

newsboys sold extras rapidly to eager buyers. People came out of private residences and apartment houses in numerous cases to learn the news and patriotic fervor and joy were unbounded.²² (In addition to providing the source for this quotation, see endnote 22 for an evaluation and correction of the word “capitulation” in this paragraph as well as for the significance of the armistice document itself with regard to the end of the war.)

Celebrations during the week of November 11th

When the Armistice was finally confirmed later that day, the mayor issued a proclamation that declared November 11th a public holiday. As reported in the *Free Press* the next day, all of London’s citizens were “called upon to unite in celebrating Victory,” and were invited to join a parade that terminated in Victoria Park.²³

As early as 1 o’clock citizens began to assemble in the park and by 2:45 the members of city church choirs and the Community Chorus had arrived and taken up their stand...The approach of the triumphal procession was heralded long before it came in sight by the arrival at the park of thousands of onlookers from the streets on the route of march. (It was estimated that about 20,000 people had gathered in the park.) They formed a dense throng through which each of the units participating in the parade made its way, forming up in a hollow square around the band stand...The view from this point was an inspiring one. Almost as far as an eye could reach on every side stretched the packed lines of soldiers and citizens. The city’s returned men occupied a position of honour before the stand and other military units were ranged beside them...Led by the massed bands everybody in the park joined in the hymn of praise. It was sung as it had never been sung in London before, for not one of the vast throng failed to realize the debt of gratitude to God for the successful end of the great struggle.²⁴

The festivities, however, started long before the parade even began. Shortly after 3 a.m. that morning when the news of the Armistice was first announced, “A bonfire that would have easily consumed the Kaiser and all the German royal family was started at the corner of Dundas and Richmond streets...” The flames were so high, in fact, that the fire department was needed out of fear that the nearby buildings would soon be engulfed. Later that day people “...from far and near... poured into London...on foot, in rigs and in autos till at the lowest estimate at least 50,000 people were gathered...to rejoice with each other at the good news.” That night an even greater bonfire was lit in Victoria Park.²⁵

All day long boxes, barrels, posts and other inflammable articles were piled around a green sapling which was erected in an open space from which the sod had been dug. After nightfall the pile was saturated with kerosene, and an effigy of the “Beast of Berlin” was placed upon it...About 8 o’clock the Kaiser’s funeral pile was ignited. In a few moments the flames were leaping high above the tree-tops, and the crowd which had gathered around was driven back by the terrific heat...When everything seemed to be “quieting down,” the Marconi Club Band took up a position in the bandstand and began to play patriotic airs. The crowd, “warmed up” by the fire sang as they never sang before. Although in the years to come, great celebrations may be held, those who took part in the one in Victoria Park last night will never forget it. “London gets more like New York every day,” said one old chap, “and if they only had the signs all lit up you would not know the difference tonight. London sure does know how to celebrate.”

So joyous were the festivities on the 11th that one of the headlines in the *Free Press* the next day claimed that London celebrated for nearly 24 hours.²⁶ The celebrations finally culminated at the end of the week when a Victory Jubilee Carnival was held at the Winter Garden on November 14th and 15th. On both days the Carnival featured the “latest music and newest songs” along with dancing to the strains of the Princess Ten-Piece Orchestra. All participants were urged to attend in costume and on the last day a “rousing grand finale” was held during which \$5 cash prizes were given for the best costumes in the following categories: comic, fancy, character, and historic.

The Winter Garden was thronged on Thursday night (November 14th)...The costumes far surpassed anything seen on carnival nights in the Winter Garden previously. The judges at the grand march to-night (November 15th) will have a hard task selecting the winners as hundreds were present and many new ones will be on hand when the judging is commended.²⁷

In an announcement of the event, the *Free Press* stated that the largest prizes would be awarded to those who wore the most interesting and the most fitting costumes for the occasion. Fifteen dollars would go to the best representation of General Foch, \$10 prizes would be given for the best representation of Lloyd George, General Joffre, General Pershing, King Victor Emanuel and General Haig.²⁸ To ensure that a large number of Londoner’s would take up this challenge, it was also claimed that “there are men who look enough like one of these great men that only a little make-up would be necessary to win the prize.”

Aftermath

Although the celebrations in London on November 11th were a huge success, a number of uncertainties still remained that needed to be addressed. As mentioned briefly above, these ranged from how to repay Canada’s massive war debt, how demobilization would take place, and how to treat the draft deserters and draft defaulters that resulted from the passage of the Military Service Act of 1917. There were also concerns over whether to continue to print casualty lists in the papers, how to care for the wounded who would be returning home, how best to memorialize those who lost their lives during the war, and finally, how future armistice days should be celebrated. Each of these matters will be discussed separately below.

War Debt and Bond Drives

The following material is from the official history of the Canadian Army in the first world war by Nicholson (1962, p. 359-361).²⁹

When on 1 August 1914 Canada tentatively offered to provide an overseas contingent in the event of war, the Dominion Government had suggested making “all necessary financial provision” for the “equipment, pay and maintenance” of such a force. The British Government agreed to the suggestion...Formal