

End of the Great War in 1918 and its Impact on London, Ontario

Prelude, Celebrations and Aftermath

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Abstract

November 11, 1918, marked the end of hostilities in what was initially called the “Great War” and is now known as World War I. The purpose of this publication is to review the events that took place immediately before, during and after the November 11th celebrations in London, Ontario, as recorded largely in the *London Free Press* and the *London Advertiser*. The Prelude focuses on how the approaching armistice was viewed, the nature of the events that unfolded before the armistice document was signed, and the “false armistice celebrations” that took place in London on November 7th. In the Aftermath we discuss a number of local issues that arose shortly after November 11th that included among others, how to memorialize those who perished during the war, how to repay the voluminous federal war debt, and how to deal with those who evaded conscription as required by the 1917 Military Service Act. Sandwiched between these two sections is an account of the armistice celebrations that occurred during the week of November 11th.

Prelude

The first suspicions that the war might be nearing an end had begun to surface in the London papers in the form of few brief scattered reports from Western Europe in early October, 1918. Under a minor front page headline, “Fritz beaten to a frazzle,” the *London Advertiser* ran the following comment.

American troops are among the wounded who are arriving in large numbers at a southern English port every day. They are flushed with victory and jubilantly declare “the Allies have Fritz beaten to a frazzle.”

Wounded German prisoners, on the other hand, are most despondent. They admit the end is not far off and say it is impossible for Germany to hold out much longer.¹

Similar thoughts were being expressed by German officials at the highest levels starting with an acknowledgement by Erich Ludendorff, Chief Quartermaster- General, that the war was lost. Of greatest importance, however, a note also was sent by Germany to President Wilson during the night of October 4th in the form of a “peace proposal.” The contents of the proposal stemmed from the “Fourteen Points” speech delivered by Wilson to the United States Congress on January 8, 1918, that “called for an equitable peace that would leave the Central Powers (Germany and her allies) with most of their territory intact, (and) obliged (them) to restore (the pre-existing conditions in) all invaded countries but not to suffer financial indemnity or even disarmament.”²

Germany’s proposal, however, was viewed with considerable distain in the West as suggested by the following front page headline that appeared in the *London Advertiser* on October 7th: “Allies expected to reject enemy’s peace proposal.” The reason for the rejection stemmed from the nature of Germany’s offer which was said to involve little more than terms that involved a negotiated settlement rather than an unconditional surrender which is what the Allies had hoped to achieve. This view was clearly articulated in the American press as summarized in the following examples from a front page article that appeared on October 22nd in the *London Free Press*.³

New York Herald: To-day, as on the heels of the American note of October 8, the demand of the American people will be - no armistice, no negotiations, no discussions, no peace until there is open admission of defeat by whatever government Germany may have, and no thought of peace until the German armies have surrendered unconditionally.

Chicago Tribune: There is but one mind in America on this war, that it shall go on to victory, to the utter destruction of Prussian militarism and to the establishment of peace founded on its ashes.

Boston Post: What is required from Germany is surrender—unconditional surrender—backed by overwhelming guarantees that leave no loophole for bad faith.

Philadelphia Inquirer: Whether the president acted wisely or not in appearing to open the door to discussion, he will not represent the overwhelming sentiment of the nation unless he now closes that door with a bang...In brief, nothing less than unconditional surrender will fill the bill.

General Currie, commander of the Canadian troops in Western Europe, also sent a personal note to the managing editor of the *Free Press* that offered his own evaluation of Germany’s peace proposal. The note, a portion of which is reproduced below, even cautioned against the belief that the war might be over soon.

The casualties have been high, but yet not so when the magnitude of the operations is considered. We have never known the Boche (the German army) to fight harder. He is like a cornered rat, and I believe

will fight most desperately until beaten absolutely and totally. I do not think that he can be finished this year, and I believe that next year he will fight more desperately than ever. The most foolish thing any of our people could do would be to imagine that victory is so close that their efforts might be relaxed.⁴

In keeping with the cautionary message in this note, as late as the morning of November 11th the following orders, as reported in the *London Advertiser*, were sent to all division and brigade commanders of the American Forces in France.

You are informed that hostilities will cease along the whole front at 11 o'clock a.m. November 11, 1918, Paris time. All communication with the enemy, both before and after the termination of hostilities is absolutely forbidden. In case of violation of this (order), severe disciplinary measures will be immediately taken. Any officer offending will be sent to headquarters under guard. Every emphasis should be laid on the fact that the arrangement is an armistice only, and not a peace. There must not be the slightest relaxation of vigilance. Troops must be prepared at any moment for further operations. Special steps will be taken by all commanders to insure strictest discipline and that all troops be held in readiness and fully prepared for any eventuality.⁵

Despite these reactions to Germany's proposal, the fact that Germany was even willing to entertain a proposal led to a series of meetings in Paris where the final terms for an armistice were drafted.⁶ On November 5, 1918, a note was sent from Washington "notifying the German Government that the armistice terms were ready and in General Foch's hands."⁷ Although the terms of the armistice would not be made available to the public "until the Germans have accepted or rejected them,"⁸ on November 6th the *London Free Press* and the *Daily Advertiser* reported that a German armistice delegation had left Berlin for Spa, the location of the German Headquarters in Belgium. The meeting with General Ferdinand Foch, the Supreme Allied Commander, was scheduled to begin during the morning of November 7th. With the exception of the following information received from Germany and reported in the *Free Press*, the location of this meeting was not made public owing to the need for secrecy.

The German Government, having been informed through the President of the United States that Marshal Foch (may) receive accredited representatives of the German Government and communicate to them conditions of an armistice...(the representatives) request that they be informed by wireless of the place where they can meet Marshal Foch. They will proceed by automobile (from Spa) with subordinates of the staff, to the place thus appointed...there will be 10 persons in all...our delegation will be accompanied by a road-mending company to enable automobiles to pass the La Chapelle road, which has been destroyed...by reason of delay the German delegation will not be able to cross the outpost line until between 8 and 10 o'clock today...

In spite of the seriousness of this undertaking, what happened over the next several days in preparation for the signing were a series of misfortunes that, it can only be said, began to resemble scenes from a Charlie Chaplin movie. While most of the following information was reported at the time in the *Free Press* as well as in the *Advertiser*, unless otherwise noted, the

following summary is based on material in Epstein (1959), Rudin (1967), and Weintraub (1985).¹⁰

Armistice Delegation

The first of many somewhat outlandish episodes started in Berlin with the appointment of the German Armistice Delegation. Matthias Erzberger was asked to head the Delegation although he was neither a high ranking member of the government nor a high ranking member of the active duty German military but, instead, was a civilian Secretary of State in charge of German propaganda in the Foreign Office. The reason Erzberger was chosen stemmed from Germany's difficulty in finding appropriate military personnel who were willing to endorse an armistice agreement, which was considered to be a disgrace, since Germany had waged the war in order to achieve an outright victory.

Erzberger was scheduled to leave Berlin via train at 4:45 p.m. on November 6. When the train reached Spa the delegates were to transfer to automobiles for the final leg of their journey on November 7th to an undisclosed Allied meeting place in France. The reason for secrecy was to prevent an attack by German reactionaries who were opposed to an armistice.

At three that afternoon (November 6th) Erzberger still had no documents authorizing his mission and even was unsure of the identities of the rest of his party. The Foreign Office was nearly empty, but he was referred to Herr Kriege, the head of the Legal Section. Kriege complained about not having been consulted and said that he was engaged in a dispute with the head of the Political Section about whether a Foreign Office could authorize the signing of a military armistice. "The entire course of world history," he objected, "knew of no precedents for making out the kind of document which was required." At 5:05 the train was getting up steam, but Erzberger refused to board. At 5:10 Count von Oberndorff (the second delegate) appeared and (finally) at 5:15 a messenger arrived with the required papers...

It is important to note that Erzberger not only did not know his final destination, he was also not permitted to sign an armistice agreement on behalf of the German Government. Instead, his role along with the others in the delegation was to negotiate with Foch for the best possible terms in the agreement. In short, he was given "Full power to conduct in the name of the German Government with the plenipotentiaries of the Powers allied against Germany, negotiations for an armistice and to conclude an agreement to that effect, subject to acceptance by the German Government." In the words of Hindenburg, he was told "May God travel with you, and see that you succeed in attaining the best that can still be secured for our Fatherland."

The train from Berlin did not arrive at Spa until the next morning (November 7) which was the day the delegation was to meet with Foch. At Spa the delegation was joined by General Detlev von Winterfeld, a prewar military attaché at Paris, and Captain Vaselow, a naval officer.

The Armistice Commission, composed of Erzberger, Oberndorff, Winterfeldt and Vanselow, left Spa and headed for the front (the Belgium/French border) in several automobiles around noon on November 7. The first car in which Erzberger sat with Oberndorff soon had a serious accident: it failed to make a sharp curve and smashed into a house, whereupon the second car hit the rear end of the first. The street was littered with glass and both automobiles were totally disabled. Erzberger and Oberndorff miraculously escaped injury...The journey continued in the three remaining cars. Progress was slowed since the roads were filled with endless columns of retreating German troops.

By six (that evening) the cars had only reached Chimay, just east of the French frontier, and there the commanding (German) general insisted that they could proceed no farther that night, as trees had been felled across the roads to cover the withdrawal of his men...Erzberger insisted that he must continue his journey and, in the end, succeeded in doing so after telephoning to German commanding officers in the neighboring headquarters at Trelon.

To protect the vehicles throughout their trip, a timed cease-fire was put in place along the road the convoy needed to travel. To make certain that the vehicles were safe,

...three German officers, carrying white flags, had gone ahead to report the coming of the Armistice delegation and to arrange for firing to cease so that the delegates could get through safely. A detachment of pioneers had cleared the (German) road of mines...It was 9:20 in the evening of November 7 when the delegation crossed the German front line. After leaving the German lines...A large white flag had been hoisted on the leading automobile (see the footnote below) and a trumpeter stood on the running board and continually blew short blasts.

Once the German delegation crossed the border and was now on the Allied side, it was courteously receive by the French, who supplied new automobiles for the further journey....Supper was served (on the Allied side) at one in the morning (November 8) at an isolated farmhouse that served as the headquarters for a (French) army command. The Germans were transferred to a railroad car a few hours later which then carried them with (window) blinds turned down to an undisclosed destination...At seven o'clock on the morning of November 8 the train arrived in a forest. About 100 meters away Erzberger saw another similar train. There was no station, no platform or shelter. The two tracks had been constructed for use by heavy railway artillery...The other train was the headquarters of Marshal Foch...At eight o'clock Erzberger was informed that Marshal Foch would receive him at nine (on November 8th).

The nature of the ensuing meeting with Marshal Foch, as reported in the *Free Press*, was governed by the following provisions that were established by the Allies during the Paris meetings.

The powers conferred on Marshal Foch only concerned the conclusion of an armistice...The modifications which he is qualified to grant are strictly limited. Any suspension of arms, even if it is asked for on philanthropic grounds, is out of the question. Marshal Foch will do nothing more than communicate to the delegates the already prepared conditions of the armistice.¹¹

Footnote: Apparently, the flag used by the German Armistice Commission to cross the border on November 7th, was considered of sufficient importance to the editor of the *London Free Press* that the following notice appeared in the paper on November 8, 1919: "...this piece of the historic white cloth, a gift from France, is mounted on leather encased in a costly frame and was placed in the Royal Museum in Brussels."

As a result of these provisions, contrary to what the German High Command had anticipated, Germany was only expected to ask for an armistice, and not attempt to negotiate the terms of the armistice. Hence, the nature of the meeting on November 8th between the German Armistice Commission and the Allied Armistice Delegation headed by Foch was extremely formal and very brief as described below. According to an eyewitness account, when the Germans entered the room, Marshal Foch asked the Germans the reason for their visit.

ERZBERGER: The delegation has come to receive the proposals of the Allied Powers with a view to reaching an armistice.

FOCH: I haven't any proposal to make, but if the German delegates ask for an armistice, I can make known the conditions under which it can be obtained.

ERZBERGER and OBERNDORFF: The German Government asks for an armistice.

During the reading neither side spoke. Weygand (a member of the Allied delegation) says that tears poured down the cheeks of Captain Vanselow (a member of the German Commission) at the reading of the clauses providing for the occupation of the Rhineland. At the end of the reading Erzberger asked for an immediate suspension of hostilities and cited, in support of his plea, the disorganization of the German Army and the spread of revolution in Germany. ..Foch replied that the fighting would not cease until after the armistice had been signed...the meeting ended near 11:00 a.m. on November 8.

At the conclusion of the meeting, Foch imposed a 72 hour deadline when the signed document needed to be returned. Since the initial meeting with Foch ended at 11:00 a.m. on November 8th, this deadline meant that Foch needed to receive the signed document back from Germany no later than 11:00 a.m. on November 11th. The document was then sent via courier who traveled by automobile and train to the German High Command in Berlin. In view of the 72 hour deadline, Erzberger estimated the time required to complete the trip and asked Foch for a 24 hour extension. Erzberger's request was denied.¹²

The difficulties that had accompanied the German Commission from Berlin to Spa and then to Foch, now continued with the transmission of the armistice document from Foch to Spa via courier and then on to Berlin. On November 8th at 1:00 p.m. the German courier, Captain von Helldorf, left Foch by car with the assurance that his passage through the French/German military border would be arranged by Foch's staff prior to his arrival at the border. The French had calculated that von Helldorf would arrive at the border in about five hours. Contrary to the assurance that von Helldorf had received, however, when he reached the border he was not allowed to pass because the anticipated arrangements had, in fact, not been made. According to Rudin (p. 341) "the German soldiers "fired like the very devil" and for five hours kept their own courier (von Helldorf) from entering their lines despite his signals, his white flags, and his reckless exposure to danger." When night came he still had not been able to cross into German

territory. Upon receiving news of the courier's delay, and since the weather had partially cleared, it was decided to fly another German courier, Captain von Geyer, with another copy of the armistice document directly to Berlin. This second courier, together with a French pilot,

took off from Tergnier in a two-seat Breguet biplane....To the High Command (in Germany) Winterfeld had sent a wireless message which asked for a safe aerial route and altitude and marks of recognition for the airfield....(he also noted that the aircraft) will carry as distinctive marks two white streamers.

Unfortunately, in the message sent by Winterfeld, the second courier, von Geyer, was wrongly identified as von Helldorf, who obviously was the first courier traveling by car and then by train to Berlin. Although it is not known what happened to von Geyer, if the plane had landed as scheduled, it is quite possible that von Geyer would have been considered an illegitimate courier because Berlin was expecting a courier named von Helldorf, and not von Geyer, to be on the plane.

In the meantime, though, von Helldorf had been given clearance to proceed through the border since Major von Bapst arrived at the border with a safe-conduct pass. In view of the lengthy delay that von Helldorf experienced at the border, though, he was not able to enter Germany and arrive in Berlin until November 10th which, of course, was extremely close to the end of the 72 hour grace period which was to expire at 11:00 a.m. the next day. To deal with this problem the following actions took place.

At 6:30 p.m. (on November 10th) , Foch had a message signed by Weygand and delivered to Erzberger, warning of the imminence of the seventy-two-hour deadline...At 2:05 a.m. on the eleventh, less than nine hours before expiration of the time limit, the German delegates (who were meeting with Foch, and not the High Command in Berlin), to no one's surprise, announced their readiness to conclude an agreement...At 5:12 a.m. the discussions were declared concluded, and Foch moved that, for convenience, the effective date be rounded off to five o'clock, so that the armistice could go into effect six hours later, on the hour. At 5:30 (on behalf of the Allies) Foch and Wemyss signed; after them the Germans. "There were tears in the eyes of our two brave officers, General von Winterfeld and Captain Vanselow," Erzberger wrote, "when, under hard compulsion, they took up their pens." ..."*Tres bien*," observed Foch. But there would be no handshakes as the two delegations parted, the Marshal waving the Germans to go with "*Eh bien, messieurs, c'est fini, allez.*" After 1,564 days the worst war in history was over (Weintraub, p.153-157).

The False Armistice

Adding to the blunders that had already occurred during the lead-up to the signing of the armistice on November 11th, four days prior to the signing, *The London Evening Free Press* ran the following erroneous banner headline on its November 7th front page. This premature headline was based on a cable that the *Free Press* had received from the United Press Service, to which it subscribed.

PARIS CABLE ANNOUNCES THE GREAT WAR IS ENDED! Armistice was signed by Germans at 11 o'clock this morning.

Owing largely to this headline, during the afternoon of November 7th, London launched a celebration as joyous and spontaneous as the celebrations that were to be held in the city following the actual signing of the armistice on November 11th (see below).

Magical was the change that took place in the staid everyday life of London at 12:00 noon to-day when with papers hot off the press the newsboys of the *Free Press* carried to the citizens the great news of the signing by Germany of the armistice and the definite crawling down of the War God, who for four long years has held sway over the hearts and lives of the world's people...Restaurants were emptied of their customers and men hatless and without overcoats rushed to the streets to buy a copy of the *Free Press*...Staid business men smacked each other on the shoulder and yelled with the abandon of youth like schoolboys...The stock board at Thompson & McKinnon's office, Richmond Street, was marked with the magic words, "War Closed."¹³

The *Free Press* also reported that many similar celebrations had been staged in the surrounding areas. Lambeth, for example, held an automobile parade followed by speeches, Kitchener was said to be "wild with joy" and in Listowel, all of the factories and stores were closed while Galt held "one of the greatest celebrations (it) has ever known."¹⁴ In addition to these local celebrations, and as the result of the same United Press dispatch, similar festivities were held throughout North America as well as in Western Europe (for a full coverage of this material see Weintraub).

In sharp contrast to the headline in the *Free Press*, *The London Advertiser*, which was privy to much of the same information as the *Free Press*, but subscribed instead to the Associated Press telegraphic service, took a very different stand on this matter. In an equally bold front page headline, on November 7th the *Advertiser* stated that "GERMANY HAS NOT YET SIGNED THE ARMISTICE" and went on to explain its position in the following manner.

Shortly after noon today The Advertiser received a "flash" from a special news service that the German plenipotentiaries had signed the Allies' armistice terms at 11 o'clock today, and that hostilities were to cease at 2 o'clock. Without delay an extra edition of this paper was prepared, and was ready to go out to the newsboys, when a message came from Washington declaring the "flash" had no authority and could not be accepted as true until verified. Rather than take the chance of arousing the hopes of readers and then possibly having to dash them again, The Advertiser withdrew its special edition and awaited the official news.¹⁵

The next day the *Advertiser* continued to speak out on this matter.

False reports that Germany had accepted the terms of the armistice (on November 7th) and that fighting had ended threw the country into a delirium and turned out to be the greatest hoax of recent years...None of these unfounded rumors, of course, was received or distributed by the Associated Press,

which, on the contrary, was able by investigation carried out through official channels to establish that story was a hoax.¹⁶

As it is particularly important at this crisis in the war to prevent false and disturbing reports (from) gaining circulation, (the chief press censor was) particularly desirous of obtaining definite information regarding yesterday's fiasco...The censorship rule is that no information except quotations is to pass through tickers. If brought to your district by any news service please state which one carried it.¹⁷

The immediate question that arises, of course, is whether the *Free Press* and/or the United Press acted in such a way as to deliberately deceive the public. Aside from the obvious error in the *Free Press* headline, what is most surprising is that in a separate column that also appeared on the same November 7th front page, the *Free Press* ran the following announcement from Washington that the *Advertiser* had mentioned on its November 7th front page (see above), which suggests that the *Free Press* might very well have been aware of the error at the time of its publication.

WASHINGTON, D.C., NOV. 7, - NAVY CABLE CENSORS REPORTED TO-DAY THAT AN UNOFFICIAL MESSAGE HAD COME THROUGH FROM ABROAD ANNOUNCING THAT THE GERMANS HAS SIGNED THE ARMISTICE TERMS DELIVERED BY MARSHAL FOCH. NO AUTHORITY WAS GIVEN FOR THE STATEMENT AND WHILE IT ADDED TO THE AIR OF EXPECTANCY EVERYWHERE, OFFICIALS SAID NOTHING EXCEPT AN OFFICIAL DISPATCH COULD BE BELIEVED.

Needless to say, this announcement in the *Free Press* does raise a serious question, namely, was the material that had appeared in the *Free Press* headline based on an "official dispatch" as requested by the official censors? Apparently in an attempt to address this matter the *Free Press* then printed the following statement, also on November 7th, in bold capital letters on its front page.

THE UNITED PRESS BULLETIN (received on November 7th), WHICH BROUGHT THE FIRST NEWS TO AMERICA OF THE SIGNING OF THE ARMISTICE WITH GERMANY, WAS SIGNED PERSONALLY BY ROY W. HOWARD, PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED PRESS, NOW IN GENERAL CHARGE OF THE UNITED PRESS ORGANIZATIONS IN FRANCE. THE DISPATCH ALSO CARRIED THE SIGNATURE OF WM. PHILLIP SIMMS, CHIEF OF THE PARIS BUREAU.

The following day (November 8th) the *Free Press* then attempted to justify its decision by reprinting a message it had also received from the United Press in New York.

Our cablegram received from Paris at noon yesterday signed by Roy W. Howard, president of the United Press, and William Philip Simms, manager of the Paris bureau, reporting the signing by the allies and Germany of an armistice, was written in plain English and not susceptible to any possible misconstruction as received in this office. No censor could have had any doubt as to its plain meaning...we have received no further word whatever from Mr. Howard or Mr. Simms, although messages were dispatched to them as early as 1 p.m. yesterday.¹⁸

To make matters even worse for itself, rather than apologize and retract the definitive words in its November 7th headline, the *Free Press* provided the following editorial comment which expressed little more than a hopeful prophesy in support of its November 7th headline.

Germany has determined to accept at once the only course that now or later lies before her. She is well aware of the terms of the armistice, even though the text of these terms may not yet have reached her. She knows the fate of Austria-Hungary, and can be sure that for herself the terms at least will be no better. Hence when she sends a delegation to Foch "to conclude an armistice," it can mean little else than that Germany has recognized defeat and that the war is virtually at an end. This, we say, is not necessarily so, but upon the face of things we are approaching peace at a gallop.

Cause and Outcome of the False Armistice

Because the *Free Press* report of the signing of the Armistice on November 7th was obviously false what was it that led to this report? According to a lengthy analysis of the events that unfolded in Paris on that day (see Morris, 1957¹⁹) it is now known that Howard, who was the president of the United Press, was informed by Admiral Henry B. Wilson, commanding officer of all United States naval forces in France, that he (Wilson) had received a telegram around 4:00 p.m. (Paris time) on November 7th that "The armistice has been signed." Howard then asked,

"Is it official?"

"Official, hell," the admiral said, "I would say it is official, I just received this over my direct wire from the embassy. It's the official announcement."

Howard broke in. "I beg your pardon, Admiral, " he said, "but if this is official and you've announced it to the base and have given it to the local paper for publication, do you have any objection if I file it to the United Press?"

"Hell, no. This is official. It is signed by Captain Jackson, our naval attache' at Paris. Here's a copy. Go to it."

With Wilson's response in mind, Howard then sent a telegram to New York which arrived at 11:20 a.m. on November 7th. The news was immediately distributed to all of the papers that subscribed to the United Press (including the *Free Press*). Unfortunately, later that day an orderly arrived with a message for Howard from Admiral Wilson which stated that Wilson had just received a second message which stated that the first dispatch he had given to Howard was "unconfirmable." Although Howard immediately sent another telegram to New York with this second message, unfortunately "it did not reach the United Press office in New York until almost noon the next day, November 8."

In essence it would seem that the *Free Press* was not necessarily at fault in printing the November 7th headline because it had relied on the "truthfulness" of the first United Press Dispatch and the United Press was not necessarily at fault because Howard had faith in the

truthfulness of the message that he had received from Wilson. The problem arose, however, because Admiral Wilson had not submitted the report he had received from the naval attaché' to the official censor for confirmation but instead merely believed the authenticity of the report. To this day it is not known who was responsible for the false report that was sent by the attaché'.

On November 9th the *Advertiser*, as both a long time subscriber to the Associated Press and not one to permit a victory over a rival newspaper to simply drop, added the following editorial comments to its initial appraisal of both the *Free Press* and the United Press for their roles in the delivery of this false information to the public.

The recent perpetuation of the "greatest hoax of recent years" by the United Press Service and the newspapers gullible or unscrupulous enough to spread the report and persist in its authenticity does nothing if it does not make the old, reliable, world-embracing Associated Press stand out in real strength as the one dependable news service 365 days in the year...when a critical situation must be faced, the practice of anticipating what MAY happen and sending it forth as something that HAS happened, becomes highly dangerous and is indulged in only by the "fakers" of the business...The Associated Press is not playing for profits. It is owned in a mutual way by a chain of newspapers and it employs the highest grade newspapermen who can be secured, but it does not sign their names to dispatches. It is too big to be personal...The Associated Press can be relied upon to characterize its dispatches as official or unofficial. If it sends out something under its own responsibility it quotes its authority or qualifies its statements so that the charge of deliberately falsifying or misleading the public has never been successfully laid against it.²⁰

Because of what had happened on November 7th, initially many Londoners were skeptical of the true announcement of an armistice on November 11th. The *London Advertiser* reported receiving phone calls that morning from a number of readers who felt the need to verify the information that had first appeared in a 3 a.m. edition of the *Free Press*,

"There's a boy away up here in the north end with an extra, saying the war is over. What does your paper say?" "The war is over all right," replied the *Advertiser*. Another man called "What's this about the war being over?" he asked. "It's true," said the *Advertiser* man. "Does your paper say so?" asked the man. "Yes." "All right. Thank you," said the inquirer. These two incidents are significant. It would appear that Londoners know where to inquire when they are anxious for reliable news.²¹

As soon as word of the November 11th armistice appeared in the two London newspapers, however, the level of jubilation within the city was not only widespread but overwhelming as summarized in a further edition of the *Free Press* that afternoon.

The news of Germany's capitulation was first given to London in an extra edition (of the *London Free Press*) shortly after 3 o'clock this morning. No other paper carried the information until a considerable time afterwards. The news quickly traveled. The fire department ran an engine out on to King Street, and the siren was left open, the shrill notes reaching nearly all parts of the city. Small Impromptu parades were quickly formed and the business and some of the residential districts of the city traversed. The