of the annual Dominion Bureau of Statistics report *New Motor Vehicle Sales and Motor Vehicle Financing in Canada.* I have favoured *Facts and Figures* for ease of availability and use (it provides useful year-to-year comparisons and international statistics, for instance.) However, *Facts and Figures* did not publish between 1942 and 1945. The issue for 1946 makes some attempt to cover those years.
[6] *Historical Statistics of Canada*, Series S222-S235. In 1929 there were just over one million passenger cars and 150 thousand trucks registered in Canada. Motorcycles were not a popular transportation option in Canada, accounting for less than one percent of all vehicle registrations in 1940.

No object of desire so symbolized the modern consumer society as the automobile, and nothing so symbolized the war's impact on the consumer society as the cessation of civilian automobile production in early 1942. Whether or not Canadians lived in an "automotive society" in the late 1930s depends on how one defines the phrase, but there is no denying that by the outbreak of war the automobile had become an indispensable part of life for millions of Canadians, including millions of Canadians who were not automobile owners. Cars and buses carried the nation's people and trucks hauled its commerce. Their influence could be perceived in everything from urban architecture and the vast expansion of paved roads to popular music and courtship rituals. By the late 1920s, the automobile business had also become a bellwether for the economic health of the nation. Not only did provincial governments rake in millions of dollars from vehicle registrations, gasoline taxes, and fines, but the industry employed tens of thousands of Canadians in everything from automobile plants to dealer showrooms and service stations.[7]

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[7] On the social impact of the automobile in Canada, see Heather Robertson, *Driving Force: the McLaughlin Family and the Age of the Car* (Toronto: McLelland and Stewart, 1995) and (especially) Dean Ruffili, *The Car in Canadian Culture: 1898-1983* (University of Western Ontario, PhD dissertation, 2006). The impact of the automobile in North America more generally is dealt with in David L. Lewis and Laurence Goldstein, eds. *The Automobile and American Culture* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1983). After the war, the authors of the British official history of overseas supply missions even complained about the automobile industry's "undue" domination of Canada's economy. See H. Duncan Hall and C.C. Wrigley. *Studies of Overseas Supply.* (London: H.M. Stationery Office, 1956), 48-49.

In the late teens and early twenties, American firms seeking a "back door" into the tariff-walled nations of the British Commonwealth subsumed Canada's own small and scattered automobile manufacturers. Within a few years, Canada emerged as the world's second leading manufacturer of automobiles.[8] It was a distant second, to be sure: in 1929, at its pre-Depression peak, the Canadian industry produced 262,626 new cars and trucks, more than twice as many as the third-place United Kingdom, but barely one-twentieth of American output.[9] It was also a production achievement that would not be surpassed for another twenty years.[10] Reliant on American-made parts and export oriented (four out of every ten Canadian-built vehicles were sold overseas), the Canadian automotive industry was unusually susceptible to fluctuations in the international economy.[11] The Depression's impact on the industry was positively catastrophic. Domestically, new car purchases fell from 160,000 in 1929 to fewer than 50,000 in 1932, while exports toppled 88 percent from 102,000 to just 12,500 in the same period.[12] By the late 1930s, struggling American manufacturers DeSoto, Packard, and Studebaker had closed down their

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[8] On the establishment of American automobile subsidiaries in Canada, see Richard White, *Making Cars in Canada: a Brief History of the Canadian Automotive Industry* (Ottawa: Museum of Science and Technology, 2000). Employment figures for automobile manufacturing can be found in *Facts and Figures of the Automobile Industry*, 1933, 5.

[9] *Facts and Figures of the Automobile Industry*, 1933, 10.

[10] Buckley and Urquhart, *Historical Statistics of Canada*, Series S222-S235.

[11] *Facts and Figures of the Automobile Industry*, 1940, 9, 29. By far the biggest foreign consumers of Canadian-made automobiles were Australia, New Zealand, and South Africa. By way of comparison, only about ten percent of American automobiles were exported in the late 1920s.

[12] *Facts and Figures of the Automobile Industry*, 1940, 5, 9.

Canadian operations, leaving only the "big three" — General Motors, Ford, and Chrysler — remaining when the war erupted.[13]

By contrast, British and German car production actually increased during the same period – the consequence of the emergence of middle-class motoring in the first case and of the Nazi regime's enthusiasm for automobiles in the second.[14] By 1937, Canada's automotive industry had fallen to fourth on the list of the world's leading car producers, behind the United States, Great Britain, and Germany. Nonetheless, that fourth-place ranking is remarkable, given that Canada was by far the least populous country among the top manufacturers, with just one-quarter the population of the United Kingdom and about one-sixth of Germany's.[15] Consequently, in terms of *per-capita* automobile ownership rates, Canada remained second only to the United States (see Table 6.1, below).

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[13] White, *Making Cars in Canada*, chapter five.

[14] On the British automobile industry in the 1930s, see: Roy Church, *Herbert Austin: the British Motor Car Industry to 1941* (London: Europa Productions, 1979). On Germany, see Bernard Bellon, *Mercedes in Peace and War: German Automobile Workers 1903-1945* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990).

[15] Population, Canada: *Historical Statistics of Canada*, Series A1; Germany, France, and the UK: Brian R. Mitchell, *International Historical Statistics* (New York: MacMillan, 1992) Series.

Table 5.1. Per Capita Automobile Ownership in the World's Major Automobile Manufacturers, 1939[16]

Country	Registered Vehicles in Use	Population	Ratio Population to Vehicle Registration
USA	29,852,910	130,000,000	4.3:1
Canada	1,439,245	11,000,000	8:1
UK	2,558,740	45,000,000	19.5:1
France	2,251,300	45,000,000	20:1
Germany	1,819,924	68,000,000	45:1
Italy	467,624	42,000,000	94:1
USSR	672,952	180,000,000	320:1
Japan	180,900	70,000,000	420:1

Another indication of the extent to which the automobile had become an integral part of life in Canada by the outbreak of war was the rate of family ownership. While the per capita rate of ownership might have been just one in eight, a great many more Canadians had access to the family car. Canada's 1941 census concluded that one family in three owned an automobile, a rate that would increase slightly before passenger car production ended in 1942 and then remain roughly static until after the war. Regional variations could be dramatic, even in large urban centers. Whereas nearly half of households in St. Catharines, Ontario, owned an automobile, just one household in seven did in Montreal.[17] Overall, the province of Quebec's per-capita

[16] Vehicle registration figures are estimates from *Facts and Figures of the Automobile Industry*, 1940, 10. All population figures rounded to the nearest million. Population figures for the United States from *Historical Statistics of the United States, Colonial Times to 1970.* (United States: Bureau of the Census, 1975), Series A29-42. For Canada: *Historical Statistics of Canada,* Series A1. All other nations from respective entries in *International Historical Statistics.*

[17] *Census of Canada, 1941* Volume IX, Table 18.

automobile ownership rate, about one car for every fifteen people, was the lowest in Confederation.[18]

Table 5.2 Retail Automobile Sales and Per Capita Ownership by Province, 1940[19]

Province	Sales	Total Registered Vehicles	Ratio Population to Vehicle Ownership
Ontario	58,104	703,872	5.4
Quebec	23,284	225,152	14.4
British Columbia	8,718	128,044	6.1
Saskatchewan	11,599	126,970	7.5
Alberta	10,191	120,514	6.6
Manitoba	7,715	90,932	8.1
Nova Scotia		57,873	9.7
New Brunswick	10,941[20]	39,000	11.7
P.E.I.		8,070	11.9
Yukon	0	402	9.9

A slightly earlier study conducted by the Dominion Bureau of Statistics measured automobile ownership based on family income, and found that just over one in ten of the poorest Canadian families owned an automobile compared to more than three-quarters in the highest income bracket.[21] Nonetheless, even the lowest ownership rates in Canada — whether measured by income or by region — still exceeded the national averages of Great Britain and Germany by a large measure. In Germany in

[18] Ibid., 164. Recalling that the rate of household automobile ownership in Toronto in 1941 was 50 percent, it is worth noting that as late as 2001, one-quarter of Toronto households did not own an automobile. See *Transportation Tomorrow Survey* (University of Toronto: Joint Program in Transportation, 2003), 9.

[19] *Facts and Figures of the Automobile Industry*, 1941, 19.

[20] Automobile sales figures for the individual maritime provinces are not available.

[21] *Family Income and Expenditure in Canada 1937-1938*, (Ottawa: Dominion Bureau of Statistics, 1941), 162-163.

particular, despite the Nazi leadership's efforts to produce an inexpensive "people's car", automobile ownership remained, as Adam Tooze has written, "the preserve of a small minority", affordable to just five percent of the working-class in 1939.[22] Only in the United States did per capita ownership exceed the Canadian rate and, as the charts above demonstrate, the ownership rate in Canada's most populous province was only slightly lower than the American average.

Domestic car sales gradually recovered in the last half of the 1930s, but even as late as 1939 they remained significantly lower than the pre-Depression peak. Export sales, too, had not yet recovered from the Depression and would decline once again with the outbreak of war.[23] In 1939 Canada's automotive plants were still operating at about fifty percent of their productive capacity.[24] This proved to be an unexpected boon for Canadian consumers, however. By mobilizing idle capacity after the war began, the automotive industry was able to meet military orders throughout 1939, 1940 and most of 1941 without reducing the production of passenger cars. Between 1939 and 1941 truck production increased 268 percent, largely as a result of military orders. In the same period, however, passenger car production actually

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[22] Adam Tooze, *The Wages of Destruction: the Making and Breaking of the Nazi Economy* (New York: Penguin, 2006), 156.

[23] *Facts and Figures of the Automobile Industry*, 1940, 9. Exports in 1929 were 101,711 compared to 58,723 in 1939. Exports of military vehicles, of course, increased after the war began.

[24] In square footage, factory floor space in 1939 was nearly identical to what it had been in 1929, but automobile production that year was 155,426 units as compared to 262,625 in 1929. See *Facts and Figures of the Automobile Industry*, 1940, 6.

increased slightly, before falling off by just 12 percent in 1941.[25] What this meant was that there was an ample supply of passenger cars remaining for consumers – consumers who, as we have seen, were given every encouragement to buy until late 1941.

Table 5.3 Retail Sales of New Motor Vehicles in Canada 1932-1945[26]
(units sold)

Year	Passenger Cars	Trucks and Buses	Total
1932	38,621	7,249	45,870
1933	39,568	5,764	45,332
1934	61,503	11,855	73,358
1935	83,242	18,219	101,461
1936	92,287	21,027	113,314
1937	114,275	30,166	144,441
1938	95,751	25,414	121,165
1939	90,054	24,693	114,747
1940	101,789	28,763	130,552
1941	83,642	34,431	118,073
1942	17,286	13,070	30,356
1943	948	3,814	4,798
1944	2,156	9,514	11,670
1945	4,526	19,830	24,356

The five percent dip in sales that occurred in 1939 is indicative of consumer uncertainty in the months leading up to the war rather than of the impact of the

[25] Passenger car production (as distinct from retail sales) was 108,369 in 1939; 109,911 in 1940; 96,603 in 1941. Truck production, including trucks built for the armed forces, rose from 47,057 in 1939 to 113,102 in 1940 to 173,588 in 1941. *Facts and Figures of the Automobile Industry*, 1946, 5. Unit retail sales figure prior to 1932 are not readily available.

[26] *Facts and Figures of the Automobile Industry*, 1933; 1939; 1940; 1941; 1946.

outbreak of war itself, since there were neither restrictions on automobile production nor large military orders that interfered with civilian production in the last quarter of 1939.[27] If anything, the outbreak of war seems to have led to a spate of "panic" buying: in September 1939, retail sales of automobiles were 29 percent higher than in the same month a year earlier, and the last third of 1939 saw the year's only substantial increases in automobile sales over the corresponding months in 1938.[28] The following year, 1940, became the second-best year for retail car sales in Canada since 1929, and even 1941's sales figures are greater than those of 1932 and 1933 put together. Granted, sales remained well below those of 1929, but the circumstances need to be viewed from the perspective of consumers who had endured a long economic depression and who now found themselves at war. Seen in that light, the persistence, and, in some months, modest growth, of car sales during the first two years of the war is remarkable. It forces us once again to adjust our preconceptions about "penurious patriotism" and of a wartime economy where, in the inexplicable estimation of one automotive historian, passenger cars were supposedly "not made" by the automotive industry.[29]

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[27] On the lack of military orders for Canadian industry in the first months of the war, see Robert Bothwell, "Who's Paying for Anything These Days? Canadian Armaments Production 1939-1945," in *Mobilization for Total War: the Canadian, American, and British Experience,* ed. N.F. Dreisziger (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press).

[28] *Facts and Figures of the Automobile Industry,* 1940, 15.

[29] Richard White, *Making Cars in Canada,* 66. White's exact words were: "Something else not made by the Canadian automotive industry during the war was passenger cars."

This meant that the experience of Canada's automotive retailers and car buyers in the two years following the country's declaration of war was unique. In the UK, passenger car production came to an almost immediate halt in late 1939. British consumer spending on personal motoring declined from £113 million in 1939 to £38 million in 1940.[30] Over the course of the following year, civilian motoring in the UK virtually disappeared.[31] In Germany, the production of cars for civilian buyers started to decline even before the war began, dropping from 211,000 in 1938 to 168,000 in 1939, before plummeting to 26,000 in 1940 and then to just 3,000 in 1941 – a falling off of 98.6 percent.[32] American production, too, began to decline even before the country was at war, as automakers scrambled in late 1941 to meet Lend-Lease orders and the requirements of America's own rapidly expanding armed forces.[33] Orders terminating civilian car production in the US were issued just three weeks after Pearl Harbor; the last civilian car rolled off the line on February 10, 1942, at which point the United States had been at war for about eight weeks.[34] By contrast, Canadian plants continued to produce large numbers of cars for domestic consumption for twenty-eight months following Canada's declaration of war in 1939.

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[30] B.R. Mitchell, *British Historical Statistics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 203. This equals a 70 percent decline after accounting for inflation.
[31] Zweiniger-Bargielowska's *Austerity in Britain*, 10.
[32] *United States Strategic Bomber Survey: the Effects of Strategic Bombing on the German War Economy* (European Report No. 3), 281.
[33] "Forced Cut is Looming for Motors," *Globe and Mail*, March 8, 1941, 20. "Cut U.S. Output of Cars in Half," *Globe and Mail*, August 21, 1941, 17.
[34] R.J. Overy, *Why the Allies Won* (New York: HarperCollins, 1996), 195; "Automobile Plants Turn Their Coats," *Globe and Mail*, February 13, 1942, 19.

In June 1940, the very month France fell, and according to many historians the beginning of the era of the "total war" in Canada, car sales were 46 percent higher than in the corresponding month a year earlier.[35] A progressive tax on automobile purchases, introduced that summer, did little to quell consumer demand.[36] In addition, there were, as yet, very few serious calls for reductions to automotive production and spending. In September, as the Battle of Britain reached its peak, a writer for *Saturday Night* responded angrily to any suggestion that there should be reductions. "Canada's automotive industry is too important a factor to treat lightly," he wrote. "Important cities — Windsor, Oshawa, St. Catharines — are almost entirely dependent on the automobile industry. Thousands of workers in other industries and cities also owe their livelihood to it. It is one of the biggest contributors to industrial research and progress. Obviously this is no industry to monkey with."[37] In October, *Canadian Automotive Trade* urged dealers to make local newspapers aware that curtailing civilian production was neither necessary nor desirable, given the importance of civilian motoring to the economy.[38] On the other hand, in November, CCF member A.M. Nicolson complained to the House of

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[35] *Facts and Figures of the Automobile Industry,* 1941, 15.

[36] It is true that passenger car sales dropped between June and July 1940, but it seems unlikely that the new tax alone accounted for this decline. For one thing, this seasonal "dip" occurred every year, and overall car sales in the last half of 1940 were only nine percent lower than the previous year (35,545 versus 32,087.) Moreover, unit car sales in the six month period from November 1940 to April 1941 were actually slightly higher than in the equivalent period in 1939/1940 (56,200 to 55,869). Finally, some very good individual months in terms of automotive sales lay ahead. In April 1941, for instance, car sales were approximately double what they had been in July 1940.

[37] P.M. Richards, "Restrictions Can Do Harm," *Saturday Night*, September 28, 1940, 27.

[38] "Dealers Should Speak Up," *Canadian Automotive Trade*, October 1940, 47.

Commons about a recent issue of *Maclean's* that was jammed with automotive advertising, and he wondered why the government was not demanding more sacrifice from consumers.[39] That very month, however, *Chatelaine* published a gushing four-page buying guide to the new 1941 car models without mentioning the war at all. "If there's one thing that's more than another calculated to make a girl wish she'd been born rich instead of beautiful," the author wrote,

> it's the new cars of 1941 ... next year's automobiles vie with each other to give us more streamlining, more colour, more chrome, more glass, as well as softer cushions, roomier seats, sturdier bumpers, and safer door locks for the children ... the cars of 1941 are a lure and a temptation. When you see them, you'll probably contemplate selling the house or nagging your husband to distraction.[40]

Next to that, and next to the dozens of likeminded articles that appeared in newspapers and consumer magazines in 1940, the few voices urging a curtailment of car buying amounted to little more than whistling in the wind.

This is not to suggest, however, that automobile production was continuing without disruption. Increasing war orders placed a de facto cap or ceiling on civilian production, which, while healthy by comparison to the 1930s, remained well below the production peaks of 1928 and 1929. In addition, in November 1940 an order-in-council issued on behalf of the DMS prohibited the manufacture of any new type of appliance or equipment. In effect, this constituted a suspension not merely of new

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[39] House of Commons, *Debates*, November 21, 1940, 301.
[40] Thelma Le Cocq, "Alice in Autoland," *Châtelaine*, November 1940, 16, 34-35, 58.

products but of design changes to existing ones, except in cases where the changes resulted in materials savings.[41] In addition, in February 1941, the DMS created the office of Motor Vehicle Controller. Controller John Berry's authority over both the automobile industry and the country's civilian motor pool was absolute – the trade papers actually referred to him as the industry's "dictator" for a brief time after his appointment.[42] Not only was he vested with the authority to regulate automobile production and sales, he could in an emergency appropriate civilian vehicles.[43] While this power was never exercised, paranoid rumours began to circulate in the United States, warning American tourists traveling to Canada that their cars might be seized. Canadian border authorities responded by handing out pamphlets assuring Americans that they could travel freely throughout Canada, and without fear of losing their cars or having the gasoline siphoned from their tanks – at least by any legal authority.[44]

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[41] Order-in-Council P.C. 6765, in the *Canada Gazette*, November 20, 1940. The design freeze did not prohibit various economies such as materials substitution, which was not merely encouraged but in some cases actually mandated owing to shortages of certain kinds of metals in particular. See, for instance: "Urge Simplification of Products to Reduce Costs," *Hardware and Metal*, February 14, 1942, 42-43 and "Washing Machines Likely to Show Effect of Wartime Conservation of Metals," *Hardware and Metal*, August 16, 1941, 294.

[42] "Berry Now Supreme Automotive Dictator," *Canadian Automotive Trade*, March 1941, 19.

[43] Order-in-Council P.C. 1121, in *Canadian War Orders and Regulations* (Ottawa: Department of Munitions and Supply, 1945), 219-222.

[44] In 1941, these rumours were discussed widely in both *Canadian Automotive Trade* and *Canadian Hotel and Restaurant*. Usually the writers suggested the rumours were spread as part of a deliberate sabotage effort. The government's pamphlets for American tourists, entitled "Canada's War Record", were issued under the authority of the Director of Public Information and designed to be kept in a passport book. Wording varied from pamphlet to pamphlet. A typical example, August 1st, 1941, read, in part, "American tourists can come to Canada and return as easily as in peace time. In Canada, they

Powerful though it might have been, in the first few months of its existence the office of Motor Vehicle Controller imposed very few restrictions on car production and none at all on retail sales. In April, Berry issued an order capping new car production for the remainder of 1941, albeit at a healthy 80 percent of what it had been in the equivalent period in 1940.[45] In addition, he banned the importation of certain American-made models as part of the general campaign to create a more favorable balance-of-trade situation with the United States, but these imports were so few that this measure had no significant impact on car sales in Canada.[46] Sales had always increased in the springtime, and the spring of 1941 was no exception. New passenger car sales rose from 6700 in February to 16,000 in April, one of the highest monthly totals since 1929. In spite of the progressive tax, first quarter car sales in 1941 were nearly identical to the same period in 1940, and were up 30 percent from the first quarter of 1939.[47] In June, even as the war escalated to frightening new proportions after the German invasion of the Soviet Union, the

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will enjoy a 10 percent premium on their money and will be able to move about freely." (Pamphlet in author's private collection.)

[45] Kennedy, *History of the Department of Munitions and Supply*, Volume II, 140. See also "First Order Comes from Motor Vehicles Controller," *Canadian Automotive Trade*, April 1941, 19.

[46] Kennedy, *History of the Department of Munitions and Supply*, Volume II, 140. Berry also forbade the establishment of new automotive manufacturers, apparently in response to the proposal by some U.S. manufacturers to set up new plants in Canada, in order to circumvent the curtailment on imports.

[47] Dominion Bureau of Statistics, *The Motor Vehicle Industry in Canada* 1945, 5. Monthly totals of passenger car sales can be found in the various editions of *Facts and Figures of the Automobile Industry* until 1941 (which published figures for the calendar year of 1940). *Facts and Figures* ceased publication in 1942 until 1946.

editor of *Canadian Automotive Trade* reassured readers that car production in Canada would in all probability continue without interruption.[48]

It proved to be an overly optimistic assessment of the situation. At the end of July, the DMS announced that production of cars would be reduced in 1942 to 44 percent of 1941's output. Berry explained that unanticipated shortages of parts and materials were becoming more frequent, resulting in whole days where production lines and workers sat idle. "Rather than wait for actual material shortages to hinder production of automobiles," he wrote, "a fixed curtailment has been put into effect and this will permit established schedules to be carried through." He estimated that the cuts would result in a savings of more than 50,000 tons of materials in 1942 alone.[49] In addition, Berry asked automakers to slash the number of new models to 79 in 1942, down from 147 in 1941.[50] These were quite serious impositions, to be sure, but they seem to have been greeted with equanimity by most dealers as the best compromise possible under the circumstances.

As the war entered its third year, then, the overall outlook for car dealers and civilian buyers was not nearly as gloomy as might be expected. The cuts to car production that Berry had ordered for 1941 did not have an immediate effect on sales, which in the 3rd quarter were 30 percent higher than in the same period the

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[48] Editorial, *Canadian Automotive Trade*, June 1941, 16. The exact quotation was: "Business in Canada goes on much as usual; there is no outward evidence yet that Canadian manufacturers must make immediate changes."

[49] "Ottawa Can Further Restrict or Entirely Prohibit Car Production," *Canadian Automotive Trade*, October 1941, 28.

[50] "Restrictions on Productions of Automobiles Announced," *Industrial Canada*, August 1941, 50.

previous year. Granted, in response to oil tanker losses, the government launched a gasoline conservation campaign that summer, but in practice this involved nothing more than appeals for conservation and the mandatory closing of pumps after 7 pm and on Sundays.[51] This brought complaints from some farmers — and a spirited denunciation on their behalf in the *Globe and Mail* from Agnes Macphail — on the grounds that they needed to go to their market towns on Saturday nights, after the pumps closed.[52] Still, overall, very few restrictions had been imposed on car sales or on driving. Dealers enjoyed steady sales and, judging from editorials and letters published in the industry's trade journals, actually welcomed at least some of the restrictions, which offered some opportunities to serve the war effort without making really large sacrifices.

Furthermore, no one seemed to believe that a total suspension of car production was likely. A few automobile advertisements, published in late 1941, made special reference to the durability of that year's new cars (phrases such as "built to last" became more common), but no articles in the trade papers forewarned dealers of an imminent order to cease production, nor was there speculation in the general media that such an order was likely. As late as December 6th, a Canadian Press story, quoting the Minister of Trade, reiterated that car production would only be cut by

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[51] "Gasoline Selling Hours Restricted," *Hardware and Metal*, July 19, 1941, 8.
[52] Agnes Macphail, "Gasoline Ban is Hardship to Farmers," *Globe and Mail*, August 12, 1941, 13.

half in 1942.[53] Perhaps most tellingly, there was no great "run" on sales in November and December 1941, as had happened in other cases of panic buying when the public believed that certain goods would become unavailable. If anything, war jitters seem to have had the opposite effect, as sales were slightly lower than usual at the end of year. Presumably buyers believed that an adequate quantity of passenger cars would continue to be available.

But the continuation of car production, and of consumer durable production generally, depended upon the continued neutrality of the United States. Approximately one-third of the parts and materials that went into a Canadian-built automobile were imported from the U.S.[54] In 1941, as the Americans' own rearmament program grew by leaps and bounds, Canadian manufacturers faced steadily greater challenges securing the necessary materials for nonessential production. The most critical requirement was for steel, despite a 100 percent increase in Canadian production. In November, the DMS's Steel Controller, F.B. Kilbourn, estimated that Canada would need to import 4.5 times as much steel from the United States in 1942 as it had in 1939. Washington's own steel allocation scheme ranked nonessential Canadian needs very far down the list of priorities,

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[53] "New Shortages of Goods Soon," *Globe and Mail*, December 6, 1941, 2.
[54] *Some General Aspects of the Canadian Customs Tariff, the National Economy, and the Automobile Industry in Canada* (Windsor: Ford Motor Company, 1938), 63.

which was one of the reasons that Ottawa's various boards and agencies progressively curtailed consumer durable production over the course of 1941.[55]

Pearl Harbor, and entry of the United States into the war, forced them to take even more drastic measures. Almost immediately, a torrent of restrictions spilled forth from Ottawa. On the 8th, Berry banned the further use of chrome, copper, and nickel in automobile trim. On the 11th, facing the complete collapse of crude rubber imports from the Pacific, the DMS's Rubber Controller froze tire stocks and prohibited rubber processing except for military or essential industrial purposes.[56] On the 12th, children bore the brunt of an announcement suspending the production of a host of metal consumer goods, including tricycles, wagons, ice skates, roller skates, and metal toys. Other banned items ranged from sandwich toasters and waffle irons to metal ash trays, coat racks, foot stools, and lawn swings. On the same day, C.D. Howe informed Canadians that coupon rationing of gasoline would commence in April – the first formal rationing that Canadians would experience during the war. On the 14th, Berry banned the sale of spare tires with new cars. On the 15th, the production of additional metal articles, including a wide of range of metal furniture, was banned, and reductions in the output of commercial refrigerators were announced. On the 17th, a reduction in commercial laundry equipment production

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[55] "Shortages of Steel to Limit Production of Many Familiar Articles," *Industrial Canada*, December 1942, 43-44.
[56] "Orders Affecting the Use of Rubber Are Announced," *Industrial Canada*, January, 1942, 73-74. *Canada Year Book*, 1942, 357.

was ordered, and further household metal productions were placed on the restricted list. On the 19th, orders forbade the use of brass or bronze in a variety of familiar items, including door knockers, name plates, and hat and coat hooks. Another order imposed severe restrictions on tin, freezing its use altogether except for essential purposes. Yet another reduction in the output of washing machines and refrigerators came down the same day. By the end of the month, further orders had cut the production of dry cleaning equipment, forbidden the use of galvanized fittings in civilian plumbing, reduced the quantities of metals available for bed frames, and restricted the use of steel in civilian construction.[57] On January 1st, 1942, C.D. Howe made the most momentous announcement of all: civilian car production would cease no later than the end of March. On the same day, and certainly not by coincidence, a similar decree was issued in the United States.[58] A ban on civilian truck production followed in both countries within a few weeks.[59] Metal shortages were so severe that in July the Board even reduced the number of pins a haberdasher was permitted to use to secure the folds in a man's shirt – to twelve, down from the usual eighteen.[60]

What led to the total suspension of passenger car production in Canada, therefore, was not greater demands for military vehicles, as these steadily diminished

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[57] *Industrial Canada*, January 1942, 72-76.
[58] "Canada Will Bar Auto Production After March 31," *Globe and Mail*, Friday, January 2nd, 1942, 1-2. The article noted that the order came as a surprise. An Order-in-Council, which formalized the suspension and established the specifics, was issued February 2nd. See Order-in-Council MVC 13, *Canadian War Orders and Regulations* (Ottawa: Department of Munitions and Supply, 1945), 226-227.
[59] Order-in-Council MVC 16, *Canadian War Orders and Regulations*, 229-230.
[60] *Men's Wear Merchandising*, July 1, 1942, 19.

after 1942.[61] It was the integration of the North American economy, and the reliance of Canadian manufacturers — many of them subsidiaries of American firms — on parts and materials that the United States could no longer supply for nonessential needs after it had declared war. In a sense, then, the order-in-council suspending car production was redundant. With the United States at war, the strategic allocation of resources was bound to bring Canadian production of civilian cars to a halt, regardless of any decision made by Canadian authorities.[62] In fact, this was precisely what happened with domestic stove and refrigerator production, the production of which virtually ended by 1943 even though no order had mandated it. As matters would have it, car production ended a month before the order-in-council had required. The last civilian car, a 1942 Chevy, missing only its spare tire, rolled off the assembly line on Friday February 27, 1942.[63] There was no ceremony. When General Andrew McNaughton, visiting from England, arrived to tour the plant that weekend, it was to see the war production facilities, not the last passenger car.[64]

While the order to cease production seems to have caught auto dealers unaware, Berry nonetheless maintained a genial relationship with them. He met often with representatives of the industry and proved amenable to persuasion in

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[61] In 1941, for example, the industry built some 96,600 passenger cars and 189,000 wheeled vehicles for the armed forces; in 1942, it would build 12,000 passenger cars (all of them in the first two months of the year) and 199,000 wheeled vehicles for the armed forces, its peak output for the war. See Kennedy, *History of the Department of Munitions and Supply*, 150. Figures are rounded.
[62] See discussion in Kennedy, *History of the Department of Munitions and Supply*, 140-142.
[63] *Globe and Mail*, February 28, 1942, 9.
[64] *Globe and Mail*, March 2, 1942, 15.

more than one instance.[65] If the claims made by some retailers about the utility of their product in wartime seemed fanciful or slight — as indeed they often were — the automotive industry, at least, had a plausible claim to indispensability. It was for this reason that the order-in-council suspending production made provisions for the manufacture, by permit, of small numbers of cars to meet essential civilian needs. Most such requirements, however, would be met by means of a reserve pool consisting of some 4500 cars drawn from existing stocks. The Controller would review applications to buy pool cars on a case-by-case basis.[66] Dealers were permitted to sell their remaining stocks at their own discretion, but panic buying was to be discouraged. To that end, dealers were advised to offer very low trade-in prices on used cars, and were promised the Controller's support in the event of complaints.[67] Dealer stocks did not last long (in 1942, just 17,000 new cars were sold in Canada) and Berry proved remarkably parsimonious in releasing cars from the reserve pool: he authorized just 984 sales in1943.[68] More pressing industrial and agricultural requirements for new trucks were met by diverting a percentage of

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[65] "Wartime Meeting of Federation Encourages Dealers to Hang On," *Canadian Automotive Trade*, August 1942, 11-12.
[66] Order-in-Council MVC 13, *Canadian War Orders and Regulations*, 226-227. "Pool" cars were made available after freely available cars on dealer lots were gone.
[67] "Dealers and Vehicle Controller Will Distribute Cars Through Two Pools," *Canadian Automotive Trade*, April 1942, 63, 67.
[68] *Facts and Figures of the Automobile Business*, 1946, 5.

military vehicles, stripped of any combat-applicable hardware, to civilian needs. In 1944 and 1945, the Controller diverted 23,000 trucks for these purposes.[69]

Berry also took action to regulate the sale and pricing of used cars, which were available only by permit after April 1942. He imposed a rather crude formula for pricing, in which a car that was one year old would be worth 90 percent of its original value, a two year old car would be worth 80 percent and so on, but it seems improbable that these rules were observed in person-to-person sales. Dealers were more constrained, but had fewer used cars to sell. When the stop order came down, *Canadian Automotive Trade* estimated that used car dealers had 40,000 cars and 20,000 trucks on hand, but noted that about six percent of the vehicles were "junkers" and that fully a quarter had poor tires, making them "hard sells" at a time when new tires were increasingly difficult to get.[70] Nonetheless, a very healthy trade in used cars continued throughout the war. While precise figures for used car sales are not available, a minimum number sold by dealers can be ascertained from financing figures. In 1941, just over 141,000 used vehicles were financed; in 1942, 57,000; in 1943, 38,500; in 1944, 30,599 – a total of 267,000 vehicles.[71] It is worth repeating that this represents a very minimum for the number of used cars sold in the last four years of the war, since not all used car sales were financed, nor do these

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[69] Kennedy, *History of the Department of Munitions and Supply*, 142-143.
[70] "Dealers Ready to Fight!" *Canadian Automotive Trade*, April, 1942, 39.
[71] *Facts and Figures of the Automobile Industry*, 1946, 14. According to the Census of Industry and Manufactures, no detailed census of used car sales was taken during the war years. A 1937 survey, however, revealed that approximately twice as many used as new cars changed hands that year.

numbers take into account a very large number of private sales which must have occurred, and which were exceedingly difficult for the WPTB to regulate. A 1945 survey undertaken for Maclean Publishing found that 17 percent of the cars owned by those surveyed had been acquired in the past year alone, and a further 27 percent in the two years before that.[72] Even allowing for used cars bought and re-sold, it seems probable that as much as a third of the nation's motor pool changed hands after the suspension of automotive production.

Nonetheless, from the car dealer's point of view, the contrast between the first half of the war and the last half could not have been greater. Not since the first decade of the century had so few new vehicles rolled off of car lots. For dealers the remainder of the war became a struggle for survival. Across Canada, they responded to the crisis by reorienting their business towards increased automotive service. Someone, they reasoned, had to keep the nation's irreplaceable cars and trucks running. Some even converted part or all of their showrooms to garage space, in anticipation of a greater volume of maintenance work in the years ahead. An optimistic service-station owner in Ottawa wrote, "we will eventually run into a period when we won't be able to buy parts (but) it is wonderful what you can do with an old lathe in your garage...we made rings, valves, and even pistons on an old

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[72] "John Public Eyes the Future of the Automotive Market," *Canadian Automotive Trade*, January 1945, 26.

lathe."[73] A Vancouver firm profiled in *Canadian Automotive Trade* was forced to reduce its sales staff from ten to two (the lucky pair were retained to look after used car sales) but prospered on account of a 400 percent increase in its service business.[74] Monthly articles in the trade papers offered highly technical advice to mechanics about keeping older vehicles running. Under such circumstances, shortages of skilled labour was always a problem – thousands of mechanics were lost to the armed forces. But jobs for those who remained were never in short supply, especially since the armed forces often contracted civilian automobile dealers to repair military vehicles in Canada. Under such circumstances, surprisingly few dealers were forced to shut their doors: only eleven failed in 1942 and just four in 1943. A few more garages failed: twenty-five in 1942 and seven in 1943, but in each case this amounted to a miniscule fraction of the trade. In 1941, there were 1,962 dealers and 3,156 garages in Canada. In the twenty-four month period of 1942 and 1943, their failure rate was less than one percent.[75]

For consumers, the symbolic importance of the suspension of car production was enormous, especially since no one could predict when production would resume. Its actual impact, however, might not have been as great as might be imagined, for the simple reason that it did not last long enough to alter automobile ownership rates to any significant degree. Owing to the growth that had occurred in the first two

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[73] "Garagemen's Ideas," *Canadian Automotive Trade*, June 1942, 29.
[74] F.J. Fullerton, "Selling a Car a Day in Wartime, " *Canadian Automotive Trade* August 1943, 21.
[75] *Canada Year Book* 1945, 626-633.

years of the war, the number of registered cars in 1945 actually stood slightly higher than it had in 1939. The number of commercial vehicles, too, increased slightly over the course of the war, with the largest proportional increases occurring outside of Ontario – yet another example of the modernizing impact of the war. In PEI, for instance, the number of commercial vehicle registrations nearly doubled between 1939 and 1945, and a very significant increase in the number of trucks was also seen in the prairies.[76] The principal impact of the suspension of car production was to frustrate those consumers who had hoped to buy a replacement car in the near future. It did not alter passenger car ownership rates – it only delayed their expansion until after victory.

Of far greater significance to those Canadians who already owned cars was the shortage of gasoline, spare parts, and especially new tires. In November 1941, C.D. Howe announced that gasoline rationing would commence as soon as the administrative details were worked out.[77] By February, plans were in place for a comprehensive rationing scheme to commence April 1st. The scheme took account of everyone from urbanites who used their cars for everyday transportation to doctors, rural mail carriers, foreign diplomats, American tourists, and even Christian Science healers, apportioning gasoline on the basis of probable needs. Ration booklets were distributed to drivers in the weeks prior to the beginning of the

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[76] *Facts and Figures of the Automobile Industry*, 1946, 16.
[77] "Gasoline Shortage Worse Next Spring, Howe Warns," *Toronto Daily Star*, November 19, 1941, 1.

campaign, with the federal government snapping up a tidy $1 million in "registration fees".[78] But apart from the inconvenience of the ration books — an inconvenience borne mainly by gas station attendants, who by law had to detach the coupons from the books — the initial gasoline rations were a comparatively minor imposition. Nonessential "class A" users received a ration of 60 five-gallon "units" per annum, good for approximately 5400 miles of driving, and no restrictions at all were imposed on most commercial vehicles, including trucks, buses, ambulances, and even taxis, provided that their use was not unreasonably higher than in 1941.[79] But tanker losses and soaring consumption (aviation gasoline consumption alone was *twenty-two* times higher in 1942 than in 1939) forced the DMS to announce stricter rations that summer.[80] By September, rations for most nonessential users (now categorized "AA") had been halved and restrictions were imposed on commercial vehicles.[81] As always, few things escaped the attention of government regulators. Rental cars, for instance, were placed under the authority of the DMS's Transit Control board, which rationed their gasoline and restricted rentals to travelers with essential business

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[78] A $1 "registration fee" was attached to each booklet. "Gasoline Ration Books Needed for Every Car," *Toronto Daily Star*, December 13, 1941, 1.

[79] "Quotas Fixed for Gasoline by Categories," *Globe and Mail*, January 30, 1942, 1. Gasoline rations posed a potentially serious problem for provincial governments. In 1939, automobile registration fees and retail gasoline taxes had accounted for anywhere from a fifth (in the case of British Columbia, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, and Prince Edward Island) to 40 percent (in the case of Ontario) of provincial tax revenues. In a rare gesture of pure magnanimity towards the provinces, Ottawa promised them tens of millions of dollars to offset the loss of gas taxes. See "Ottawa Will Pay 100 Millions Years to Nine Provinces," *Globe and Mail*, January 16, 1942, 1.

[80] Kennedy, *History of the Department of Munitions and Supply*, Volume II, 164.

[81] "Gasoline Cut to Affect 225,000 Drivers," *Globe and Mail*, September 29, 1942, 1.

requirements, thus denying consumers who ran out of gas the opportunity to rent a car in their hometown.[82] Legally monitored civilian consumption of gasoline dropped off dramatically, from 746 million gallons in 1941 to a low of 529 million in 1943, an annual savings that the DMS described as being "equivalent to 64 voyages of an average size ocean tanker."[83]

An almost equal deterrent to pleasure driving was the critical shortage of new tires. In 1950, the official history of the DMS would describe the rubber situation as the most serious supply crisis Canadians faced during the war. Ninety percent of Canadian crude rubber was imported from Indochina, Malaya, Java, Sumatra, and the East Indies. War with Japan cut off these imports, and the production of synthetic rubber, which began belatedly and only experimentally in early 1942, could not make up the difference. Consequently, the DMS made drastic cuts into the quantity of crude rubber dedicated to the consumer economy. Production of standard tires for civilian cars plummeted from 1.4 million in 1941 to 56,000 in 1942 – a staggering 96 percent drop in a single year. Production of heavy-duty tires plunged from 557 thousand to 23,000 in the same period, while tube production fell from 1.9 million to 80,000.[84] Overall civilian consumption of crude rubber dropped from over 30,000 tons per year to fewer than 3,000 in 1944. Even so, with military requirements

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[82] Kennedy, *History of the Department of Munitions and Supply*, Volume II, 274.
[83] *Facts and Figures of the Automobile Industry*, 1946, 10; Kennedy, *History of the Department of Munitions and Supply*, Volume II, 169.
[84] *Facts and Figures of the Automobiles Industry*, 1946, 11.

soaring, rubber stocks declined from just under 34,000 tons in 1941 to 6,800 tons in 1944.[85] An order-in-council even made it a criminal offense to throw out or destroy anything made of rubber without a proper permit.[86] Massive campaigns urged manufacturers and consumers to turn over "scrap" rubber. In 1942 and 1943 over 28,000 tons was collected.[87]

While every government agency acknowledged that the maintenance of the civilian automobile fleet was essential to the war effort, the DMS nonetheless estimated in 1942 that fewer than one car in sixteen could be issued a new tire in 1942 and 1943, and that even at that rate the stockpile of tires available for civilians would be exhausted by mid-1944. Conservation therefore became an urgent mission. Tires were rationed by permit rather than by coupon, and were therefore never apportioned to consumers on a schedule in the way that such things as coffee, tea, and gasoline were. Stocks of tires, which had been frozen after Pearl Harbor, were made available on a case-by-case basis to essential users, though even then the buyer was required to surrender his old tires upon obtaining new ones.[88] In July 1942, the Rubber Controller announced that 375,000 drivers in the "essential" category might be granted permission to buy retreaded tires or to have their existing tires retreaded.

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[85] Kennedy, *History of the Department of Munitions and Supply*, Volume II, 191.
[86] "Penalties for the Destruction of Any Rubber Item," *Canadian Automotive Trade*, June 1942, 59. See also "Tire Conservation is of Vital Importance to Every Canadian," *Globe and Mail*, January 30, 1942, 11.
[87] Kennedy, *History of the Department of Munitions and Supply*, Volume II, 192.
[88] "Orders Affecting the Use of Rubber Are Announced," *Industrial Canada*, January, 1942, 73-74; "Restriction Affect Automotive Industry," *Canadian Automotive Trade*, March 1942, 40, 54.

For everyone else — some 800,000 car owners — new tires would simply not be available by any legal means until after the war.[89] Provincial governments, hoping to extend the lives of tires, imposed a maximum 40 mile-per-hour speed limit, an indignity that the poet Raymond Souster responded to in 1943, expressing the automobile owner's inextinguishable zeal for independence and speed:[90]

> To drive the newest, shiniest, longest, most cylindered, most featured of the latest models down the four-lane highway bound for supper club or the weekend summer hotel.
>
> This is to live, this is to meet the moment of each day with the maximum prescribed measure of pleasure.[91]

While the official history of the DMS reports that gasoline and tire regulations "were observed by the vast majority of Canadians", a great deal of evidence points to an extensive black market, especially for gasoline.[92] Even a cursory examination of Canadian newspapers from 1942 to 1945 reveals that the theft of tires and gasoline coupons, as well as prosecutions of both retailers, consumers, and even corrupt government officials for various other rationing infractions, were a daily occurrence. Probably the most commonly reported type of prosecution was of gas station owners who sold gasoline without receipt of legitimate coupons. In August

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[89] "Controller of Supplies Issues Stern Rubber Warning," *Canadian Automotive Trade*, July 1942, 51. The specifics of tire rationing regulations can be found in: "Tire Ration Order More Specific and Drastic," *Canadian Automotive Trade*, June 1942, 31-32, 42 and "Controller Sets District Quotas for Tire Rationing," *Canadian Automotive Trade*, September 1942, 57.
[90] *Facts and Figures of the Automobile Industry*, 1946, 47.
[91] Raymond Souster, "Nada," *Directions*, November 1943, 4.
[92] Kennedy, *History of the Department of Munitions and Supply*, Volume II, 169.

1942 alone, the Oil Controller temporarily closed 225 gas stations in Montreal, Toronto, Winnipeg, and Vancouver for violations of rationing rules. In November, a further seventy-two stations in southwestern Ontario were closed in a typical inspection sweep.[93] In one sting operation in Windsor, undercover Mounties operating a gas station found that only *four* out of 80 customers they served in a two-hour period presented them with proper ration booklets.[94] So serious was the situation that the editors of the *Globe and Mail* proposed that the black market could only be brought under control by flogging first-time miscreants and executing serial offenders.[95] No such punishments were forthcoming, but prosecutions did increase — there were more than a thousand in 1943 — with hefty fines and even an occasional prison sentence handed down.[96] Other forms of punishment sometimes awaited violators, too. In Vancouver, to cite one example, the city council voted to suspend the civic trade licenses of any retailer who participated in the black market.[97]

The office of the Oil Controller responded with a number of measures designed to curtail the reuse of old tickets. These included requiring the ration coupon holder to write his or her license plate number on the back of the ticket and

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[93] "Contrell Closes Stations for Coupon Infractions," *Canadian Automotive Trade*, November 1942, 50.
[94] "Mounties Run Gas Station After Arresting Operators," *Globe and Mail*, November 4, 1943, 1.
[95] "Black Market Crimes," *Globe and Mail*, April 14, 1943, 6.
[96] Wartime Prices and Trade Board, *Annual Report*, 1944, 43.
[97] "Individuals Can Eliminate Evil Black Market Problem," *Hamilton Spectator*, May 22, 1943, n.p.

making gas station attendants stamp all coupons in indelible ink.[98] Still, there is every indication that black market activity continued to grow. An enormous underground traffic in fake, used, and expired gasoline coupons existed. In one instance, new ration booklets worth 74,000 gallons of gasoline mysteriously "disappeared" from the truck delivering them.[99] A Hamilton-based racket managed to steal a total of 500,000 used coupons before being broken up by the RCMP.[100] In Montreal, an even bigger black market syndicate was caught before it could distribute as many as three-quarters of a million fake or stolen coupons.[101] So it went, on and on. In April 1944, the *Globe*'s frustrated editors likened the situation to bootlegging in the prohibition era, claiming that "tens of thousands" of Canadians were partaking in it.[102] A few weeks earlier, the paper had published an incendiary full-page advertisement for the Joy Oil company, which operated filling stations in Windsor, Toronto, and Montreal. The advertisement alleged that an underground distribution of 300 *million* gallons of gasoline was occurring annually. Rationing affected only honest, independent gas station owners, the ad claimed, while big oil and gas companies, who had Oil Controller George Cottrelle in their pocket,

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[98] Harold Don Allen, *Canada: Rationing, a Numismatic Record* (Montreal: Canadian Numismatic Association, 1956), 21.
[99] "A National Scandal," *Hamilton Review*, April 17, 1943, n.p.
[100] "Use 500,000 Coupons in Cover-Up Racket," *Toronto Daily Star*, November 17, 1943, 1.
[101] Keshen, *Saints, Sinners and Soldiers*, 101.
[102] J.V. McAbee, "Gas Black Market a National Scandal," *Globe and Mail*, April 4, 1944, 6.

criminally disregarded rationing rules.[103] Such allegations proved too much for the authorities to endure, and Joy Oil's owners were brought up on the very serious charge of attempting to subvert the war effort. In the subsequent trial, the judge, while disputing the claim that 300 million gallons of gasoline had been illegally distributed the previous year, found for the defendant.[104] No doubt the figure alleged by the advertisement was too high, but in its annual report for 1944, the WPTB itself admitted to "widespread evasion" of its gasoline regulations. Of 7,706 prosecutions for various consumption-related infractions that year, some 2,558 were gasoline-related offenses. While the report claimed that "the vast majority" of Canadians were obeying the rules, it also noted that the number of prosecutions reflected only a small percentage of all offenses being committed. "No one party to such a deal [a black market transaction] has any incentive to make a disclosure or complain," was the report's blunt assessment of the circumstances.[105]

It is therefore impossible to establish with any certainty how widespread gasoline and tire infractions were, especially since there is countervailing evidence to suggest that many Canadians were at least willing to tolerate the imposition. Certainly there is evidence to suggest that people were driving less, such as the demonstrably huge increases in the number of passengers on planes, trains, and

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[103] Joy Oil Company advertisement, *Globe and Mail*, March 30, 1944, 21. In 1943, it is worth noting, Joy's owners had themselves been fined $800 for selling gasoline without receipt of proper gasoline coupons.

[104] "Court Dismisses Charge Against Joy Oil Head," *Toronto Telegram*, July 14, 1944, 1. See also "Free Speech Prevails," *Globe and Mail*, July 14, 1944, 6.

[105] Wartime Prices and Trade Board, *Annual Report*, 1944, 43-44.

buses. Another indication that people were driving less, or at least driving more carefully, is the decline in traffic offenses. Convictions for traffic offenses dropped nearly 30 percent between 1941 and 1943. Granted, this could be a question of diminishing enforcement, so it is more telling that the number of automobile fatalities, which were not likely to be underreported, dropped by nearly a quarter as well, from 1,852 in 1941 to 1,417 in 1943.[106]

Editorial cartoons in newspapers and magazines often made light of gasoline rationing and tire shortages, as if to say that they were not much of a burden at all. One such cartoon depicted a woman at a formal ball, wearing what an onlooker calls "her family heirloom" – a rubber tire, around her neck.[107] Writing in *Mayfair* in April 1943, Robert Stark cracked wise about the "good old days" of guiltless gasoline consumption: "Yes sir, life was mighty full. I remember how proud my own Pop was when we had a car that got only fifteen miles to the gallon of gas. He was awful jealous when the man next door showed up with one that only got thirteen."[108] Moreover, the public gave every indication that it was willing to make further sacrifices if necessary. In May 1942, the *Globe and Mail* reported the results of a survey which found that most motorists would be willing to give up their car

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[106] *Canada Year Book*, 1945, 1085.
[107] *Canadian Automotive Trade*, April 1942, 38.
[108] Robert C. Stark, "It Has Come At Last," *Mayfair*, April 1943, 25.

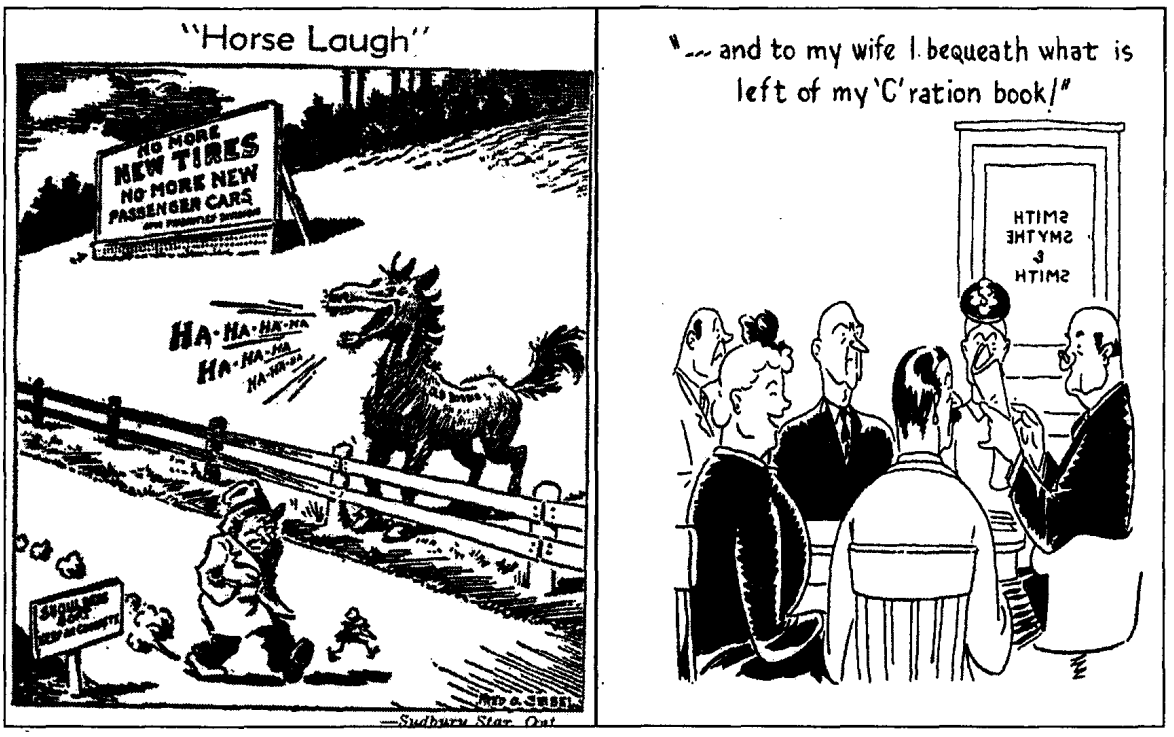

Figure 5.1 and 5.2 Editorial cartoons sometimes made light of gasoline and tire restrictions. Above, left: a cartoon from the Sudbury Star, reprinted in Canadian Automotive Trade, January 15, 1942. Right: by cartoonist Jake Ridelle, Motor Magazine, March 1944, n.p.

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altogether, if need be.[109] In July, this was followed by a more formal poll which found 84 percent of respondents agreeing that the government should, if necessary, appropriate tires from nonessential vehicles – provided that the owners were properly compensated, of course.[110] Symbolic acts of patriotism by prominent Canadians made good news copy, too. In spite of his own greater-than-average gasoline allowance, GM of Canada president Sam McLaughlin demonstrated both his

[109] "Motorists 'Don't Care a Hang' If Autos Are Commandeered," *Globe and Mail*, May 8, 1942, 15. The article did not divulge the source of the survey.
[110] *The Public Opinion Quarterly*, Vol. 6, No. 4. (Winter, 1942), 655.

patriotism and some nostalgia for his family's carriage-making heritage, when he started driving a horse-and-buggy to his Oshawa office.[111]

Some farm and commercial services really did start using horses again, but given their much larger rations, not to mention the difficulty of procuring wagons, carriages, and harnesses under wartime conditions, this seldom proved necessary or desirable. A service-station owner in Nova Scotia who displayed a full-size replica of a horse-drawn carriage under a sign that read "1943 taxi" was only joking.[112] For the typical urbanite, carpooling and public transportation proved to be far more practical means of coping. The number of buses operating in Canadian cities jumped from 1700 in 1941 to 2600 in 1944, and would have expanded further had American bus manufacturers been able to make good on their Canadian orders.[113] In Toronto, bus and streetcar ridership increased by 84% over the course of the war.[114] This was actually lower than the national average of 120%, the bulk of which occurred after the introduction of gasoline rationing, with ridership exploding from 857 million passengers in 1941 to 1.4 billion in 1944.[115] Intercity bus service, too, took off, with expanding routes and a staggering increase in ridership: from 17 million passengers

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[111] Robinson, *Driving Force*, 303.
[112] *Canadian Automotive Trade*, November 1942, n.p.
[113] Kennedy, *History of the Department of Munitions and Supply*, Volume II, 272.
[114] Donald F. Davis and Barbara Lorenzkowski, "A Platform for Gender Tensions: Women Working and Riding on Canadian Urban Public Transit in the 1940s," *Canadian Historical Review* 79 (3) 1998, 437.
[115] Kennedy, *History of the Department of Munitions and Supply*, Volume II, 272-274.

in 1939 to 85 million in 1943.[116] Bicycles proved to be another way of getting by, at least when the weather was agreeable. In early 1942 the DMS increased the quota on adult bicycle output by 150 percent to 150,000 units, while streamlining the number of bicycle models to just three adult types. Manufacture of children's bicycles, however, was eliminated altogether.[117] Smart hardware dealers got the jump on selling used and refurbished bicycles, for which there was no fixed ceiling price until 1944.[118] Police complained that increasing bicycle traffic was a serious hazard, with cyclists traveling three-and-four abreast, but the number of cyclists killed in 1943 was 68, only about half of what it had been in 1939.[119]

In many respects, the circumstances surrounding appliances paralleled those of automobiles. In spite of the Depression, there was a very large increase in the percentage of Canadian households owning electrical appliances in the 1930s. As in the case of automobiles, these rates lagged well behind those of the United States, but were far ahead of those found in western Europe. Given that much of rural Canada was not yet electrified (the use of gasoline-powered generators notwithstanding) regional variations in the ownership of electrical appliances was enormous – far greater, in fact, than regional variations in automobile ownership.

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[116] *Canada Year Book*, 1943, 678.
[117] "150,000 Bicycles Quota of 1942 for Dominion," *Globe and Mail*, May 26, 1942, 1.
[118] "How Emerson Brothers Adjust Stocks to Wartime Conditions and Needs," *Hardware and Metal*, August 15, 1942, 87. "Use Bicycles Prices Fixed," *Globe and Mail*, October 4, 1944, 1.
[119] "Advocates Bikes-Built-for-Two as Traffic Violations Increase," *Globe and Mail*, May 26, 1942, 5. *Canada Year Book*, 1945, 680; *Canada Year Book*, 1941, 579.

Table 5.4 Percentage Household Ownership of Selected Durable Commodities, 1941[120]

Commodity	Farm	Rural	Urban	All Canada
Radio	60.6	70.6	88.6	77.8
Telephone	29.3	27.8	49.7	40.3
Electrical Vacuum	4.4	17.7	36.2	24.2
Electrical / Gas Stove	7.4	23	60.9	39.6
Electrical Refrigerator	3.6	15.6	31.2	20.9
Automobile	43.8	36.9	33.1	36.7

For instance, over 99 percent of households in cities of 30,000 or above had electric lighting, compared to 20 percent in rural farm areas. In Ontario cities over 30,000, just under half of all households owned electrical refrigerators, while on farms in Saskatchewan, less than half of *one* percent did.[121] The only electrical appliance whose use can be described as widespread regardless of region was the radio, where ownership rates in most major cities exceeded 90 percent and fell under 50 percent only in rural Quebec.[122]

The social impact and cultural meaning of electrical appliances has been much discussed by historians. It seems clear that appliances never quite lived up to the liberation from toil and drudgery that they promised in advertisements but, then, nothing ever did. Nonetheless, in the early years of the war, advertisers aggressively promoted the alleged timesaving qualities of electrical appliances and Canadian

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[120] *Census of Canada*, 1941, Volume IX, Tables 12, 17, 18.
[121] *Census of Canada*, 1941, Volume IX, Housing, Table 17.
[122] See CBC Radio Canada, *Radio Homes in Canada*, 1941.

consumers took advantage of their renewed purchasing power to buy appliances in record numbers. In the first two years of the war, hardware and appliance dealers across the country reported record business.[123] Home radio production reached an all-time high of nearly half a million units in 1940, while the production of electric refrigerators, washing machines, irons, and toasters reached its highest volume to date in 1941. A survey conducted by *Hardware and Metal* found most appliance dealers in late 1941 in an optimistic mood, and concluded that consumers' increased spending power had more than offset their increased tax burden.[124]

After this surprising and often overlooked boom in appliance production and sales, the combination of the expanding war effort and the difficulty in securing parts and materials from the United States in 1941 forced the DMS to issue a succession of orders regulating production. The same November 1940 regulation that had frozen automobile designs to already existing models affected appliances as well. In October 1941, the DMS ordered a reduction of the manufacture of radios, refrigerators, electric stoves, gas stoves, vacuum cleaners, and electric washing machines to 75 percent of their 1940 output.[125] A subsequent order reduced

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[123] "Restrictions and 1942 Sales Volume," *Hardware and Metal*, January 31, 1942, 27.
[124] "Dealers Extremely Busy," *Hardware and Metal*, July 5, 1941, 11; "All Branches of Hardware Trade Feel Stimulation of Business in 1941," *Hardware and Metal*, August 16, 141, 1.
[125] "Several More Productions Names as Supplies – to be Restricted," *Industrial Canada*, November, 1941, 61.

production to 50 percent.[126] In August 1942 — the halfway point in the war, it should be noted — the production and sale of most electrical appliances was suspended except by permit.[127] The "bare shelves" period that followed is the one that resonates most powerfully in home-front histories, whose emphasis naturally is on the sacrifices made by civilians at war and the uniqueness of wartime life. But the production of some appliances, such as electric irons, remained surprisingly high. In the case of stoves, washing machines, and irons, significant increases in output began as early as 1944. In fact, in March 1944, the DMS considered the supply of electrical stoves sufficient to discontinue the practice of rationing them by permit.[128]

Table 5.5 Production of Electrical Domestic Appliances 1939 to 1945[129]

Year	Refrigerators	Stoves and Rangettes	Washing machines	Irons	Radios	Toasters	Vacuums
1939	51,534	46,952	92,057	188,346	384,507	163,839	49,669
1940	53,165	44,470	99,562	233,817	485,010	171,015	43,441
1941	64,093	51,311	104,583	271,535	386,372	196,030	44,494
1942	37,792	24,316	52,198	133,786	177,149	131,327	35,034
1943	358	9,867	5,373	60,483	979	7,788	4,163
1944	237	17,798	23,967	113,484	0	6,981	1,899
1945	2,418	31,502	44,809	179,259	50,317	142,044	14,220

[126] "Production of Washing Machines and Refrigerators Reduced Another 15%," *Hardware and Metal*, January 3, 1942, 42; "Electric Toasters, Irons, and Fans Reduced to 50% of Their 1940 Production," *Hardware and Metal*, January 17, 1942, 26.

[127] "Markets at a Glance," *Hardware and Metal*, August 15, 1942, 138.

[128] Wartime Prices and Trade Board, *Annual Report*, 1944, 19.

[129] *The Electrical Apparatus and Supplies Industry in Canada*, issues for 1939-1945, various pages. Unit sales of appliances are not available for the war years. However, production figures provide rough indicators of domestic sales, particularly in the war when consumers bought whatever was available. In addition, the majority of appliances were produced for domestic consumption. In 1939, 18 percent of refrigerators were exported. In 1940, just 2.3 percent were.

In addition, military conversion did not completely eliminate the production or sales of certain kinds of consumer durables, as demonstrated by the figures for gas, coal, and wood stoves in Table 6.6, below.

Table 5.6 Production of Coal, Wood, and Gas Stoves in Canada 1939-1945

Year	Coal and Wood Cooking Stoves	Coal and Wood Heating Stoves	Gas Cooking Stoves
1939	89,355	102,125	25,292
1940	111,463	103,520	31,228
1941	123,485	119,476	29,700
1942	96,991	109,899	19,064
1943	98,154	113,276	8,820
1944	93,755	121,284	8,439
1945	97,546	168,850	8,595

Granted, some of the appliances itemized in the tables above were built for the requirements of the armed forces, but the majority passed into civilian hands. Once again, we must ask of what consequence was the unavailability of, say, electric stoves or refrigerators to the hundreds of thousands of Canadians who did not, and indeed could not, own them anyway. Furthermore, most consumers seem to have understood and appreciated the necessity for the suspension of consumer durable production. One measure of this is the fact that the WPTB Consumer Branch's advisory councils did not receive many complaints regarding the cessation of

consumer durable production, especially in comparison to incessant complaints about rationing of food and shortages of soft goods.

In addition, the drastic cuts in the production in electrical appliances in 1942 did not result in a significant decrease in consumer spending. In 1943, per capita spending was only fractionally smaller than what it had been the year before, and overall retail sales actually increased by about 3 percent.[130] In large part this was because consumers redirected their discretionary spending towards the surprisingly large range of goods still available. Hardware and appliance dealers, hard hit by the suspension of electrical appliance manufacturing, could nonetheless at least partially cope with the loss of sales through appliance repair and by emphasizing other lines of merchandise, such as sporting goods, children's toys, and dishware.[131] One notable arrival on the scene was a host of household items – kitchen tools, bathroom fixtures, and even some home furnishings made out of coloured plastic.[132] Other goods such as wooden furniture continued to be produced with very few restrictions on the volume of output. Granted, a 1942 edict from the WPTB reduced the number of lines of furniture to half of what it had been, but the total volume of furniture production continued to grow. [133] As the editors of *Canadian Woodworker* wrote, "it is doubtful if fabricators of wood products ever faced a more favourable opportunity to add new

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[130] *Historical Statistics of Canada*, Series T1-24. See also the discussion in the Appendix.
[131] "Commence basé sur le 'service' tabli dans un district minier," *Hardware and Metal*, January 3, 1942, 24; "New, Improved and Replacement Lines to Sell During Wartime," *Hardware and Metal*, August 15, 1942, 122.
[132] "Plastics in Household Hardware," *Hardware and Metal*, August 15, 1942, 92-94.
[133] *Industrial Canada*, July 1942, 239.

lines and extend the market for wood products."[134] Admittedly, part of this growth was to supply the enormous requirements of the armed forces for base furnishings. However, figures from department stores indicate an after-inflation increase of 24 percent in home furnishings between 1941-1945, while furniture stores experienced a very healthy 44 percent after-inflation increase over the duration of the war.[135]

Table 5.7 Gross Production Value of Selected Household Furnishings 1939-1945[136]

Year	Bedroom Furniture	Upholstered Living Room Furniture	Dining Room Furniture	Lawn and Verandah Furniture	All Furniture
1939	5,300,425	6,082,003	2,147,003	302,515	25,629,270
1940	7,003,809	7,855,516	2,695,755	206,746	32,294,385
1941	9,546,571	10,209,806	3,390,158	236,712	42,776,336
1942	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	45,650,224
1943	"	"	"	"	47,107,520
1944	"	"	"	"	51,296,574
1945	12,595,956	10,630,937	3,066,030	263,227	58,739,829
adjusted increase	128%	46%	19%	-28%	93%

Only in the category of lawn and verandah furniture — more likely to involve metal in its manufacture — did the production value of furniture decrease over the course of the war. Overall, the adjusted value of household furnishings produced during the war nearly doubled, a fact reflected in the daily department store advertisements in major newspapers. Retail advertisements for Eaton's (see Figure 6.1), the Hudson's

[134] "Opportunities for Wood," *Canadian Woodworker*, May 1942, 1.
[135] *Department Store Sales and Stocks*, 1941-1946 (Ottawa: Dominion Bureau of Statistics, 1948).
[136] Dominion Bureau of Statistics, *The Furniture Industry in Canada*, 1941; 1945. *Canada Year Book*, 1945, 395; 1946, 403; 1949, 531. "All furniture" column includes furniture types not listed to the left. Note that data for the years 1942-1945 was not available at the time this dissertation was submitted.

Bay Company, and Simpson's in 1943 and 1944 routinely featured such items as beds, sofas, dining room suites, and even appliances, while consumer magazines such as *Canadian Homes and Gardens* featured a steady stream of articles on home decorating.

Figure 5.3 As this advertisement from the summer of 1943 demonstrates, "thrifty" wartime planning on the Canadian home front could include ice refrigerators and five-piece dinette sets.[137]

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[137] "August at Eaton's," *Toronto Daily Star*, August 10, 1943, 29.

After victory, regulations on appliance and automobile manufacturing eased gradually. In 1945 and 1946, quotas were raised or eliminated altogether, permit rationing was suspended and — over the protests of many consumers but few retailers — the price ceiling was lifted. But this did not result in an immediate boom in appliance production. With patriotic incentives to restrain consumption evaporating and their personal expectations growing, consumers faced many months of frustration ahead. No one was more frustrated than motorists. Given gasoline and tire rationing, anyone fortunate enough to have purchased a car in late 1940 or 1941 probably had not driven it more than a few thousand miles before the war's end. On the whole, however, Canada's motor pool was becoming a geriatric one indeed. Polls found consumers eager to start replacing their cars. A comprehensive December 1944 survey undertaken by Maclean-Hunter found that 300,000 Canadians wanted a new car immediately after the war, and a further 175,000 wanted one within two years, while nearly three-quarters of a million present car owners wanted tires within a year.[138] But in the short term, domestic production could not meet anything remotely like that level of demand. In June 1945, Howe authorized the production of 10,000 to 12,000 passenger cars. In August, two days after Japan announced its

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[138] *Wanted: 762,568 New Cars*, (Toronto: Maclean-Hunter Publishing, 1944), 5.

surrender, he lifted all limitations on car production.[139] Resuming production, however, required retooling plants and securing the necessary parts and materials, and the automobile industry's reconversion plans were thwarted that fall by the massive United Autoworkers Strike which brought the assembly lines to a halt. Total passenger car production in 1945 was a meager 1,868.[140] In 1946, it reached nearly 80,000 – slightly below the level reached in 1941.[141]

So what had it all meant? Prior to the war, automobiles and appliances had been symbols of prosperity and objects of consumer desire. During the war, as Joy Parr writes, they became "tools and tools alone, allocated only on the basis of the need for goods and services that they would produce."[142] It is perhaps more accurate to say that this was the position adopted by government officials in late 1941. As we have seen, in the world of advertising, durables were much more than that: they signified the right of citizens to secure prosperity through consumption; they were not just weapons of war but one of the prizes of war.

It is perhaps inevitable that the social memory of the war tends to dwell upon those aspects of the home front that were unique: regulation, rationing, and shortages. But in case after case, we find, on closer examination, that the privations

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[139] Kenneth Wilson, "Can Produce at Least 10,000 Cars This Year," *Financial Post*, June 1, 1945, 1; "Permit Auto Output; Control Distribution," *Globe and Mail*, August 18, 1945, 1.
[140] *Facts and Figures of the Automobile Industry*, 1946, 5.
[141] *Sales and Financing of New Motor Vehicles in Canada*, 1946 (Ottawa: Dominion Bureau of Statistics, 1946), 5.
[142] Joy Parr, *Domestic Goods*, 23.

suffered by wartime consumers were neither as protracted nor as severe as is usually claimed. It will not do, of course, to suggest that consumers on the home front shopped amidst a cornucopia of goods, but the overall picture is not nearly so bleak as is often remembered. Many families, in fact, acquired their first cars and electrical appliances during the two-year consumer boom at the beginning of the war. For those Canadians who owned cars and electrical appliances, the biggest challenge was to keep them running for the last half of the war. For those who did not, nothing changed.

Chapter Six
"The Grim Realities of war, as Pictured by Hollywood" : Movie Going in Wartime Canada

"War is Hell — let's go to the movies!"

Canadian Motion Pictures Digest, September 9, 1939[1]

As the supply of durable commodities dried up, and as the range of available soft goods and semi-durables increasingly came under restriction, consumers naturally looked for other avenues for their spending dollar. Restaurants were one obvious choice – their business tripled over the course of the war.[2] Granted, a good deal of dining-out fell into the category of necessity rather than recreation, especially for families seeking to ease the rationing burden, and for weary shift workers who needed to eat late. In Ottawa, the Woolworth's on Sparks Street installed a fifty-meter long lunch counter — they boasted that it was the longest in North America — for the highly pragmatic purpose of serving the hordes of civil servants flowing down from Parliament Hill at lunchtime.[3] But it is also true that strictly recreational clubs, dance halls, and beach-side resorts enjoyed burgeoning business. Canada's favourite spectator sport, hockey, also thrived during the war, and Quebec fans celebrated in 1945 when Maurice "Rocket" Richard scored the National Hockey League's first fifty-

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[1] "Ray Presents," *Canadian Moving Picture Digest*, September 9 1939, 3.
[2] On this, see appendix one.
[3] *Soda Fountains in Canada* , November 15, 1942, 33. Note that *Soda Fountains in Canada* was published as a special insert in *Drug Merchandising*.

goal season.[4] As we have seen, diverting and seemingly frivolous forms of consumption sometimes came under censure, especially after 1941. Temperance organizations under the umbrella of the National Council of Women complained relentlessly, as they had during the Great War, that a nation given to imbibing could not properly wage war.[5] In October 1944, when *Maclean*'s published an enthusiastic five-page article on the night club scene in Montreal ("night life in Montreal is booming like Big Ben on Armistice Day," the author wrote) it drew angry letters from readers incensed that Canadians were living it up while the boys overseas were sacrificing everything.[6] Even hockey became the subject of some considerable controversy as governments on both sides of the border debated whether or not it should be allowed to continue, especially when its teams consisted of young men fit for military service.[7]

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[4] On the NHL in wartime Canada, see J. Andrew Ross, "The Paradox of Conn Smythe: Hockey, Memory, and the Second World War," *Sport History Review* 37 (May 2006): 19-35. Many thanks to Andrew Ross for sharing an advance copy of his dissertation, *Hockey Capital: Commerce, Culture, and the National Hockey League, 1917-1967* (PhD diss., University of Western Ontario, 2008).

[5] Reports from the Canadian branch of the Woman's Christian Temperance Union, invariably containing resolutions calling for temperance, if not outright prohibition, can be found in any wartime issue of the National Council of Women's *Yearbook*. For a variety of reasons, their temperance efforts failed almost entirely in the Second World War. For a typically hostile reaction to them, see "Beer and the Elections," *Saturday Night*, March 18, 1944, 1. The failure of temperance movements to gain ground in the United States during the Second World War is explored in Jay L. Rubin, "The Wet War: American Liquor Control, 1941-1945" in Jack S. Blocker, Jr., ed., *Alcohol, Reform and Society: the Liquor Issue in Social Context* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1979), 235-258. Rubin attributes the failure of temperance forces to the greater preparedness of breweries and distilleries to counter them. In Canada, Labatt's mounted institutional advertising campaigns that argued that beer is a temperate drink. See "Brewers Teach True Temperance," *Marketing*, September 9, 1939, 8.

[6] Jim Coleman, "Night Club," *Maclean's*, October 15, 1944, 12, 58-60.

[7] See Ross, *Hockey Capital*, chapter three.

But no form of public recreation generated so much revenue — or controversy — as the movies. Movie going offers a potentially fruitful case study in the manifold tensions of the Canadian consumer society in wartime. Longstanding suspicions about American economic and cultural imperialism and misgivings about the potential power of film to undermine public morality merged with the unending home front conflict between demands for sacrifice and the everyday realities of well-to-do consumers seeking to satisfy their wants and needs. The entire motion picture industry had for years been forced to contend with charges that the movies were impious and even wicked. Now the possibility of patriotic service in wartime offered the industry the opportunity to defend its reputation and to secure a share of renewed prosperity. During the war, consumer movie-goers flocked to the theatres in unprecedented numbers, seeking news, entertainment and yet another opportunity to serve the war effort through patriotic consumption.

Like so many other retailers, movie theatre owners were exultant in the contrast between wartime and years that had preceded it. Many had sensed, even before the war began, that a great opportunity was at hand. In August 1939, Ray Lewis, the longtime editor of *Canadian Motion Picture Digest*, urged her colleagues in the business to face the prospect of war both stoically and optimistically. "We cannot be worse off than we have been," she reflected. War would, at least, end the "state of uncertainty" and the "bog of business depression" under which the motion picture

industry had toiled for a decade.[8] Canadian exhibitors had been especially hard hit by the Depression. Revenues from ticket sales had declined by a third in the first half of the 1930s and had not yet recovered.[9] Nationwide, an average of only one seat in four was sold for any given performance in 1939.[10] While there were more theatres — about 1200 compared to just 900 in 1930 — nearly 20 percent of them had annual receipts totaling less than $2500. On the Prairies, the figure was closer to 40 percent. In 1939, those poorest 163 Prairie theatres grossed an average of just $1400 each – the equivalent of a paltry seventeen ticket sales per business day. Admittedly, some of those theatres were just community halls with projection equipment installed, and in some small towns theatres operated only on weekends or in the summer, but most exhibitors throughout Canada remained mired in the Depression. War brought the prospect of improved business, but also unforeseeable perils.[11]

In September 1939, Canadian motion picture exhibitors declared at once their intention to place their theatres at the disposal of the war effort. Following Britain's declaration of war, Lewis (who, like many Canadians, assumed that Britain's declaration committed Canada also), wrote that Hitler's "unholy show" and "putrid serial thriller" must be "censored right off the map."[12] For those purposes, she wrote,

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[8] Ray Lewis, "Ray Presents," *Canadian Motion Pictures Digest*, August 28, 1939, 3.
[9] Receipts in 1930 totaled $38.5 million compared to $33.5 million in 1938 and 34 million in 1939. *Historical Statistics of Canada*, Series T213-26.
[10] *Motion Pictures in Canada*, 1939, (Department of Trade and Commerce, Dominion Bureau of Statistics, 1940), 3.
[11] Ibid., 7, 12.
[12] Ray Lewis, "Hitler's Unholy Show," *Canadian Motion Pictures Digest*, September 2, 1939, 1.

the motion picture industry would be ready to counter Nazi propaganda with the more sophisticated and benevolent propaganda that the North American film industry could produce. Lewis assumed, correctly as matters would have it, that Hollywood could be relied upon to support the Anglo-Canadian war effort even though the United States remained neutral; she even speculated that the right kind of movies might sway Americans from neutrality to co-belligerency with the Allies. "Watch the war pictures from Hollywood," she wrote. "The Nazis will be the villains. The British and French will be the heroes. How neutral will the people of the United States be with one hundred and twenty-six million of them attending moving theatres and looking and listening to the voice and drama of the screen?"[13]

Rather paradoxically, however, she also articulated what I have ventured to call the "escape thesis" – the idea that civilians on the home front had an urgent psychological requirement for diverting forms of entertainment, a requirement that the movies were particularly well suited to satiate. "Theatres are as shelters from the bombs of news which tear through our brain and break our hearts," she wrote with her customary haughtiness in the spring of 1940.[14] Over the course of the war, the "escape" thesis was advanced from every corner of the motion picture industry, a variant of the advertiser's argument that the purchase of luxurious commodities was justifiable if it bolstered civilian morale. In 1942, Franklin Delano Roosevelt himself

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[13] Ray Lewis, "Ray Presents," *Canadian Moving Pictures Digest*, September, 16, 1939, 4.
[14] Ray Lewis, "Ray Presents," *Canadian Moving Picture Digest*, May 25, 1940, 19.

defended the Hollywood's continued operation on precisely these grounds.[15] As I shall argue, however, the extent to which the motion picture industry committed itself to supporting the war effort — a commitment which reflected the usual combination of patriotic altruism and economic self-interest — and the nature of the movie-going experience itself, precluded the possibility that any night at the pictures could be anything more than a partial "escape" from the turmoil of war.

Lewis's conviction that the movie industry was ideally positioned to thwart Nazi propaganda reflected a broader belief that film was a uniquely powerful and influential medium. That the movies possessed vast powers of suasion was perhaps the only point of consensus between the motion picture industry and its many social critics. The contours of the dispute between the two parties are familiar even today, having remained essentially the same since the earliest days of motion pictures, and they are themselves derivations of very old arguments about the moral implications of live theatre. Movie makers and exhibitors argue that film can instruct, entertain, and offer respite to the weary; their detractors charge that the silver screen is awash in sex, violence, and other forms of moral degeneracy that can pervert the minds of the young and naïve. The careful observer will note that there is no necessary contradiction between these two points-of-view, but in the 1930s they seemed poles apart. Over the course of the decade, the censorious scored a succession of victories in the United States. Early in the decade, Hollywood producers were forced to acquiesce

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[15] Wellington Jeffers, "Canada Curbs Industry," *Canadian Film Weekly*, June 17, 1942, 5.

to the authority of a powerful regulatory body, the Production Code Authority (PCA), whose mandate was to suppress realistic depictions of sex and violence.[16] Even greater challenges were forthcoming. In 1938, anti-trust suits against the vertically integrated studios reached the U.S. Supreme Court, and in 1939 members of the U.S. Congress's House Un-American Activities Committee embarked on the first of its many witch-hunts, seeking to root out communists and other subversives who were suspected to be lurking in the acting, writing, and directing guilds.[17]

In Canada and western European, cultural and economic nationalists voiced fears of their own as they observed, aghast, the vast tide of motion pictures emanating from Hollywood.[18] As early as 1926, Hollywood's dominance of the global motion picture industry had been considered alarming enough to make the agenda at that year's seminal Imperial Conference. In a brief prepared for the conference, delegates were warned that it was "clearly undesirable that so very large a proportion of films shown throughout the Empire should present modes of life and forms of conduct which are not typically British."[19] Here, encapsulated in a sentence, was the essence of the fears felt so acutely by Canadian cultural nationalists; in a slightly modified

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[16] On the Production Code Administration, see Robert Sklar, *Movie-Made America : A Cultural History of American Movies*, Rev. and updated. ed. (New York: Vintage Books, 1994), 173-74.
[17] Martin Dies, "Is Communism Invading the Movies?," *Liberty*, February 24, 1940, 47-49.
[18] On Western European responses to Hollywood, see Frank Costigliola, *Awkward Dominion : American Political, Economic, and Cultural Relations with Europe, 1919-1933* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1984). For Canada, see Ted Magder, *Canada's Hollywood: The Canadian State and Feature Films* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1993), Peter Morris, *Embattled Shadows: A History of Canadian Cinema 1985-1939* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1992).
[19] Quoted in: Magder, *Canada's Hollywood: The Canadian State and Feature Films*, 38-39.

form they are the same as those felt today. In theatre after theatre, from Halifax to Winnipeg to Vancouver, American features rolled day in and day out throughout the 1920s and 1930s. Canadian exhibitors, including the Canadian-owned Famous Players chain, were wholly prostrate before Hollywood producers. Every attempt to loosen Hollywood's hegemonic hold over theatre audiences, from early attempts at banning "excessive" displays of the American flag to the introduction of a quota system mandating the production and exhibition of "British" films, failed entirely.[20]

Moreover, the outbreak of war severely disrupted British and European feature film production, intensifying Hollywood's grip on Canadian theatres. In 1943, 557 of 686 feature films booked in Canadian theatres were American. Just seventy-two were from Britain.[21] As for Canada's own motion picture industry, it was, in the words of historian Peter Morris, "an unmistakable branch plant of Hollywood" by 1939. Canadians' very few ventures into feature film making were "scattered" and "uncoordinated" and of "minimal economic or cultural relevance" in Morris's view.[22] "Stillborn", is how historian Ted Magder has described Canada's feature film industry, but by his own account it is probably more precise to say that it died in its infancy, a "feeble enterprise" that "withered further from government neglect."[23] Granted, the fledgling National Film Board, which hoped to bolster the country's already

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[20] Morris, *Embattled Shadows: A History of Canadian Cinema 1985-1939*, 54.
[21] "Canadian Per Capita Expenditure for Film Entertainment - $5.61," *Canadian Moving Picture Digest*, August 26, 1944, 15.
[22] Morris, *Embattled Shadows*, 239.
[23] Magder, *Canada's Hollywood: The Canadian State and Feature Films.*, 329-330.

respectable reputation for documentary filmmaking, seemed better positioned to produce the kind of benevolent propaganda that Ray Lewis and others in the industry had called for when war erupted in 1939. But documentaries did not fill theatres – Hollywood features did.

As a consequence of the fear that Hollywood's hegemony was not merely economic but cultural, and the harbinger of a particularly vulgar sort of culture at that, no other consumer industry in Canada (with the possible exception of those pertaining to alcoholic beverages) was subject to such intense scrutiny and oversight in the years leading up to the war. Not only were theatres themselves regularly inspected, but provincial censors and regulators often took an even more puritanical view of the cinematic representation of sex and violence than did the American PCA. In 1939, for instance, thirteen films which had met with the PCA's always grudgingly bequeathed approval were banned outright by the Manitoba Censor Board. More than one hundred more were edited to remove "objectionable dialogue or action." The banned films, innocuous to the modern eye, included *A Child is Born*, a tear-jerker about nurses in a maternity ward, whose subject of pregnancy and birth was deemed "unsuitable for public entertainment", and *The Phantom Creeps*, a twelve-part serial starring a sadly diminished Bela Lugosi as a mad scientist, but nonetheless considered "too strong for public exhibition."[24]

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[24] "Manitoba Censor Board Bans 13 Films in Part Year," *Canadian Moving Picture Digest*, March 7,1940, 4.

In Quebec, provincial regulations barred children under the age of sixteen from movie theatres altogether. No exceptions were granted for children accompanied by an adult. As the province's theatre owners never tired of observing, the government's professed reason for the ban — that theatres posed a fire safety hazard to children — seemed like a mere façade for what was in fact ecclesiastical disapproval.[25] An exemption permitted in 1937 for Disney's *Snow White*, for example, was rescinded when provincial regulators decided that the Wicked Witch would frighten children (which is precisely what she was supposed to do)[26] and no exemption was granted at all when the similarly terrifying tale of the flying elephant Dumbo arrived in theatres in 1942.[27] Predictably, an impolitic decision in 1944 to allow the Dionne quintuplets to attend a screening of *Lassie Go Home* brought mocking and derisive responses from the trade papers, but the Quebec government's policy remained otherwise intact.[28] Quebec's regulations were the most stringent in Canada, but every province kept movie exhibitors on a tight leash. If anything, the outbreak of war initially made provincial regulators more than usually sensitive to anything that might be deemed to cause offense or undermine morale. A large

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[25] In fact, both claims were true. In January 1927, seventy-seven children were killed in a fire that engulfed the Laurier Palace Theatre in Montreal. The fire had occurred on a Sunday, and during the funeral masses that followed a succession of prominent Quebec clergymen took the opportunity to rail against cinema and for the sanctity of the Lord's Day. Quebec children were banned from theatres until the 1960s. See Rene Schmidt, *Canadian Disasters* (Toronto, Scholastic, 2006).

[26] "Special Permission for Quebec Juveniles to See 'Wizard of Oz'," *Canadian Moving Picture Digest*, October 7, 1939, 9.

[27] "'Dumbo Denied Quebec Kids'," *Canadian Film Weekly*, January 14, 1942, 3.

[28] "Quints Movie Visit Stirs Quebec Parents," *Canadian Moving Picture Digest*, February 5, 1944, 13.

number of films were banned or removed from circulation in September 1939, including, to give just one notable example, director Lewis Milestone's adaptation of Erich Maria Remarque's *All Quiet on the Western Front.* Already considered a classic and still making the rounds in repertory theatres, the movie was pulled from theatres across Canada in September 1939 on the grounds that it constituted anti-war propaganda and might prove detrimental to the war effort.[29]

It was against this backdrop of economic uncertainty and the persistent opprobrium of regulators that Canada's motion picture exhibitors braced themselves for war. Small wonder that they were so eager to demonstrate their civic worth through patriotic service. With their late closing hours, large audience capacities and, in the case of many older venues, actual stages, movie theatres were ready-made for the purposes of serving a variety of home front efforts. Throughout the war, theatres offered recruiters and patriotic organizations a large and largely captive audience for their messages. In exchange for their entertainment, audiences were harangued by armed forces recruiters, Victory Bond salespeople, and fundraisers from service clubs seeking donations for aid to Russia and the Red Cross, to buy milk for British orphans, "smokes" and shaving kits for the boys overseas, and innumerable other patriotic

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[29] John Whiteclay Chambers, "*All Quiet on the Western Front*: The Antiwar Film and the Image of Modern War," in *Word War Two: Film and History*, ed. John Whiteclay Chambers and David Culbert (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 13-30. The movie had, of course, been banned in Nazi Germany for almost precisely the same reasons. Hollywood films were not the only targets of provincial censors. In March 1940, Ontario Premier Mitchell Hepburn secured a provincial exhibition ban on the National Film Board documentary *Canada at War*, citing it as an example of "political propaganda for the federal government" (which is certainly was). See "Premier Hepburn Bans "Canada at War" In Ontario," *Canadian Moving Picture Digest*, March 9, 1940, 4.

causes. Few other retailers so readily embraced the war effort as motion picture exhibitors and few would so indisputably profit from it.

By 1944, the movie theatre business in Canada had rebounded from the Depression to such a degree that Ray Lewis, writing shortly before D-Day, predicted that future exhibitors would look back on the war years as the best in the industry's history:

> the war years were good; good for production; good for distribution; good for exhibition; good for our governments which cleaned up in the collection of super super taxes, good for morale, because of world-wide motion picture war services, good for our good-will, because we drew closer to our public, having a kinship in the sufferings which this world-war generated, and good for our relationship with our governments, because we injected showmanship into the government's war effort.[30]

This was hyperbole, certainly, but not wholly without justification. People really did flock to the theaters during the war. Admissions passed the 200 million mark in 1943 and Famous Players, the nation's largest movie theatre chain, reported that year that its profits had increased 50% since 1939.[31] Once again, however, we find that consumers themselves remain the most inscrutable aspect of the consumer economy. In Canada, no systematic attempt was made during the war to gauge audience reactions to films. Compelled to rely on the anecdotal — those few remarks that can be dredged up from audience members, theatre staff, movie inspectors, and film

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[30] Ray Lewis, "Good Morning, God!," *Canadian Moving Picture Digest*, May 13, 1944, 1. "Super super" in the original.

[31] "Famous Players Can. Corp. Ltd.," *Saturday Night*, April 22, 1944, 46.

critics — we can only guess at how audiences felt about any given movie or the movie-going experience. Given the extraordinary growth in theatre admissions, however, and the fact that the average person spent the equivalent of a working week in the theatre each year, it is probably safe to assume that most Canadians considered movie going worth their time and money.

Table 6.1 Motion Picture Theaters, Admissions, and Value of Receipts 1939-1945[32]

Year	Number of Establishments	Value of Receipts / Amusement Taxes in Thousands of dollars	Total Admissions In Thousands
1939	1,183	33,696	137,899
1940	1,229	37,474	151,599
1941	1,240	40,796	161,678
1942	1,247	57,277 (45,720 / 11,557)	182,846
1943	1,265	64,645 (51,485 / 13,160)	204,678
1944	1,298	66,729 (53,173 / 13,556)	208,167
1945	1,323	69,486 (55,431 / 14,055)	215,573
Adjusted Increase	12%	35%	57%

It should be noted that these figures, impressive as they are, do not include itinerant operators who entertained as many as a million and a half patrons annually, nor do they account for the thousands of screenings that occurred on armed forces bases and in military hospitals across the country.[33]

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[32] *Historical Statistics of Canada.* Series T213-T226. Beginning in 1942, a federal amusement tax of 25% was added at point-of-purchase to the cost of admission. Bracketed figures for 1942-1945 indicate the value of receipts (including concession stand sales) and the value of amusement taxes.

[33] "Army Entertainment Big Task: Military Centers Provide No. 2 Dominion Exhibition Circuit," *Canadian Film Weekly*, February 25, 1942, 1. In June 1944, *Canadian Moving Picture Digest* announced that some sixty theatres were to be built in military hospitals across the country. J.J.

Admittedly, movie-going ranked rather low on the list of things that Canadians spent money on during the Second World War. The record sixty-seven million dollars they spent going to the movies in 1944 worked out to a little under six dollars per person – just over 1 percent of total consumer spending. But the dollar figures are deceiving. With the average cost of admission to an evening performance just twenty-five cents, going to the movies was inexpensive and many people went several times per month. A 1938 study by the Dominion Bureau of Statistics found that movies accounted for 90 percent of the average household's expenditure on admission to public amusements, compared to just 9 percent for spectator sports and 1 percent for theatres and live music. Additionally, the study concluded that movie going was within the means of even most poor Canadians, albeit at a reduced rate, with households in the lowest income brackets reporting an average of just over $5 per year on admissions compared to about $23 for households in the highest bracket.[34]

In small towns and midsized cities in particular, where residents lacked the many diversions proffered by the big city, movie-going seems to have been an essential part of most people's leisure hours. The DBS study found that in Montreal, movies accounted for 62% of all entertainment expenditures by the city's one million

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Conklin, "Winnipeg News," *Canadian Moving Picture Digest*, June 3, 1944, 9. Military bases received their films through the regular movie exhibitor trade distribution channels. However, military bases were not subject to inspection by government theatre inspection agencies, nor were military projectionists subject to the same licensing as civilian operators.

[34] "Family Income and Expenditure in Canada 1937-1938," (Dominion Bureau of Statistics, 1941), 123.

citizens. In Quebec City, population 150,000, it accounted for 92%.[35] Similarly precise figures are not available for the war, but some crude indicators suggest a comparable picture across wartime Canada. In Halifax, whose seventy-thousand strong civilian population was augmented on any day by thousands of military personnel from at least three armed forces, the nine movie theatres sold four and a half million tickets in 1944.[36] London, Ontario's seven theatres sold a total of nearly three million tickets in 1944 – the city had a population of just 80,000.[37] Citizens of Regina, population 40,000, had one of the nation's highest per-capita movie going rates: the city's theatres sold two-and-a-quarter million tickets in 1944 – an average of fifty-five tickets per person, compared to about thirty in Toronto.[38] In tiny Picton, Ontario, the Edwardian-style Regent theatre, a converted opera house, could seat 800 people, more than a quarter of the town's population – and it was not the town's only theatre. The Regent was seldom sold out before an airbase, subsequently utilized as part of the British Commonwealth Air Training Plan, opened on the outskirts of town in late 1940. After that, the theatre's manager usually called in the police to help his ushers manage the crowds on busier nights.

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[35] Inexplicably, a 1947 DBS report, which might have offered a truer reflection of the actual wartime expenditure on movies by various income brackets than these Depression-era statistics, lumped entertainment and educational expenditures together. The figures are therefore essentially without value, as it is impossible to determine if any given dollar was expended on a movie or a schoolbook.
[36] *Motion Picture Theatres in Canada,* 9-10.
[37] "Family Income and Expenditure in Canada 1937-1938."
[38] *Motion Picture Theatres in Canada,* 10.

As the table below demonstrates, theatre exhibitors in every province benefited from the public's increased rate of movie-going. But it is also apparent that the war did not significantly alter the very wide regional discrepancies that had existed upon the outbreak of war.

Table 6.2 Per Capita Spending on Movie Entertainment by Year and Province (in dollars)[39]

Year	PEI	SK	PQ	NB	MB	AB	NS	ON	BC	Canada
1939	1.23	1.57	2.19	1.84	3.03	2.61	2.59	4.08	4.83	3.03
1940	1.26	1.76	2.30	2.21	3.23	2.80	3.27	4.63	4.98	3.35
1941	1.52	1.92	2.48	2.41	3.41	3.11	3.82	5.07	5.08	3.63
1942	2.52	2.56	3.81	3.75	4.39	4.22	5.89	6.53	7.52	5.01
1943	3.35	3.31	4.21	4.53	4.81	5.27	6.68	6.97	8.29	5.61
1944	3.41	3.54	4.26	4.51	4.93	5.35	6.73	6.84	8.15	5.61
1945	3.31	3.83	4.36	4.76	5.13	5.34	6.56	7.16	8.15	5.77
Adjusted Increase	122%	102%	65%	102%	40%	69%	109%	45%	39%	57%

In 1939, Price Edward Island's six theatres, for instance, were operating at just one-fifth of their seating capacity and ticket sales were barely sixty percent of what they had been in 1930. In the countryside of this poorest and least-urbanized of Canadian province, going to the movies was "a rare and golden event", writes island historian Edward MacDonald. "Out there, local dances, community concerts, and amateur

[39] Figures from 1942 onwards include the federal amusement tax. Dollar values not adjusted for inflation. Percentage increase for 1939-1945 adjusted for 21.5% inflation from 1939-1945.

theatre still ruled the social universe."[40] Over the course of the war, however, the island's theatres experienced a remarkable boom. Box office receipts nearly tripled by 1944 – the presence on the island of several BCATP schools, teeming with fliers from a dozen countries, surely helped. Nonetheless, the province's overall ranking, last in the country in terms of per-capita expenditure, remained unchanged. British Columbians, whose province had one of the highest urbanization rates in Canada, remained the country's most frequent movie-goers, spending two-and-a-half times as much as Prince Edward Islanders. Ontarians remained in second place, and the four provinces that changed rankings over the course of the war did so by the narrowest of margins.

As the example of P.E.I. demonstrates, in some cases the per capita figures can be deceiving. Statisticians arrived at them by tallying up theatre receipts and then dividing by resident population figures. In wartime, however, the population of some regions fluctuated drastically with the comings and goings of soldiers, sailors, and airmen, all of whom had voracious appetites for the movies. Halifax provides the foremost example of a city whose theatres benefited from the presence of armed forces and then suffered from their withdrawal. In 1950, Halifax theatres reported well over a million *fewer* admissions than they had in 1944. Per-capita spending on movies in Nova Scotia in general declined from $6.73 per person in 1945 to $5.10 in

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[40] Edward MacDonald, *If You're Stronghearted: Prince Edward Island in the 20th Century* (Charlottetown: PEI Books, 2000), n.p. I am grateful to Ed MacDonald for bringing his chapter on the island at war to my attention.

1948, a loss of 50% after adjusting for postwar inflation. Prince Edward Island, too, saw per capita movie expenditures stagnate and lose significant ground against inflation after the war, even while the national trend was one of modest growth in theatre attendance.[41]

Of course, the actual movie-going experience varied enormously from place to place and even from one theatre to the next. American entrepreneur Marcus Loew, whose chain of theatres operated in both the United States and Canada, once boasted that he sold tickets to his theatres rather than to movies.[42] He made the remark in an insouciant mood, no doubt, but he was also acknowledging the fact that the theatre itself was an important aspect of the moviegoer's entertainment experience. In Canada, nearly every small town and nearly every big city neighborhood had a theatre of some kind, but it was the majestic movie 'palaces', ostentatious relics of the late teens and twenties, that remained the most visibly commanding presence in Canada's theatre circuits when the war began. Vancouver's Orpheum; Winnipeg's Metropolitan; Toronto's Pantages and its veritable twin, the Uptown; Sherbrooke's Granada; Moncton's Capitol: they had been intended to suggest something of the splendor and sophistication of Europe's great opera houses but had been built, as

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[41] "Motion Picture Theatres, Exhibitors, and Distributors, 1950," (Ottawa: Industry and Merchandising Division, Dominion Bureau of Statistics, 1952), n.p.
[42] Harold Kalman, *A Concise History of Canadian Architecture* (Toronto: Oxford University Press 2000), 499.

architectural historian Harold Kalman put it, without "discipline or restraint."[43] Some of them had been constructed to stage vaudeville but had been converted to screen motion pictures — the old stages were put to good use by recruiters and bond salespeople during the war — while others were purpose-built movie theatres. "Orgies of architectural excess," one theatre historian has called them, and indeed they often were, with their gilt, glass, marble, and mirrors, the grand sweep of their staircases, the vast interior spaces of their domed auditoriums, and their atmospheric affectations.[44] Halifax's Capitol resembled a baronial castle, complete with faux fortress walls and battlements, drawbridge, timber ceiling, and suits of armour in the lobby. Montreal's Empress had been designed throughout in the Egyptian revival style, intended to invoke an Egyptian palace, situated near the banks of the Nile.[45] The Granada, in Sherbrooke, Quebec, resembled the courtyard of a picturesque Spanish villa, and utilized lighting effects to create the illusion of a twilight sky on the ceiling.[46]

Most of the palaces were located in the downtowns of larger cities, but a few, such as Sherbrooke's Granada and Timmins's Palace were located in smaller centers, where they were always the source of authentic if slightly swollen civic pride, and proffered as an indication of the town's urbanity and sophistication. Such distinctions

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[43] Ibid.
[44] John C. Lindsay, *Palaces of the Night : Canada's Grand Theatres* (Toronto: Lynx Images, 1999), 65.
[45] Kalman, *A Concise History of Canadian Architecture*, 503.
[46] Jonathan Rittenhouse, "'Our Granada': The Granada Theatre, Wellington Street, Sherbrooke, Quebec, Canada, America, the World and Me," *Theatre Research in Canada* 18, no. 2 (1997).

were reinforced not only by architecture but also by the kind of courteous, even fawning, service that they offered to patrons. Ivan Ackery, longtime manager of Vancouver's palatial, twenty-seven hundred seat Orpheum, recalled that his managers wore tuxedos on most nights, while uniformed and white-gloved ushers and usherettes were "very carefully selected to meet and handle the public graciously." [47] In the palaces, pretenses such as these were maintained throughout the Depression and seem to have continued even in the face of wartime pressures towards conservation and thrift, an indication, perhaps, that concerted efforts on behalf of the war effort could conceal a multitude of profligate sins.

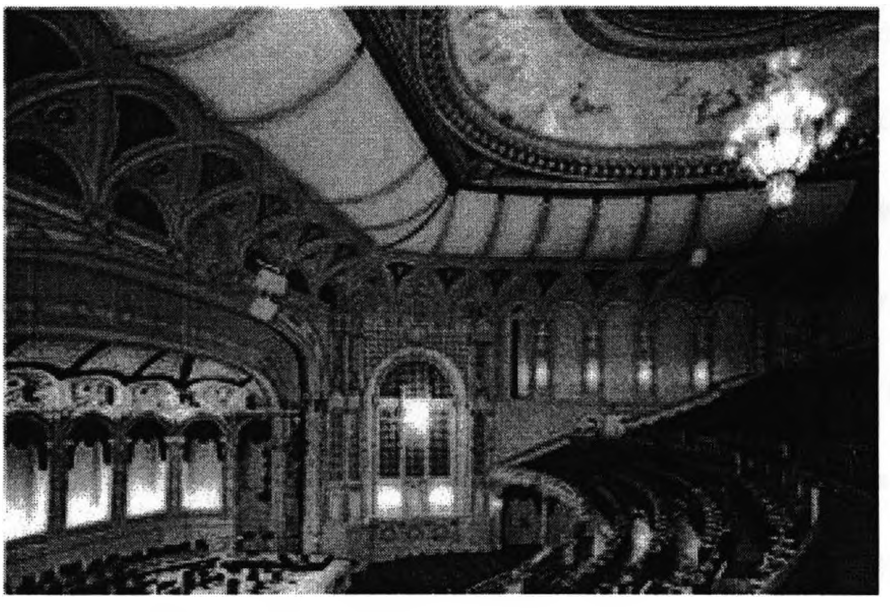

Figure 6.1. Built to suggest the opera houses of the old world, nothing on screen could quite match the spectacle of the greatest of the movie palaces, such as Vancouver's Orpheum (above).[48]

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[47] Ivan Ackery, *Fifty Years on Theatre Row* (Vancouver: Hancock House, 1981), 13,15.
[48] Orpheum photo: http://vancouver.ca/tehatre/graphics.Orph5.Gif. Some of the photographs below are from the on-line exhibit *Stories from Ontario's Movie Theatres* at the Public Archives of Ontario. www.archives.on.gov.ca

Jonathan Rittenhouse has written that such theatres had the effect of "hyper-intensifying the movies watched ... and also provided a kind of cocoon sameness to all images and thus naturalizing the innumerable flickering images emanating from the Granada's screen."[49] But we should not discount the possibility that, especially in wartime, they might also have provided some genuinely amusing non-sequiturs. One can imagine formally dressed ushers directing patrons to their seats, where the movie-goers then opened boxes of Cracker Jacks and settled in to watch such fare as Bud Abbot and Lou Costello's *Keep 'Em Flying* (1941), a recruitment film masquerading as a comedy.

In *Going Out*, his history of public amusements in the United States, David Nasaw argues that in the 20s and 30s movie-going was a democratizing and socially-leveling activity. According to Nasaw, disparate audiences drawn from every social rank and ethnicity (except blacks) were seated together *without* regard for social rank or ethnicity; together they experienced the pleasure of watching the same films in the opulent, breathtaking interiors of movie palaces.[50] Unfortunately, Nasaw's study has nothing to say about the war years, but similar arguments were advanced by representatives of the film industry throughout the war in both Canada and the

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[49] Rittenhouse, "'Our Granada': The Granada Theatre, Wellington Street, Sherbrooke, Quebec, Canada, America, the World and Me." The on-line version of this article is not paginated.
[50] David Nasaw, *Going Out : The Rise and Fall of Public Amusements* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1999), 221-40.

United States. In their view, movies were instruments of democracy, spreading not just liberty but greater equality. This was a variation upon the argument, often stated within the community of advertisers and retailers, that mass-produced consumer goods were socially leveling, offering both a multitude of choices but also a uniform product for those who made any given choice. As Ray Lewis put it, the war was nothing less than "civilization's last stand" while the movies were "ammunition" in that noble struggle.[51] A columnist for *Canadian Film Weekly* went so far as attribute Japanese militarism, and Japan's high suicide rate, to that nation's lack of movie-going opportunities. "Films were beginning to open windows in their minds and let in the fresh air of reason," he wrote, "'till the ruling caste canned them."[52]

But as historian Lizabeth Cohen demonstrates in *Making a New Deal*, her study of Chicago workers in the interwar years, far from being democratizing and socially leveling, movie-going could in some cases actually epitomize the very deep social distinctions that existed amongst consumers. In the first place, the assumption that everyone flocked to the great movie palaces, Cohen argues, is itself highly dubious.[53] Certainly, they held enormous appeal for middle-class audiences, but they usually had more expensive admission prices than ordinary theatres and were often located downtown, a streetcar or bus trip away from working class neighborhoods.

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[51] "Screen Power Versus Hitler," *Canadian Moving Picture Digest*, August 10 1940, 1.
[52] Hye Bossin, "On the Square," *Canadian Film Weekly*, January 28 1942, 3.
[53] Lizabeth Cohen, *Making a New Deal: Industrial Workers in Chicago, 1919-1939* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 120-29.

We might observe, too, that Nasaw's argument — and the similar ones advanced in Canadian trade papers of the early 1940s — overlooks the fact that seemingly unrestrictive admission policies and open, fixed-price seating cannot conceal innumerable other ways to convey social distinctions. Presumably, a wartime shift worker in grubby coveralls had no illusions about being in the same "class" as a woman in jewels and furs just because they had sat near to one another in a movie palace.

Here it might be useful to interject the recollections of one of Ivan Ackery's "usherettes", who recalled how the Orpheum kept up appearances even through the doldrums of the late Depression. "It's very hard to describe," she wrote,

> in this day and age, the graciousness of the staff. It was a world of charm and fascination and fantasy and, really, it was a fairlyand...ladies and gentleman came in formal dress, and not only for the big premieres; Saturday nights, especially, were dress nights. [54]

One cannot dismiss the possibility that these kinds of pretensions may have actually discouraged many working class people from attending the palaces, and might even have been intended to do so, in the hopes of drawing a "better sort" of clientele. Certainly theatre inspectors were not reticent about expressing their moral disapproval of the behavior, character, and dress of some wartime audiences. Midnight screenings — established to accommodate the growing volume of wartime shift workers — came in for particular scrutiny. "A nest of riff-raff and people of

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[54] Ackery, *Fifty Years on Theatre Row*, 15.

questionable character", one Ontario inspector sniffed, noting that police had informed him that most break-ins tended to occur around the time midnight screenings let out. Moreover, in an age of enthusiastic and guiltless use of tobacco in all its forms, he nonetheless felt compelled to point out the volume of smoking at midnight screenings was so great that "in some instances the air was blue and it was difficult to see the pictures."[55]

It seems possible, then, that movie-going, especially when it involved the extravagant palaces, may have served to reinforce many social boundaries and stood as a reminder of social exclusion. Another possibility presents itself as well. It may even be the case that, as the war effort intensified, a public persistently regaled to make greater sacrifices did not object to, and in some cases may have actually preferred, a more austere moving-going experience than the one offered by the palaces.

[55] Public Archives of Ontario, RG56-14, Theatre Inspector Reports November 30, 1943.

Figure 6.2 While by no means austere, London's elegant Capitol (above) was a far reach from the splendor of the great movie palaces, and represented a more typical movie-going experience for many Canadians.[56]

The handful of new theatres launched in the interval between the beginning of the war and the suspension of new construction in 1942 were built along very different lines than the palaces had been a decade-and-a-half earlier. Graceful, modernistic, but highly functional art deco replaced marble, glass, and gilt. All this suggests more than a change in taste in the intervening decade: it suggests that the construction of opulent new palaces would have seemed like a crass and unseemly extravagance in the late Depression and early years of the war. Toronto's Pylon theatre, which opened its doors in late 1939, had a modest 750 seats. While its opening was a significant

[56]Public Archives of Ontario, RG 56-11-0-140-7.

event, an indication of the return of prosperity important enough to draw Toronto's Mayor Ralph Day , a gala party scheduled to coincide with the opening was scaled back in favour of an event more in keeping with the spirit of a nation now at war.[57]

Moreover, in Canada's biggest cities, starkly utilitarian neighborhood theatres served huge numbers of patrons who preferred to avoid a streetcar trip downtown, or who were kept closer to home by wartime gasoline rationing beginning in 1942. Unremarkable from the exterior, undistinguished and even bland inside, they were built with function rather form in mind.

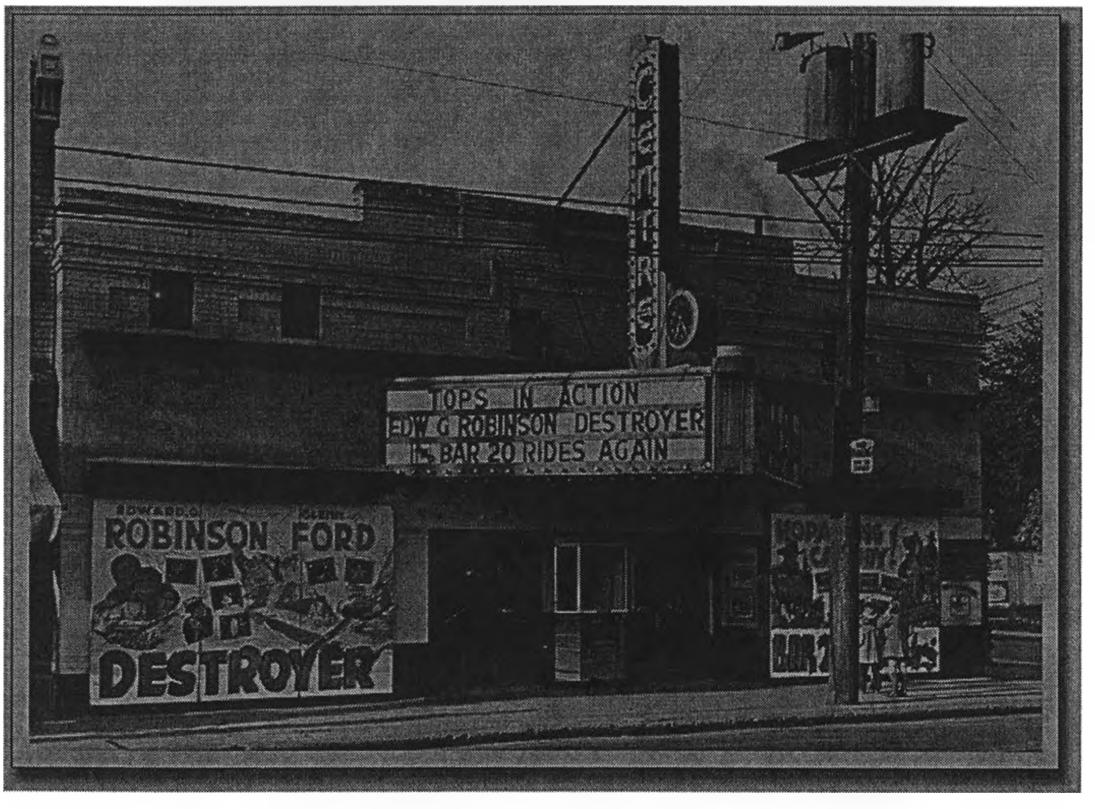

Figure 6.3. The exterior of Toronto's Centre theatre. The divide between refined movie theatres and run-down ones was not merely between urban and rural. Notably absent from most theatres of this kind was the confection stand. Most theatres relied, instead, on candy machines. When popcorn was available it was usually brought in pre-popped, reheated on site, and then sold in boxes.[58]

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[57] "Open Pylon Theatre, Toronto," *Canadian Moving Picture Digest*, October 28, 1939, 5.
[58] Public Archives of Ontario, RG 56-11-0-277-1.

And what are we to say of the tiny community hall theatres or of the remote and ramshackle venues that still entertained countless tens of thousands of Canadian moviegoers every year? There is simply no possible correspondence between the grand palaces, and venues such as these:

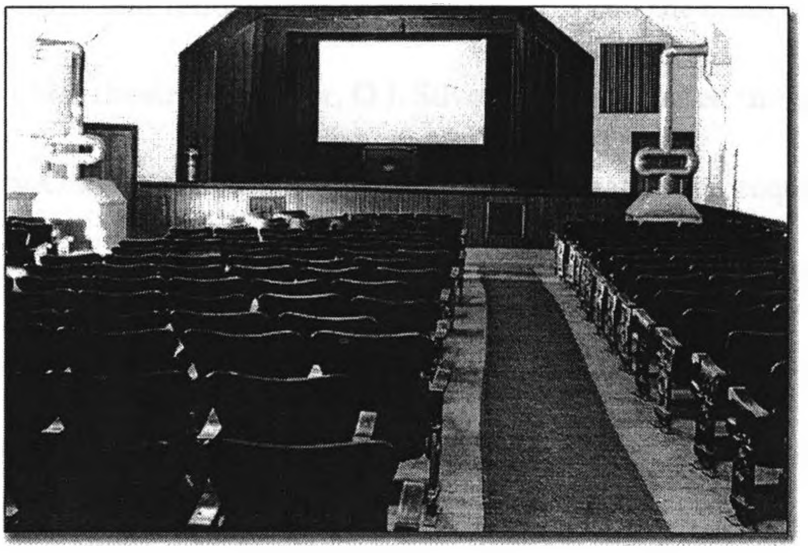

Figure 6.4 The Gaiety theatre, in Rainy River, Ontario, used woodstoves to heat the tiny auditorium. The screen is approximately four square meters.[59]

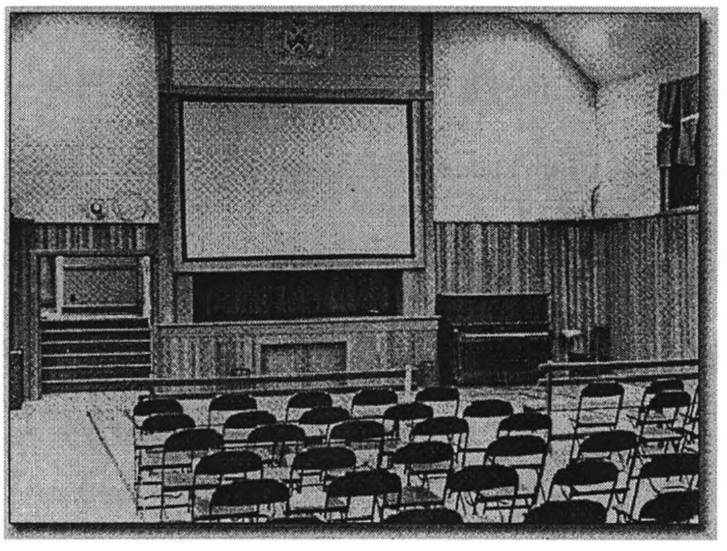

Figure 6.5 Some of the nation's theatres were just community halls with projection equipment installed. But, collectively, halls such as this one in Picton entertained hundreds of thousands of people every year, and nearly every armed forces base in the country would have had one like it.[60]

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[59] Public Archives of Ontario, RG 56-11-0-221-3.
[60] Public Archives of Ontario, RG 56-11-0-73-1.

By war's end, dilapidated theatres may have been the norm rather than the exception. The imposition of wartime restrictions on building materials delayed much-needed repairs and renovations to many theatres and the construction of new ones. Ontario's chief theatre inspector, O.J. Silverthorn, estimated in September 1944 that at least sixty Ontario theatres, and probably twice that many, required significant renovations to be brought up to code.[61] The WPTB, however, had prohibited the "public exhibition of moving pictures for profit in venues which were not actually in use for that purpose on January 31, 1942" which meant, in effect, that no new theatres could be built thereafter.[62] Occasionally, Board approval could be secured for the construction of a new theatre, such as in the case of one Sudbury theatre, the Lyric, whose dilapidated facilities Silverthorn described as posing "a distinct menace to the attending public." But such approval was rare. Despite booming attendance, only about forty new theatres were constructed in Canada from 1942-1944. Meanwhile, Silverthorn's reports were full of descriptions of rundown exteriors, decrepit interiors, and unsanitary (and even non-existent) toilet facilities. Owners of such theatres often pointed to the orders of a higher authority — the WPTB — to explain their failure to

[61] Public Archives of Ontario, RG56-14, Theatre Inspector Reports, September 1944.
[62] "Ottawa Defines Board's Power," *Canadian Film Weekly*, February 25, 1942, 1.

modernize their facilities, happy for once about having to abide by intrusive federal regulations.[63]

Coping with regulations was part of the theatre operator's daily existence, but the war confronted them with a baffling array of new, often overlapping, and sometimes even conflicting rules and regulations imposed by every level of government. World War Two was only days old when theatre operations began to be effected. Given that theatres drew large crowds, many of these concerned public safety. In Ontario, theatre owners were required to install emergency lights by September 30, 1939, in order to prevent a repetition of the panic that occurred in Toronto and St. Thomas when the power failed during one of the first screenings of a war newsreel.[64] In Nova Scotia and New Brunswick, the theatres "went dark" in mid-September, their neon and electric light marquees extinguished as an air-raid precaution.[65] Movie theatre blackout regulations varied over time and from place to place. Of course, nearly every city in Canada adopted some sort of blackout precautions and air defense scheme, none of which seemed terribly unreasonable in coastal regions, especially where theatres were concerned. The pulsating theatre marquees were among the brightest landmarks in any city, after all. But air raid

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[63] Public Archives of Ontario, RG56-14, Theatre Inspector Reports, October 1, 1943.
[64] "Order Emergency Lighting Systems Installed in Ontario Theatres," *Canadian Moving Picture Digest*, September 16 1939, 3.
[65] "Canada at War Seriously Affects Theatres in Maritime Provinces," *Canadian Moving Picture Digest*, September 16 1939, 4.

precautions struck the many Canadians who lived far from the coast as quite unnecessary. It was generally understood that the Axis powers did not possess intercontinental bombers and that, even if such aircraft did exist, there were targets of far greater strategic significance than those offered by most mid-sized Canadian cities. O.J. Silverthorn, agreed that most blackout regulations were unnecessary as far as movie theatres went: theatres were windowless anyway and marquees were easily extinguished in the event of an emergency.[66] By 1942, at least some theatre exhibitors had had enough of unwarranted blackout and air-raid regulations and began to distribute amongst themselves a set of gag precautions. It read, in part:

> 1) As soon as the bombs start dropping, run like hell.
> a) wear track shoes if possible – if the people in front of you are slow, you won't have any trouble getting over them
> 2) Take advantage of opportunities afforded you when air raid sirens sound the warning of attack ie)
> a) if in a bakery, grab some pie or cake, etc.
> b) if in a tavern, grab a bottle
> c) if in a movie, grab a blonde

Other "precautions" included the advice to "drink heavily, eat onions, limburger cheese etc. before entering a crowded air raid shelter" on the grounds that your breath would ensure you greater personal space and privacy.[67]

As this satire demonstrates, theatre operators might have been willing to demonstrate their commitment to the war effort, but they did not take the imposition

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[66] Public Archives of Ontario RG56-14, Theatre Inspector Reports, January 6, 1943.
[67] "Air Raid Advice," *Canadian Film Weekly*, March 4 1942, 5.

of every regulation lying down. Above all, they took exception to the government's decision to categorize their business as non-essential. With great indignation, they pointed to the fact that they had donated their theaters to patriotic organizations and had undertaken their own efforts to mobilize movie-goers for the purposes of serving the war effort, and wondered why officials did not give them greater consideration. Practically every retailer and service provider argued that his business was essential, but theatre operators felt that they had a more plausible argument than others. It was not entirely pretense – their organizational efforts on behalf of the war effort had begun very early in the war In the spring of 1940 exhibitors across Canada mounted a coordinated coast-to-coast Victory Bond drive, which they encumbered with the inelegant title "Canadian Moving Picture Industry Win the War Campaign." Commencing on Dominion Day with the sale of Victory Bonds in theatres and culminating in a free show two weeks later to anyone who bought a minimum of two war savings stamps, the campaign involved the participation of hundreds of theatres. Assistance arrived from Hollywood, with Alfred Hitchcock promising top studio talent to promote the campaign. In the event, most of the stars who turned out were Hitchcock's fellow British expatriates. Vivian Leigh, fresh from her triumphant turn as Scarlett O'Hara in *Gone with the Wind,* appeared with her husband Laurence Oliver in Toronto. Maureen O'Sullivan, best known for playing Jane to Johnny Weissmuller's Tarzan, appeared alongside actor Ronald Colman in Winnipeg. Sir Cedric Hardwick, one of the first modern actors to be knighted, appeared in

Montreal, while Anna Neagle, largely forgotten today but one of the top box-office draws of the era, appeared in Vancouver. By all standards the campaign was a ringing success. In Ontario, all but two of 375 movie theatres took part; even in unenthusiastic Quebec 128 of 218 theatres participated. For the culminating event, the July 15 free show, Winnipeg's forty theatres were filled to capacity. Even in tiny Fort Qu'Appelle, Saskatchewan, population 580, where the theatre sat only 200, the manager was forced to run an additional show to seat everyone who wanted to be.[68] Similar, if less coordinated campaigns, were run throughout the war, and of course individual theatres participated in scrap metal drives, offered free admissions to people who had bought Victory Bonds (or, in the case of the Palace theatre in Timmins, Ontario, free admission to patrons bringing two pounds of waste fats), and supported innumerable other patriotic causes.[69]

It is hardly surprising, then, that theatre operators resented the continued censure of people described in one trade paper as "citizens of mature years who have been reared in the atmosphere of homes governed by the precepts and restrictions of Puritan philosophy." Apart from moralistic misgivings about the films themselves, the biggest point of contention between the Canadian industry and its critics were midnight and Sunday screenings, which became commonplace during the war.[70]

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[68] *Canadian Moving Pictures Digest*, July 14,1940, 1, 3.
[69] "Timmins Fats Show," *Canadian Moving Picture Digest*, October 14, 1944, 14.
[70] The Trenton *Quinte Sun*, quoted in "Midnight Show Ban Called Unfair," *Canadian Film Weekly*, January 28 1942, 5.

"Pity the poor theatre manager," said a writer for *Canadian Film Weekly*, "who wants to put on a Sunday show for the bomb victims, milk for British babies, smokes for the boys overseas or any of a number of worthy causes. Next day, sure as shooting, representatives of religious groups protest loudly that the Lord's Day Act is being violated."[71] In most cases, civic officials sided with theatre operators, provided that their facilities were engaged for patriotic purposes. In response to one group protesting Sunday openings, Hamilton's exasperated mayor observed that "Hitler doesn't care on what day he parades his soldiers or sends his airplanes over Britain."[72] But the effort to use movie theatres in support of the war effort raises a serious query about the validity of the "escape thesis". Among wartime writers, no more enthusiastic proponent of the utilization of theatres for patriotic purposes could be found than Ray Lewis, but she herself wondered if audiences were not being oversaturated with war news, war-related movies, and patriotic appeals. She worried that too much of this would actually engender resistance and resentment in audiences, driving them away from the movies. "Certainly three or four propaganda appeals during an evening is two too much, to do us or the public, or our Government, or our War Effort any good" she wrote.[73] Even John Grierson, director of the National Film Board of Canada, worried about overdoing it. Given the NFB's own serial monthly newsreel, *The March of Time*, its other documentaries, and the

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[71] "In the Middle," *Canadian Film Weekly*, March 4,1942, 2.
[72] "Hamilton Whacks Midnite Shows," *Canadian Film Weekly*, February 11, 1942, 1-2.
[73] Ray Lewis, "Too Much of a Good Thing!," *Canadian Moving Picture Digest*, May 27, 1944, 1.

immense number of American and British "shorts" being screened across Canada, Grierson worried that more would be self-defeating.[74]

Far from an avenue of escape, then, an evening at the movies might actually have been one of the most immediate reminders for movie-goers that they were inescapably in a state of war. In most cities, patrons would have entered the cinema under a blacked-out marquis, made their way through a lobby plastered with recruitment and Victory Bond posters, and then would have watched a succession of newsreels and war-themed documentary 'shorts', followed by the feature presentation that might very well have been a war movie. Can such patrons really be said to have psychologically "escaped" from the war? If anything, movie-going was probably the aspect of Canadian consumer culture most visibly altered by the war in its first two years, and the relationship between movie-going and the war only intensified after American entry. In June 1942, *Canadian Film Digest* reported that of seventy-six films presently in production in Hollywood, one-third were war movies.[75] When the American trade journal *Film Daily* polled movie critics in 1943 for a list of the year's ten best movies, all of them had war themes. Of the forty-seven pictures nominated by the critics, half were war-related.[76] That same year, when the Department of National Defense produced its own list of the movies most suitable for distribution to

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[74] John Grierson, "The National Film Board and You," *Canadian Film Weekly*, February 25, 1942, 5.
[75] "Movie Patrons Are Realistic," *Canadian Film Weekly*, July 2, 1942, 3.
[76] "Critics Select "Random Harvest" Year's Best," *Canadian Moving Picture Digest*, January 22, 1944, 1.

troops overseas, it included no fewer than five war movies: *Corvette K-225*, *Desert Victory*, *Mission to Moscow*, *Heroic Stalingrad*, and *In Which We Serve*.[77]

Moreover, even those movies that were not explicitly about the war seldom offered audiences straightforwardly escapist entertainment. As film historian Robert Sklar has observed, even the comedies of war years were decidedly more jaded than we might suppose and, moreover, the war years gave rise to that genre of gloomy, violent, cynical and even sinister thrillers French critics would later dub *film noir*. Among the early films in the genre were John Houston's *The Maltese Falcon* (1941), director Fritz Lang's adaptation of Graham Greene's schizophrenic spy thriller , *The Ministry of Fear* (1944), and Alfred Hitchcock's most claustrophobic film of all, 1944's *Lifeboat*, in which the captain of a capsized German U-Boat is rescued by the survivors of a liner he had just torpedoed. "The hallmark of *film noir*," Sklar writes,

> is its sense of people trapped — trapped in webs of paranoia and fear, unable to tell guilt from innocence, true identity from false. Its villains are attractive and sympathetic, masking greed, misanthropy and violence. Its heroes and heroines are weak, confused, susceptible to false impressions...In the end, evil is exposed, though often just barely, and the survival of good remains troubled and ambiguous.[78]

Director Billy Wilder's *Double Indemnity* (1944), based on a novella by James M. Cain, takes the motif a step further: middle-class life itself becomes the trap. What motivates the central characters in *Double Indemnity* to commit murder is not,

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[77] Bill Press, "Toronto and District," *Canadian Moving Picture Digest*, January 29, 1944, 5.
[78] Sklar, *Movie-Made America : A Cultural History of American Movies*, 253.

ultimately, the hope for financial gain, but the ennui and purposelessness of middle-class consumer life.

But even the bleakest and most violent of the film noir thrillers did not match the unprecedented levels of cinematic brutality audiences would encounter in the era's war movies. According to historian Stephen Prince, wartime Hollywood filmmakers progressively challenged the authority of the Production Code of America. In particular, they demanded that the PCA grant them greater latitude in depicting the brutality of war, lest their films seem to diminish the actual sacrifices being made by Allied soldiers overseas.[79] Prior to the war, Prince writes, filmmakers had considered the human body as inviolate on screen. Actors whose characters were shot or stabbed would perform what he calls the "clutch and fall" – which involved clutching at a bloodless, imaginary wound before pitching forward.[80] Depictions of blood or the mutilation of the body were forbidden. In movies such as *Bataan* (1943) and *Pride of the Marines* (1945), however, the PCA permitted depictions of modern warfare with scenes of violence that, in Prince's words "easily surpass anything that gangster or horror movies had shown to audiences."[81] *Bataan* actually portrayed an American soldier impaled through the neck by a Japanese bayonet; *The Purple Heart*

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[79] Stephen Prince, *Classical Film Violence : Designing and Regulating Brutality in Hollywood Cinema, 1930-1968* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 2003), 164.
[80] Ibid., 153-55.
[81] Ibid., 164.

(1944), a dramatization of eight Allied airmen captured after the famous Doolittle Raid, strongly implied acts of torture and depicted the execution of Allied POWs.[82]

Granted, many of the era's war movies were not much more than propaganda in the guise of adventure epics, which cast the war and its unpredictable dangers into a narrative in which the outcome was always a favorable one. But their violence was shocking nonetheless: even the "clutch and fall" scenes of the era seemed somehow more brutal, with scores of actors falling in the face of chattering machine guns.[83] "Every week the war films get longer, louder, and more violent," *Saturday Night's* always caustic film reviewer, Mary Lowrey Ross, wrote in March 1944, singling out the recent Randolph Scott-Alan Curtis war epic *Gung Ho*:

> There is not one touch of insight or imagination in a film of this sort. When it is over you know no more than you did before how men feel when they go out to face death and destroy their fellow-creatures. All you have seen are the strictly dehumanized mechanics of killing, which you react to as "entertainment" simply with your nerves. Before it is over even your nerves refuse to respond, so that instead of being excited or exalted or even sickened you are merely bored.[84]

"Fourth class scrub and dirt," is how the members of Winnipeg's School Board responded to the new war movies in a complaint to provincial authorities, singling out one — probably *Bataan* — which featured a gruesome bayoneting. "It is terrible the number of young children that attend these motion pictures and see these scenes,"

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[82] Ibid., 161, 63.
[83] Ibid., 164.
[84] Mary Lowrey Ross, "Stepping-up the Violence May Bore the Suffering Populace," *Saturday Night*, March 11 1944, 30-31.

one teacher remarked.[85] A year later, the *Canadian Forum*'s film reviewer made the same observation, noting that the net effect of recent films was to make one aware of the "hundred curious ways in which death may creep up on you."[86]

But a sampling of movie reviews indicates very strongly that while most critics were cognizant of Hollywood's increasingly sanguinary output, they also seemed to believe that war movies served the eminently useful purpose of arousing the public's hatred of the enemy. Referring to the graphic portrayal of the torture and subsequent execution of Allied POWS in *The Purple Heart,* for example, the *Canadian Moving Pictures Digest* reviewer wrote, "Any man, woman, or child who can sit through this picture without getting the urge to go all-out in his or her personal war effort is either as yellow as the Japs' skin or a potential Quisling."[87] Moreover, there is reason to believe that Prince's argument, that wartime censors were less likely to edit movies portraying events actually in the news, applied in Canada as well. In Ontario, for example, just fifty-six of 1767 American films (including newsreels and documentaries) exhibited in provincial movie theatres were cut or edited beforehand.[88] In the specific case of *Bataan*, which ran for more than six months,

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[85] Conklin, "Winnipeg News," 9.
[86] D. Mosdell, "Film Review," *The Canadian Forum*, March 1945, 284.
[87] "'Heart' a Patriotic 'Must'," *Canadian Moving Picture Digest*, April 1 1944, 7.
[88] "Silverthorne Report Praises War Effort of Industry," *Canadian Moving Picture Digest*, May 20 1944, 8.

Ontario censors permitted the infamous bayoneting to remain, although the soldiers' scream was cut.[89]

In any case, the clucking disapproval of the morally indignant seldom deters audiences, and in most instances has had the opposite effect. In an era of innumerable, rapidly produced, and often – even in the estimation of contemporary critics – vapid melodramas and tiresome comedies, audiences may have yearned for weightier movies. In her wartime memoir, *Sun in Winter*, British expatriate Gumba Lambton recalls crossing the river to Hull, Quebec, where Sunday screenings were legal. The film was the now forgotten *Music for Millions*, about a lonely soldier's wife. "Sober Ontarians would most likely have approved of the movie we saw in Hull," Lambton reflected, but therein lay the problem. "There's nothing in this film that could not be seen on Sundays, and we were vaguely disappointed," she concluded rather dejectedly.[90] "The public prefers the strife stuff," wrote the editors of *Canadian Film Weekly*, recognizing the disjuncture between the "escape" thesis and the reality of wartime theatre going:

> What does the public want of films, recreation and entertainment or inspiration and information? More exhibitors would say recreation and entertainment. But according to the latest assay of public preferences, the movie patron wants a well-balanced program, one that includes everything.

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[89] Prince, *Classical Film Violence : Designing and Regulating Brutality in Hollywood Cinema, 1930-1968*, 163. Unfortunately, Prince does not indicate what his source is for the claim that Ontario cut only the soldier's scream.

[90] Gunda Lambton, *Sun in Winter: A Toronto Wartime Journal* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2003), 234.

> And he or she is not afraid of the grim realities of war, as pictured by Hollywood.[91]

But it might be imprudent to push the argument too far. The public's interest in war movies and crime thrillers should not necessarily be construed as evidence that they did not also seek diversion and amusement from the movies. The history of the arts, after all, gives us ample reason to believe that people find synthetic violence highly entertaining. Nonetheless, the success of war movies and *film noir* suggests that the Canadian consumer-moviegoer sought something more from movie-going than a mere distraction from wartime anxieties, or perhaps that the anxieties themselves were not so great as is sometimes supposed. People allegedly seeking a respite from their wartime worries flocked to a succession of films of shocking and unprecedented violence, and were in the process inundated by a barrage of war news and patriotic appeals.

Like the wartime consumer economy generally, movie going was a study in contrasts. Longstanding concerns about American economic and cultural imperialism, and fears about the decline of the values of thrift and abstemious morality in the consumer society, far from being subsumed by the war, were intensified by it, and to these were added the customary disputes about the appropriateness of public expenditure on nonessentials in wartimes. The movie industry's rebuttal was to position itself as essential in a variety of capacities. Like so many other retailers of the

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[91] "Strife Stuff," *Canadian Film Weekly*, August 26, 1942, 2.

era, movie exhibitors worked to secure a place for themselves and their businesses in their towns and neighbourhoods. They resented and openly contested accusations that their business agenda was at cross-purposes with the war effort. On the contrary, at the war's end they could with some justification point to the efforts they had made on behalf of their country. Not only had governments squeezed millions in amusement tax revenues from ticket sales, but their theatres had served as venues for recruiting, Victory Bond drives, and patriotic gatherings of all kinds, and this was in addition to the role that they had played in the dissemination of war news. As for movie going consumers themselves, the argument that they went to the movies seeking nothing more than a superficial escape from wartime worries is itself superficial. As we have seen throughout this study, consumers sought to chart a middle course between wartime restraint and excess, serving, however imperfectly, their own needs, the needs of the producers and sellers of commodities, and the demands of a nation at war.

In Conclusion

No one can sell me the idea anymore, after having lived through two world wars, that people have become so educated, so civilized, that they are now epicureans and all-wise guys, too choosy, or too clever to be sold anything. After Hitler, I believe that you can sell the people a dead dog.

Ray Lewis, *Canadian Moving Pictures Digest,* December 2, 1944.[1]

Our self-renewing lords who spell democracy
as private enterprise and public rape
may yet be wrong. That was another war, and we
are haunted by our frustrate fathers and the late
souring of a milksop truce, when Steves, with brains
and hands alone to trade with, and no credit,
were paid in promises, or jailed, or warned off freights
and politics and love, unless they peddled
the latest brightest stones to all who asked for bread.

Earle Birney, "For Steve", 1944[2]

Birney, who served with the Canadian army overseas, wrote these words about a glacial era — the Great Depression — and as Allied victories mounted, he, like many Canadians, became preoccupied with the possibility that it might yet return. Perhaps no other people had been so ravaged by the Depression, and everyone knew that it was economic mobilization for war that had delivered them from it. But what would happen when the war plants shut down and a million men were released from the armed forces? As early as the summer of 1942, Cyril James, the principal of McGill and the chair of the Committee on Postwar Reconstruction, bluntly told a House of

[1] Ray Lewis, "Ray Presents," *Canadian Moving Pictures Digest,* December 2, 1944, 2.
[2] Earle Birney, "For Steve" *Canadian Forum,* August 1944, 112-113.

Commons committee that "there will inevitably be a post-war depression, either immediately after the war or after a brief period of prosperity."[3]

In the last year of the war especially, gloomy prognostications such as this were everywhere to be found, many of them intermingled with bitter reflections on the disillusionment that had followed the failure of so many hopes and dreams following the Great War. "The last war came to be called 'the war to end all wars'," wrote the authors of *Canada: The War and After*, published in 1944. "But while we won the war, the victory turned out to be an empty one."[4] The strangest and bitterest of all publications on the topic of reconstruction was an "economic satire" called *The Permanent War or Homo the Sap.* by Lorne Morgan, a professor at the University of Toronto, "Never before in the history of man has his economy functioned as it is functioning today," Morgan wrote,

> Never before has that economy distributed the purchasing power it is distributing today. Within ten short years, the modern industrial and capitalist world has literally jumped from the depths of its greatest depression to the peak of its greatest prosperity. Why? *Because the world was fortunate enough to blunder into war.*[5]

Morgan's sardonic conclusion was that the wartime boom could only be sustained by perpetual war – he proposed that when Germany and Japan were defeated Canadians might pick a fight with a Latin American country. Tasteless though this was, it

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[3] Quoted in Harry Cassidy, *Social Security and Reconstruction in Canada* (Toronto: the Ryerson Press, 1943), 4-5.
[4] W.E.C. Harrison, *Canada: The War and After* (Toronto: The Ryerson Press, 1944), 58.
[5] Lorne T. Morgan, *The Permanent War or Homo the Sap* (Toronto: Worker's Educational Association, 1944), 15.

underscored a troubling predicament. What was to sustain the Canadian economy when the war ended? Within the ranks of the government and civil service in Ottawa grandiose plans for a prosperous peace had been in the offing for some time. James's Committee on Postwar Reconstruction had been struck in March 1941, and had in turn spawned Leonard Marsh's 1943 *Report on Social Security in Canada.* While the parsimoniousness of the finance department precluded any possibility of a wholesale adoption of the social programs Marsh proposed, there was a general agreement inside King's government that some form of social welfare planning was necessary to secure both a smooth transition to peacetime and the electoral fortunes of the Liberal party.[6]

By 1945, many Canadians agreed that the federal government had a responsibility to involve itself in matters of economic planning and social welfare. As Kenneth Norrie and Douglas Owram have argued, the greatest change within the government during the Second World War was not the vast expansion in the federal bureaucracy's size and power, but an intellectual transformation brought on by the realization that macroeconomic planning was actually possible. The government could regulate prices, wages, and the consumer economy, it could assume direct control of whole industries and forge working relationships with moderate elements of organized labour and, above all, it could engage in large-scale deficit spending without bringing about economic ruin.[7] While the war had also convinced many

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[6] Robert Bothwell, et.al. *Canada 1900-1945* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1987), 390.
[7] Norrie and Owram, *A History of the Canadian Economy* (Toronto: Harcourt Brace, 1996), 390-393.

reluctant businesspeople that a carefully managed relationship with the government could be a mutually beneficial one, nothing so alarmed them as the possibility that the wartime regulatory state might evolve into some form of welfare-state socialism. Admittedly, there was little chance of this occurring with the Liberals in power (though the editors of the *Toronto Telegram* had nonetheless been accusing the government of "despotism" since 1940), but what if the C.C.F. won the next federal election? In late 1944, it was a possibility that could not be dismissed. In June, the C.C.F. had formed a government in Saskatchewan, and it had been the official opposition in Ontario since 1943. Polls put the party in a dead heat with the Liberals.[8]

One consistent theme of this study has been how the apostles of free enterprise equated consumer choice with political freedom. Ideologically, this was easy to reconcile with the expressed war aims of the Allies. In this perspective, the struggle for human emancipation necessarily included the defense of free enterprise and consumer choice. In addition, as I have argued, many advertisements from the last two years of the war promised a high-technology "world of tomorrow" where Canadians would lead lives of comfort and prosperity thanks to the availability of inexpensive consumer goods. In the last two years of the war, a succession of editorials in the business and retail trade press reiterated these arguments. Canadians were not, they said, fighting a war against totalitarianism only to accept the extension of the planned economy into peacetime. Economic regimentation would stifle free

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[8] Robert Bothwell et.al., *Canada 1900-1945*, 330.

enterprise and socialized welfare would undermine the qualities of hard work and individual self-reliance that were responsible for Canada's greatness and the defeat of the Axis. As the editors of *Drug Merchandising* saw it, "next to winning the war and the peace, our greatest responsibility is to preserve our Canadian way of life which revolves around the system of initiative and enterprise."[9]

Many businesses turned to institutional advertising in their campaign against the emerging welfare state. Such advertisements advanced the argument that social security would result from the only thing that had ever been proven to generate widespread wealth: the unfettered operation of free enterprise in a consumer economy. One notable institutional advertisement took the form of the cliché of the misguided friend. The advertisement (Figure 7.1, below) depicted an "old-timer" in the cafeteria at Dominion Oilcloth explaining to a newcomer, "Social security? We've had it for years at Dominion Oilcloth...the best unemployment insurance is a good job – and work to do." He felt no anxiety for the postwar world either, since, "there's going to be plenty of need for linoleum after the war."[10]

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[9] *Drug Merchandising*, October 1, 1943, 1.

[10] "Social Security? We've Had it for Years at Dominion Oilcloth!" Advertisement, *National Home Monthly*, September 1944, 27.

Figure 7.3 Consumer capitalism's answer to the emerging social welfare state: widespread prosperity secured through mass consumption.

In addition, a new advertising cliché emerged in the last year of the war – the cliché of the "fifth freedom" – a freedom beyond those enumerated in the Atlantic Charter. "Four freedoms aren't enough!" cries a character in one such advertisement:

> Freedom of speech, freedom of worship, freedom from want, and freedom from fear are great stuff – as far as they go. But they may never go very far beyond the stage of bright idealism if they don't make room for the greatest democratic freedom of all – freedom of individual enterprise ... So let's boil it all down to this, the right of free choice...to choose our opinions, our words, our religion,

> our homes, our clothes, our books, and breakfast foods, friends, and amusement.[11]

Of course, views such as these had always been and still are the basis of the conservative argument against a social welfare state, but as social welfare planning turned into concrete reality, and with the C.C.F. no longer a discountable threat, some editorials in the business and trade press neared an hysterical pitch. In a typical example, the editors of *Marketing* said that proposals to create a socialized welfare state, "should be recognized for what they are: projects for revolutionizing our economic and social system, with the abandonment of all rights to freedom of choice in how we earn what we spend and spend what we earn."[12]

In the event, the predicted C.C.F. victory never materialized. In June 1945, the Ontario wing of the party suffered a crushing defeat in the provincial elections, losing twenty-six of its thirty-four seats. In the federal election that followed, the party secured just twenty-eights seats and only 16 percent of the popular vote. While the Liberals were reduced to 125 seats, and Mackenzie King suffered the indignity of losing in his own riding, the party retained its majority.[13] Historians have offered several explanations for the C.C.F.'s failure to secure greater electoral success in 1945: the Liberal party's vast election-campaigning experience, the timidity of voters, and King's adoption of several social welfare measures that effectively pulled the carpet

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[11] Published by the E.B. Eddy Company, this advertisement ran in many mass-market and trade publications, for instance: *Marketing*, October 14th, 1944, 14 and *Maclean's*, October 15, 1944, 27.
[12] "Small Scope for Advertising if Beveridge Ideas Adopted," *Marketing*, December 2, 1944, 1.
[13] Leo Zakuta, *A Protest Movement Becalmed* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1964), 71.

out from under the C.C.F.'s own platform, but it might be unwise to discount the cumulative impact of anti-C.C.F. propaganda. It is worth noting, too, that the C.C.F.'s own campaign materials were often flatly contradictory: the party professed that a socialist future was at hand but also promised voters "electric refrigerators, radios, houses, and cars" – the very products of consumer capitalism.[14]

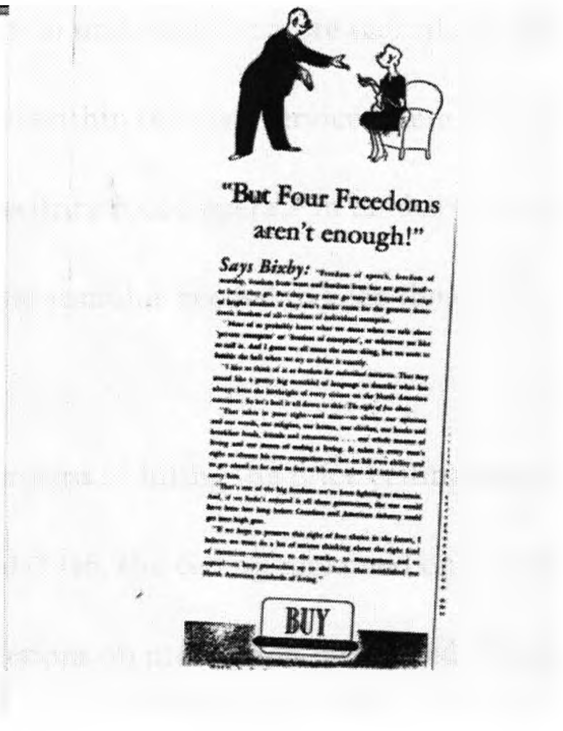

Figure 7.2, 7.3. Late in the war, institutional advertising campaigns began to allude to a "fifth freedom": the freedom of free enterprise. It became yet another cliché of wartime advertising.[15]

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[14] Walter D. Young, *The National C.C.F. 1932-1961* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1969), 118.
[15] "There is a Fifth Freedom," *Men's Wear Merchandising*, June 1, 1944, 13; "But Four Freedoms aren't enough!" *Maclean's*, October 15, 1944, 27.

Reconstruction planning has been discussed elsewhere in great detail.[16] Suffice to say that the Liberal party's own reconstruction plans were neither as socialistic as their conservative and business community critics sometimes alleged, nor were they the wholesale capitulation to corporate interests that some C.C.F.ers accused them of being. The concrete steps taken by the Liberals toward the creation of a national welfare system: the adoption of unemployment insurance in 1940, the Family Allowance Act of 1944, and various measures referred to as the Veteran's Charter, were only partially motivated by the desire to undercut the more radical agenda of the C.C.F.. Within King's government and within the civil service, there was a broad consensus that a federal system of social security could operate in tandem with free enterprise, helping to provide the economic stimulus needed to keep the engine of consumer capitalism running.[17]

Accordingly, the WPTB began the process of lifting the price ceiling and other regulations in the summer of 1945. By mid-1946, the ceiling remained only in the case of goods in short supply and all restrictions on production had ended. Gordon himself resigned from the Board in March 1947. His successor, K.W. Taylor, had the unglamorous duty of overseeing the final suspension of the few remaining controls.

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[16] On the King government's plans, see Granatstein, *Canada's War* and Robert Bothwell and William Kilbourn, *C.D. Howe: A Biography* (Toronto: McLelland and Stewart, 1979). On the emergence of the social welfare state in this period, see Alvin Finkel, *Our Lives : Canada After 1945* (Toronto: James Lorimer and Co., 1997). On the cultural aspects of reconstruction, see L.B. Kuffert, *A Great Duty: Canadian Responses to Modern Life and Mass Culture, 1939-1967* (Toronto: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2006), 65-103.

[17] Kenneth Norrie and Douglas Owram, *A History of the Canadian Economy*, 390-395.

The Board shut down by year's end.[18] The WRACs continued to meet throughout 1946, although liaisons complained that it was increasingly difficult to get women involved. Having developed what Magda Fahrni calls "a sense of economic citizenship cultivated over the war years", some soldiered on to form their own consumer organizations to agitate for reasonable prices.[19] As price controls lifted, however, inflation soared. Between 1946 and 1947, the cost of living increased by nearly 10 percent – more than it had in the previous five years put together, according to the official figures.

As events would have it, the immediate postwar economy is something of a paradox. Gross national product suffered only the smallest decline in 1946, and then raced ahead. Nothing like the predicted depression emerged – but neither did the first two years after the end of the war live up to the expectations of those who had hoped for an explosion of pent-up consumer demand. Joy Parr, in her study of postwar consumers, argues that the anticipated postwar boom was to an extent limited by the higher per capita tax burden Canadians quite willingly accepted in order to underwrite the cost of the emerging welfare state.[20] It is also true that throughout 1945 the Board's directors continued to urge consumers to be cautious and restrained, reminding them that in the case of the First World War the worst inflation had

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[18] Christopher Waddell, *The Wartime Prices and Trade Board*, 719-725.
[19] Magda Fahrni, "Counting the Costs of Living: Gender, Citizenship, and a Politics of Prices in 1940s Montreal," *Canadian Historical Review*, 83 (4), December 2002: 483.
[20] See Parr, *Domestic Goods*, chapter one.

followed victory. But the real impediment to any immediate postwar boom was the fact that reconversion took time. While the Department of Munitions and Supply had lifted most restrictions on production by the end of 1945, shortages of parts and materials meant that production of most consumer durables initially was well below expectations. Unit sales of new passenger cars, for example, were slightly lower in 1946 than they had been in 1941 and well below the levels of the first two years of the war.[21] In addition, many semi-durables and soft goods remained in short supply, sugar rationing continued until 1947, and meat rationing resumed in September 1945 (and continued until April 1947) once again in order to fill export requirements to the starving continent of Europe. A writer for *Saturday Night* put it well when he said, "when Allied troops landed in France on D-Day they not only broke the lock of Germany's fortress Europe but also opened the door to new world food problems."[22] But however circumscribed the initial postwar boom might have been by problems of demobilization, inflation, and increased tax burdens, there can be no doubt that the general trend in consumer sales was up, and by the end of the decade record numbers of cars and electrical appliances began to spill forth from Canadian producers.

I have argued that the Second World War was, in many respects, a period of progress in the development of the modern consumer economy, rather than the period of consumer deprivation that it is usually made out to be. In place of the

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[21] *Historical Statistics of Canada*, Series T61-66.

[22] "Sugar Supplies Present and Post-War," *Food in Canada* April 1945, 30.

"penurious patriotism" of social memory, where home-front consumers pulled together and sacrificed everything on behalf of the war effort, we find a much more complex relationship between consumers, consumption, and the war effort. Even a cursory examination of the home front reveals an obsessive concern from all segments of society with how the war would affect consumerism in Canada and, indeed, how consumerism would affect Canada's war effort. But many prior histories of the home front, when they have addressed consumption at all, have placed an inordinate emphasis on rationing, shortages, and propaganda urging consumer restraint. While these were undeniably important aspects of home front life, there were few shortages until late 1941, rationing did not begin until 1942, and in the first two years of the war calls for increased consumer spending were far more common than calls for restraint. Moreover, even allowing for the possibility of errors in the price indexes compiled by the Dominion Bureau of Statistics, there is every indication that per capita retail sales continued to rise even after the cessation of the production of many consumer durables in late 1941 and early 1942. A surprisingly wide array of goods remained for sale and advertisers and retailers unapologetically converted wartime jitters into rationales for buying them. Admittedly, it is difficult to reconcile the patriotic mythology of self-sacrificing Canadians with the image of department stores, restaurants, and movie theatres jammed to the rafters, but it is worth reflecting that many observers had difficulty with this picture at the time. As the writer Dave Mullen reflected in a prose poem composed in 1944:

> Toronto was very gay and ever-so prosperous. I think as far as big business is concerned, the war is practically over. The stores are full of merchandise and people are extravagantly dressed and the money seems everywhere....and so I sat in Eaton's and wondered how many men felt the last blinding flash between the time my coffee-cup left its saucer and touched my lips and the young woman across from me finished putting on her lipstick.[23]

I have also argued that the women's history of the Second World War is in need of revision. It has centered on the movement of women into nontraditional professions such as munitions work and military service. By contrast, this study has contended that a crucial and, for the most part, neglected aspect of women's lives on the home front is what I have ventured to call "patriotic consumerism". Patriotic consumerism was a highly malleable concept, but what was unchanging was the understanding that the female consumer's concept of citizenship and civic duty in wartime was closely related to discourses of consumption that were themselves contested. The essence of patriotic consumerism was the claim that, consumption, undertaken in a patriotic manner — and, as we have seen, this meant different things at different times — could be part of an effort to defend both the country and the family; it need not be at cross purposes with the war effort, as was sometimes suggested. Given the centrality of the defense of family to the conception of patriotic consumerism that was widely held at the time, it is possible to argue that the concept was part of a sexist backlash against the advancement of women into nontraditional roles. However, just as Canada's business leaders did not recognize any necessary

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[23] Dave Mullen, "Letter from a Young Artist," *Directions*, 1944, n.p.

contradiction between the maintenance of the nation's consumer economy and the prosecution of the war effort, so too did many Canadian women and the organizations that represented them see no distinction between defending Canada and defending what they regarded as its central institution – the family.

My conclusion that patriotic citizenship became closely related to the politics of consumerism (although admittedly at times in contradictory ways) is, in general, echoed in the arguments made about postwar consumerism by Joy Parr and Magda Fahrni. In addition, historians including Peter McInnis and Michael Dawson have demonstrated how the Cold War era's denunciation of socialism and communism in Canada often centered, as it did in the United States, on the alleged superiority of societies whose prosperity, and thus democratic character, was predicated upon free enterprise.[24] I have argued that, while there was no consensus about the meaning of "free enterprise", these sorts of rhetorical devices were employed throughout the Second World War against totalitarianism generally, and later against domestic social reformers. Rather than originating in the Cold War, then, the effort to correlate consumer choice with democratic freedom was in fact transposed, and rather easily, from the Second World War era.

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[24] Michael Dawson, "Leisure, Consumption, and the Public Sphere: Postwar Debates Over Shopping Regulations in Vancouver and Victoria during the Cold War," in *Creating Postwar Canada: Community, Diversity, and Dissent, 1945-1975* edited by Magda Fahrni and Robert Rutherdale, (Vancouver, UBC Press), 193-216; Peter McInnis, *Harboring Labour Confrontation: Shaping Settlement in Postwar Canada, 1943-1950* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002), 47-86.

No consensus is possible in an ethnically and regionally diverse nation of twelve million people, as Canada was at the time. I hope, therefore, that this study has also hinted at certain broader implications concerning the social history of wartime Canada. Beneath the veneer of patriotic unanimity and consensus we find that the whole compass of political, social, cultural, and economic disputes that had always been part of Canadian life continued unabated during the war. In many cases, the arguments actually intensified, for it seemed to everyone who had a stake in them that national survival depended on their resolution. It is therefore impossible to make a final conclusion about what consumerism "meant" on the home front. It meant many things to many different people. Some exalted it and embraced it, others resented it and resisted it, still others sought to temper it or harness its power, but in the end, they all became consumers.

In a recent essay on the state of Canadian scholarship on consumption, historian Donica Belisle wrote,

> Leading figures such as Naomi Klein are offering influential critiques of contemporary consumer culture, attacking the corporations and governments that are responsible for how production, distribution, and consumption are arranged. Millions of young people are reading such critiques, expressing dissatisfaction with the organization of the contemporary marketplace at the local and global levels.[25]

Perhaps, but it is one thing to read such critiques and another thing to act upon them, and there is no evidence that people are actually reining in their consumer spending.

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[25] Donica Belisile, "Toward a Canadian Consumer History," *Labour / Le Travail* (52) Fall 2003, 51.

In 1945, per capita retail spending in Canada was $380, or about $4400 adjusted for sixty years' worth of inflation. In 2005, retail sales in Canada reached $370 billion, the equivalent of just under $12,000 in spending by each Canadian.[26] On average, Canadian consumers in 2005 spent nearly three times as much per capita as their wartime counterparts even *after* adjusting for inflation. In a century where writers, thinkers, and politicians preoccupied themselves with the ideologies of fascism, communism, and imperialism, consumerism was the ideology whose victory was complete.

[26] *Retail Trade, 2005,* www.statscan.ca

Appendix

A Statistical Analysis of Canadian Consumer Spending in the Second World War.

One of the central arguments of this study is that a substantial consumer spending boom coincided with, and was the result of, Canada's economic mobilization for war. As we have seen, both buyers and sellers often expressed paradoxical views about wartime consumerism, especially late in the war – lamenting the difficulty of obtaining certain products to buy or sell, but also stating repeatedly that they had never had it so good. Admittedly, the post-Depression consumer boom was impeded by wartime shortages, especially of consumer durables, in the last half of the war. Nonetheless, it is my contention that real consumer spending increased over the course of the war, and that the consumer boom that is supposed to have begun in 1945 can be traced to 1939. In this appendix, I will establish the empirical validity of this claim by using retail sales, per capita consumer spending, and selected production and consumption figures for commodities not addressed in earlier chapters.

Consumer spending dropped precipitously at the beginning of the Depression, then began a sluggish recovery beginning in 1934. As late as 1939, however, it remained substantially below the level reached in 1929 ($4.6 billion) and per capita consumption was flat. From there, however, total consumer expenditure began a remarkable expansion, returning to pre-Depression levels by 1940 and continuing to

grow thereafter, even when taking account of the decline in spending on durables that began in 1942.

Table A1. Personal Expenditure by Category 1939-1945 (in millions of dollars)[1]

Year	Durables	Semi-durables	Non-durables	Services	Total
1939	330	531	1,717	1,394	**3,972**
1940	381	669	1,884	1,530	**4,464**
1941	402	813	2,179	1,695	**5,089**
1942	262	903	2,435	1,866	**5,466**
1943	177	916	2,750	1,940	**5,783**
1944	196	987	2,905	2,172	**6,260**
1945	225	1,102	3,225	2,420	**6,972**
adjusted increase	**-57%**	**73%**	**57%**	**45%**	**46.5%**

Adjusting for both population growth and inflation (or, in the case of the 1930s, deflation), we find that per capita spending in constant 1945 dollars was, for example, $454 in 1940 and $524 in 1944, compared to $389 in 1935 and $413 in 1938.[2] It seems clear, then, that Michael Bliss erred when he wrote that wartime shortages and controls prevented consumer spending from rising above Depression levels.[3]

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[1] M.C. Urquhart and K.A.H. Buckley, *Historical Statistics of Canada*, edited by F.H. Leacy. (Ottawa: Statistics Canada, 1983), Series F76-90. While the totals for consumer expenditure on goods and services are the same between the two editions of *Historical Statistics of Canada*, only the 1983 edition provides the breakdown of consumer expenditure by category as listed above. Once, again, all inflation figures are calculated using the Bank of Canada's on-line inflation calculator at http://www.bank-banque-canada/en/rates/inflation_calc.html

[2] Ibid., and Series A1-19 for population estimates.

[3] Bliss, *Northern Enterprise*, 448

Since the category "services" includes expenditures on such things as health and education, which do not normally come to mind when one speaks of "consumerism", the figures for per capita retail sales (Table A2, below) are even more revealing. For the sake of ease, I have computed them using the standard method of dividing total retail sales by aggregate population estimates. A very good case could be made, however, for deriving them based on *resident* population figures alone, deducting the members of the armed forces overseas —nearly 400,000 at the peak of deployment in 1944 — or perhaps by deducting the net difference between Canadians overseas and foreign service personnel based in Canada. A case could even be made for computing them based solely on resident *civilian* population, on the grounds that soldiers, sailors, and airmen stationed in Canada were for the most part clothed and fed by the armed forces and were major consumers of leisure services only. In any case, the figures below should be taken as conservative estimates of actual spending per head:

Table A2. Per Capita Retail Sales Expenditure 1939-1945[4]

Year	Retail Sales (millions)	Population (thousands)	Per Capita Retail Expenditure	Adjusted Growth from Previous Year
1939	2,578	11,267	$228.81	-
1940	2,935	11,381	$257.88	8.4%
1941	3,415	11,507	$296.78	10.9%
1942	3,619	11,654	$315.54	- .9%
1943	3,786	11,795	$316.93	- 1.7%
1944	4,093	11,946	$342.63	6.9%
1945	4,573	12,072	$378.90	10.6 %
adjusted increase	**48%**	**7%**	**40.4%**	-

As I have argued, historians have sometimes been incautious in suggesting that the material conditions of the last half of the war were constant for its duration. In fact, as the figures above demonstrate, absolute spending increased dramatically over the course of the war, while real per capita retail spending declined only in 1942 and 1943, and then by only the tiniest of percentages. Moreover, this apparent decline disappears entirely if the *resident* population of Canada is used as the basis for the per capita computation. It is probably more accurate to state that the retail spending curve was flat in 1942 and 1943, before resuming its upward growth in 1944. We can conclude, therefore, that rather than reducing retail sales, the combination of rationing, shortages, and anti-consumerist propaganda that some home front histories

[4] Retail Sales: *Historical Statistics of Canada* Series T1-24; Population: Series A-1.

have tended to dwell upon, only impeded the expansion of per capita retail sales for about twenty-four months.

Another remarkable aspect of the wartime consumer economy is that absolute consumer spending remained high even when proportional spending (consumer spending as a percentage of personal income) began to fall in 1942. Consumers spent more than ever, but they also increased their personal savings five-fold over the duration of the war. Despite unprecedented taxes, per capita disposable incomes increased by an extraordinary 55 percent between 1939 and 1945. For what was perhaps the first and only time in Canadian history, the growth in consumers' incomes outstripped their ability to spend their money.

Table A3. Personal Expenditure on Goods and Services as a Percentage of Disposable Income 1939-1945[5]

Year	Personal Disposable Income (millions)	Per Capita Disposable Income (dollars)	Total Personal Expenditure (millions)	Personal Savings (millions)	Expenditure as % of Disposable Income
1939	4,207	373.94	3,972	202	94%
1940	4,798	421.58	4,464	300	93%
1941	5,577	484.66	5,089	455	91%
1942	6,918	591.36	5,466	1,421	79%
1943	7,362	624.63	5,783	1,543	79%
1944	8,051	673.95	6,260	1,760	78%
1945	8,354	692.01	6,972	1,351	83%
Adjusted Increase	65.8%	54.55%	46.5%	458.56%	-

[5] Personal disposable income and personal savings: *Historical Statistics of Canada* Series E-66-78.

What accounts for this proportional decline in spending? The most obvious answer would seem to be the one suggested above – that wartime incomes grew much faster than Canadians' ability to spend, especially after 1941 when there were fewer "big ticket" items available for purchase. We might also speculate that anti-consumerist propaganda had a chilling effect on consumer enthusiasm, but we have no way of knowing how far such patriotic appeals penetrated into the mindset of ordinary Canadians, just as we have no certain means of gauging the impact of advertisements that used the war as a rationale for increased spending. Shortages, too, must have taken their toll, even with the diversion of consumer spending to those goods that were still available. An examination of retail spending by category (see Table A4, next page), reveals where the shortfalls occurred after 1941:

Table A4. Retail Sales by Category of Business 1939-1945
(millions of dollars)[6]

Category	1939	1940	1941	1942	1943	1944	1945	adjusted increase
Grocery Stores	404	469	567	663	707	768	849	75%
Meat markets	60	68	83	92	96	102	110	52%
Other food	120	124	136	155	164	104 (?)	179	24%
Alc. Beverages	103	119	145	177	191	217	277	125%
General Stores	183	194	215	245	274	298	324	48%
Department Stores	291	327	378	419	420	460	510	68%
Auto Dealers	294	340	371	217	180	201	240	-32%
Gas Stations	160	189	205	116	89	94	109	-43%
Men's Clothes	60	68	80	96	98	105	115	60%
W's Clothes	40	55	71	87	94	102	111	131%
Other Clothes	51	61	74	88	94	100	111	81%
Hardware	59	65	73	81	85	89	104	47%
Furniture	46	57	64	66	62	69	79	44%
Appliances	35	43	46	42	33	31	37	-12%
Restaurants	69	87	131	158	196	216	232	178%
Fuel Dealers	83	87	99	123	138	131	137	38%
Drug Stores	76	84	101	115	128	138	148	62%
Jewellery	25	32	38	44	52	60	71	137%
Tobacco	31	36	43	49	56	59	65	75%
All other retail	248	260	312	352	393	427	482	62%
All Retail	2,578	2,935	3,441	3,619	3,786	4,093	4,573	48%

[6] Retail sales by category: *Historical Statistics of Canada* Series T1-24.

As the table demonstrates, the only retail businesses that saw total sales decline in 1942 and 1943 were sellers of consumer durables and businesses related to them: appliance and radio dealers, auto dealers, filling stations, and the like. These three categories of retail alone account for the leveling of the retail spending curve in 1942 and 1943. In the specific case of department stores, sales, too, fell only in the category of durable goods:

Table A5. Department Stores Sales by Selected Departments 1941-1945[7]
(thousands of dollars)

Dept.	1941	1942	1943	1944	1945	adjusted increase
Home Furnishings	26,953	28,956	22,008	26,294	30,372	24%
Appliances and Electrical Supplies	11,254	11,120	7,823	8,121	9,630	-23%
Hardware and Kitchen Utensils	14,229	16,549	14,954	16,275	19,389	36%
Radios, musical instruments	5,024	5,813	4,219	3,315	3,883	-30%
Piece goods	27,558	32,116	31,411	36,939	41,177	36%
Stationery, books, and magazines	6,209	7,322	8,368	9,519	10,730	57%
Footwear	27,418	30,198	30,327	33,207	37,541	24%
Women's dresses, coats, and suits	37,190	44,709	48,631	54,023	60,177	47%
Other women and children's apparel	89,518	103,549	109,449	119,857	130,235	32%
Men's and boy's clothing	43,465	49,995	49,935	54,535	59,233	24%
Total, all departments[8]	**377,800**	**421,964**	**423,618**	**464,880**	**516,141**	**24%**

[7] *Department Store Sales and Stocks,* 1941-1946 (Ottawa: Dominion Bureau of Statistics, 1948). Note that there is a very slight variance between these figures quoted here and the ones in *Historical Statistics of Canada.* The DBS kept figures on department store sales and stocks on a department-by-department basis beginning in 1941.

Returning to the question of retail stores generally, we find that in the case of nearly every other category of goods, sales continued to rise, and sometimes very far ahead of inflation. Between 1942 and 1945, department store sales increased by a further 18 percent after inflation, women's clothing store sales by 23 percent, men's clothing by about the same, alcoholic beverage outlets by 51 percent, and jewellery stores, despite a 25 percent point-of-purchase luxury tax, by an extraordinary 56 percent. Of course, these businesses were also forced to contend with a variety of wartime shortages. An analysis of department store inventories reveals that the quantity of available goods declined generally, not just in radio and appliance departments. Inventory values were $103 million in December 1941; $95 million in December 1942; $89 million in December 1943; and $79 million in December 1944. Durable goods accounted for a large portion of this decline, but women's and men's clothing inventories declined by 20 percent. In part, this was the consequence of the military allocation of raw materials, but it was also the result of economies imposed by the WPTB. Consumers had fewer styles and colours of suits, dresses, socks, and shoes to choose from, for instance. Hardly anything escaped the attention of the Board's retail administrators; they even specified the precise colours that men's socks would henceforth be available in: white, black, grey, brown, blue, grey mix, brown mix, blue mix, green, and maroon – but there was a war on, after all.[9] In the context

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[8] Includes departments not listed above.

[9] *Men's Wear Merchandising*, February 1, 1942, 10.

of that dreadfully destructive war, impositions such as these were comparatively minor ones, and at least partially compensated for by an even greater availability of certain other commodities. For instance, there was a remarkable expansion in the consumption of various "sin" commodities over the course of the war. Apparent consumption of domestically produced wine (for those hearty souls inured to the domestic Concord grape) increased from 3.4 million imperial gallons in 1939 to 4.6 million in 1943; the figures for the consumption of spirits are roughly the same. Both returned to 1939 levels in 1944 — indicative of the partial conversion of their facilities for the production of alcohol for military, medical, and industrial purposes — before beginning to climb back up again in 1945. Beer consumption, however, increased from approximately 63 million gallons in 1939 to 110 million in 1945 and cigarette production increased from 7.1 billion in 1939 to a staggering 17.7 billion in 1945.[10]

That consumer purchasing power continued to rise against a backdrop of a diminishing availability of goods, without rampant inflation, is indicative of the general success of price controls. According to the official figures, total wartime inflation was less than 20 percent, and only about 3 percent during the price control period. Having said that, some historians have cast doubt on the official cost-of-living figures circulated by the DBS and WPTB. Such claims represent a serious query against the argument that a wartime consumer boom occurred. In dissertations dating

[10] Dominion Bureau of Statistics, *The Tobacco Industry in Canada* 1945, 4.

from 1947 and 1981 respectively E.J. Spence and Christopher Waddell each suggested that the overall cost-of-living between 1942 and 1945 may have increased faster than the WPTB's figures indicated. As we have seen, many consumers at the time believed this to be the case, and the accusation was also made in numerous editorials and in left-wing and labour periodicals during the war. The basis for Spence and Waddell's claims is that the Board had insufficient resources to investigate more than a fraction of the complaints it received regarding price violations. Even when investigations did occur, the Board tended to issue warnings rather than lay charges in the case of most first-time offenders, which may have done little to deter further violations. In addition, both Spence and Waddell argue, the Board was not unsympathetic to the plight of retailers (though one would not know it, reading the incessant complaints retailers made in their trade papers) and sometimes looked the other way when price infractions occurred.[11] The second basis for the claim is that the quality of many goods declined during the war but without a corresponding reduction in prices, and hence the cost-of-living index concealed a de facto form of inflation. This claim was the subject of a discussion in chapter one. Board investigators, it will be recalled, found that many of the complaints about quality took the form of quite ordinary consumer griping, and often concerned quality control issues unrelated to the war. Moreover, both claims rest on evidence that is wholly

[11] See Christopher Waddell's discussion in *The Wartime Prices and Trade Board*, especially 211-314, and 727-749.

anecdotal and inferential, and consumer complaints must be weighed against those of retailers who insisted that they complied with the price ceiling even at the expense of their own profits.

It is not possible to establish conclusively the validity of these claims. Strictly for the sake of argument, however, let us assume a worst-case scenario: that the prices reached in 1947, after the price ceiling had been lifted, had already, practically speaking (that is, accounting as well for any diminution in quality) been reached in 1945. In this hypothetical case, wartime inflation would have been approximately 32.9 percent, rather than the 19.8 percent the official figures indicate. Even assuming this worst-case scenario, which would involve nearly doubling the official inflation figures and *quadrupling* them for the price control period, we still find a very considerable overall growth in the wartime consumer spending, with retail sales increasing by 32 percent in the period between 1939 and 1945.[12] It bears repeating that this is strictly for the sake of argument – neither Spence nor Waddell offer evidence beyond the anecdotal that prices were substantially higher than what the Board claimed they were, and the official figures are the only comprehensive statistics that are available to us.

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[12] Credit for this methodology goes to Harold Vatter, who used a similar methodology in "The Material Status of the U.S. Civilian Consumer in World War II" in G.T. Mills and Hugh Rockoff, eds., *The Sinews of War: Essays on the Economic History of World War Two.* (Ames: Iowa State University Press, 1993), 219-242.

In conclusion, arguments such as these can have something of a glass-is-half-full, glass-is-half-empty character about them. No doubt many Canadians continued to live under what Magda Fahrni has called "rickety" economic circumstances during and immediately after the war, and there is no denying that after 1941 the supply of durable commodities was very meager indeed.[13] But, as I have demonstrated, the overall flow of goods for consumer consumption remained surprisingly large throughout the war, and the circumstances faced by consumers generally were not nearly so spartan as is often claimed in histories of the home front. The rest of this dissertation has been an effort to describe what that meant in the lives of ordinary people on the Canadian home front. It remains a topic worthy of further investigation.

[13] Magda Fahrni, "Counting the Costs of Living: Gender, Citizenship, and a Politics of Prices in 1940s Montreal," *Canadian Historical Review*, 83 (4), December 2002, 493.

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