

## Lloyd Robertson

### **New Books on Canadian History – and the Old Conscription Debate**

Back in the 60s (or so), Pierre Berton would amuse his friends in Toronto's journalism—publishing world by saying there was money to be made by writing on Canadian history. His friends didn't believe him. What would be the subjects that would attract readers?, they wanted to know. Berton had an answer ready—he touched on the topics that would eventually make him (even more) rich and famous: the CPR, the Dionne quintuplets, the Klondike gold rush, the War of 1812-14, and so on. Eventually he was able to organize his time (and hire research assistants) so that he wrote the books himself. Except for Berton's books, which may have been more given as gifts than read over the years, there have been very few commercially successful books in Canadian history. In the growth of a global marketplace, and a global perspective, the place of local or national stories becomes more uncertain. It could be argued that Canadians, especially English Canadians, are much more aware of, if not immersed in, American than Canadian culture. There have always been predictions that the embrace of free trade in the Mulroney years would make it more difficult to publish books on Canadian topics, or by Canadian authors. If this is true for all Canadian books, stories and ideas, it must be even more difficult to have success with studies of Canadian history—which might be associated with a certain mustiness even for Canadians.

One rare success was C.P. Stacey's book on W.L. Mackenzie King.<sup>1</sup> This may be the exception that proves the rule, since it argues that one Canadian, who was famous and powerful in his day, was much more eccentric in his private life than anyone knew at the time. A Canadian Prime Minister was presented as a believer in the occult, who believed himself to be communing with the dead, and spent significant hours giving some kind of attention to prostitutes. One can imagine undergraduates in a course they expected to be boring, sitting up and thinking: this is more interesting than I expected.<sup>2</sup> Many Canadians may have had the reaction: thank God, we Canadians are not all as boring as people (especially Americans) think we are.

(This may also be part of the Rob Ford phenomenon). The Stacey book set a high bar for “human interest” in Canadian history. Perhaps the only stories that would make the cut would have to include sex, untraditional spirituality or religion, eccentric hobbies, and a troubling combination of gregariousness, political life which necessarily involves a lot of meeting and greeting, and intense loneliness or (possibly) personal unhappiness.

With this somewhat discouraging background, it is very pleasing to see a new generation of lively, thoughtful, and well-researched books on Canadian history. I will mention two by Tim Cook, and two by John Boyko, before going into one of the Cook studies in some detail. Boyko has written a life of R.B. Bennett, who was originally, like Max Aitken (Lord Beaverbrook), from small town New Brunswick. (Aitken was nine years younger than Bennett, but the two began an “improbable but important” friendship when they were very young). Bennett was Prime Minister during the worst years of the Great Depression in the 1930s, and victim both of that Depression and of King’s skillful campaigning as he helped establish the Liberals as the “natural governing party of Canada.”<sup>3</sup> For decades, if Bennett was mentioned at all, it was to criticize or make fun of him as the stereotypical rich Tory, unaware of and indifferent to the sufferings of ordinary people. In response to the Depression, Bennett was actually more in favour of what we would now call Keynesian measures to stimulate the economy than were King and the Liberals; before that he made his money by performing well, possibly even brilliantly, as a lawyer and entrepreneur; he enjoyed some hard-earned success in Alberta politics before national politics, and then with a title and a place in the House of Lords, he more or less disappeared in England. Boyko makes a good case that there was much more to Bennett than any stereotype would suggest.

The other book by Boyko I have read recently is called *Blood and Daring: How Canada fought the American Civil War and Forged a Nation*.<sup>4</sup> There is a lot of fascinating detail here about developments that may seem strange today: many English Canadians (like many people in Britain) were pro-Confederate; a number of Canadians fought on one side or the other in the Civil War; and Canada, by virtue of geographical proximity and

the “neutrality” of Britain, became a kind of haven for American recruiters, propagandists, and spies who were working for one side or the other in the Civil War. All of this is a preliminary to Confederation; leaders in “Canada” (consisting at the time of a union of Canada West (Ontario) and Canada East (Quebec)), along with British colonies on the Atlantic, saw that the growth and battle experience of the Union Army, especially with the added zeal of the Fenians who were fighting for Irish independence, made it urgent to form a new political union on principles that were different from, more British than, those of the United States. There really was a fair bit of talk about the U.S. invading Canada, before, during and after the Civil War, and there were at least some real military or paramilitary skirmishes that might have led to something bigger.

Tim Cook is identified as an expert on the First World War, “Great War historian at the Canadian War Museum.” In addition to a two-volume history of that war, Cook’s books include *The Madman and the Butcher*, a truly funny yet absorbing account of relations between two Canadian leaders during war: Sam Hughes and General Arthur Currie.<sup>5</sup> I want to focus on *Warlords*, a dual biography of Sir Robert Borden, and Mackenzie King, who served as Prime Minister during the First and Second World War respectively.<sup>6</sup> Very much to his credit, Cook focusses on the statesmanship of these two leaders: how they reacted to circumstances, or changed them where possible, and (the question to which we all really want to know the answer) whether they were right or wrong, allowing as much as possible for the time and place in which they found themselves. As the old saying goes, it is easier to judge decisions in hindsight than in the heat of the moment, which is normally the time when they have to be made.

The issue that both unites and divides these leaders is conscription. They both faced a decision, from early in a world war, whether to conscript a large number of troops in order to ensure the maximum or most effective participation by Canada, or not. Borden was a one-time teacher in rural Nova Scotia, and then a highly successful lawyer in Halifax. As Conservative Prime Minister, he was willing to keep escalating Canada’s commitment to Britain and the Empire as World War I continued to

go badly in Europe. Industry and agriculture were both largely directed at serving the war effort. In December 2016, a bit more than half way through the war, Borden committed Canada to providing 500,000 troops. It soon became clear that conscription would be necessary to get up to that number. Borden launched conscription in May 2017 even when it looked like it was going to cost his party votes within Canada, and even, one might say, if it was going to deepen the distrust between French Canada, centred in Quebec, and the rest of Canada. Arguably Borden was trying to impress the British government so that Canada would be taken more seriously, leaders such as himself would be given more of a role in decision-making, and a case could be made for greater independence for Canada from Britain.

Laurier, the Liberal leader of the opposition, turned down a “generous” offer from Borden to serve as deputy Prime Minister, with an equality of Liberals and Conservatives in Cabinet, and a veto over all Cabinet members. Laurier was unable to believe that Canada itself was going to come under attack, and he thought that with the resistance in Quebec to conscripting troops for a British war, conscription could not be justified. Borden formed a Unionist party with the many English-speaking Liberals who were willing to join him, while French-speaking Conservatives deserted him. In a December 17, 1917 election, less than a year before the armistice that ended the war, the Unionists swept the country outside Quebec, and solidified the reputation of the Tory party, for decades to follow, as the group that did not know or care anything about Quebec. King saw his party kept out of office, and reduced to a rump, over the conscription issue.<sup>7</sup> In the later war, King was determined to minimize harm to either his party or his country, so he postponed any decision to conscript troops as long as possible, while making it clear he was open to expert advice as to whether more troops were needed. For both wars, Cook focusses to a certain extent on a military/moral argument: once a substantial group of soldiers are committed to a fight, and suffering losses, it is a betrayal of those soldiers, and an undermining of the decision to fight, to make anything less than the maximum effort to provide reinforcements as needed.

For Laurier, World War I may have been the Boer War in South Africa all over again. Laurier was Prime Minister in 1899 when fighting broke out between Britain and two small republics in Africa which had been settled by Dutch-speaking Boers. The British asked for support from the Empire; English Canadians were generally supportive, whereas French Canadians and recent immigrants often were not. Laurier compromised on any formal military action by offering government support to equip and transport a force of volunteers, i.e. not members of any regular Canadian or British military unit. Lord Strathcona formed and paid for one cavalry unit; over the course of years, almost 7,500 Canadians served in South Africa. (It might be hard to explain to new Canadians today why there are substantial Boer War memorials in major Canadian cities, including Montreal). The Western front in World War I, with troops bogging down in trenches in France and Belgium, could be seen as a repeat, with political loyalties in Canada lining up in a similar way. Cook does a good job of showing that Borden had a number of motives for insisting on conscription, one of which was simply that he was “British to the core.” Was it ever true that the possible victory of the Germans threatened the entire British empire, including Canada? Was it true, indeed, that Britain itself would fall if Paris fell? This sequence of events did not occur in the Second World War, when the Germans actually conquered France and had the advantage of air power. Was it true that all of civilization was at stake, and if Canada did not fight “over there,” it would have to fight the barbarians “here”? All of these allegedly factual statements were given substantial airings by Borden at the time, and are repeated by Cook. Of course it is hard to believe them in hindsight, but that in itself does not mean Borden was wrong to think this way at the time. The British suffered a genuine shortage of food because of German U-boat attacks, and no doubt would have suffered more if the Germans controlled France and Belgium.

For both world wars, English speakers have probably tended to neglect the Eastern Front. Russia, which had been fighting on the British and French side, was forced out of the war by its own revolution. This event was precipitated by the deliberate decision of German and Austrian officers, who had taken con-

trol of the their governments, to free Lenin from captivity in such a way that he was certain to get to Russia; Lenin arrived in April 1917. The Central Powers (Germany and Austria) signed an armistice with (the new) Russia in December 1917, and the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk in March 1918. With the end of Russian opposition to the Germans, the fall of Paris became extremely likely, and indeed came very close in March 1918, when the city was shelled and the front came within 120 km. The involvement of the Americans then turned the tide. The US Congress actually declared war in April 1917, provoked by German attacks on American ships, but it took time to organize and train troops (2.8 million men were ultimately drafted) and deploy them. American forces were substantially deployed in late March 1918, and from that point there was little doubt as to the outcome.

Partly because the American contribution was so substantial—and decisive—President Woodrow Wilson gained a substantial role in negotiations about the end and aftermath of the war. It was the American declaration of war, for which Wilson had asked, that provoked the German leadership to actions that, whether intentionally or not, began the Russian Revolution. It was largely at Wilson's insistence that hostilities ended with an armistice at a time when German forces had not been forced out of France and Belgium, and a substantial German fleet was still intact. The belief that they had been sold out by their leaders, and the desire to get another chance, were both very strong among Germans. Woodrow's language about the self-determination of distinct peoples, who were supposed somehow to be freed from historical political boundaries that had been arbitrarily and unjustly forced upon them, echoed around the world. One can easily exaggerate the effect of words, but Wilson's words surely did something to contribute to waves of ethnic, linguistic and sectarian "cleansing" in many areas of Europe and Asia, with death and suffering the result for millions of innocent people. Specific details about the end of World War I—again, following Wilson's plan—led to the rise of Lenin followed by Stalin, and then Hitler. Before the war, humanitarians believed there would be no more major wars. In the immediate aftermath of the war, many of these same humanitarians thought they had found a way

to end all wars. Measures which were intended to be humanitarian, including the Armistice, arguably made things worse instead of better. None of this, however, supports any downplaying of the threat that was posed by Germany. One might agree with the American General Pershing. He objected to the armistice that ended the war, saying that if Germany were not soundly beaten, like the South in the U.S. Civil War, the allies would all be back in Europe to finish the job in a few years. This of course proved prophetic.<sup>8</sup>

King was the grandson, on his mother's side, of a famous "rebel" in what is now Ontario who sought representation by population, and was willing to take up arms against the British authorities. King had a promising career in the U.S. as an expert in labour negotiations, and he received a doctorate from Harvard—the only Canadian Prime Minister to be so honoured.<sup>9</sup> In World War II, King could easily have been defeated over the Conscription issue by either the "French" or anti-conscription side, or the "English" or pro-conscription side.<sup>10</sup> The footwork he showed in postponing a decision, while always insisting that he would draft troops if necessary, was truly amazing. Canada declared war on September 10, 1939; on September 25 Maurice Duplessis, Premier of Quebec, called a snap election in that province for October 25, even though he could have waited a year and a half before an election was necessary. One of Duplessis' goals was surely to strengthen the "anti-conscription" cause, as well as his own position. Three of King's Quebec ministers (Lapointe, Power, and Cardin), along with a Senator named Dandurand, campaigned furiously in this provincial election. Their role was somewhat incongruous in that they held office at the federal level. Their strongest appeal to Quebeckers was that if Duplessis won, they would resign their federal positions, leaving the pro-conscription forces in a stronger position in Ottawa. King apparently did not think of this extreme strategy himself, but he eventually approved it. Patronage was dispensed on a prodigious scale. Lapointe spoke brilliantly. Duplessis was defeated (although he returned to office in a few years) and the provincial Liberal leader named Godbout, who had been little noticed in the campaign, became Premier.

Only a few months after the Quebec election, King faced another attack, this time from the pro-conscription forces. On January 18, 1940, Mitch Hepburn, Liberal Premier of Ontario, rose in the Legislature to join George Drew, the Conservative Opposition leader, in denouncing King's wartime leadership; in English Canada, this meant King was not fighting the Nazis, or helping Mother Britain, aggressively enough. A resolution was quickly passed to this effect. King had already been thinking about when to call an election, and he reacted to Ontario events with, well, ruthlessness. As Brian Nolan says:

For a man who usually moved with the speed of a snail, King's behaviour in dealing with Hepburn, as revealed in his diary, shows a crispness of thought uncharacteristic of his personality. He appears decisive and analytical. His first reaction expressed to Lapointe 'was a general election at once.'<sup>11</sup>

King met Parliament briefly on January 25, and called an election for March 26. (It may be worth noting that King had established a pseudo-constitutional doctrine, after the "King-Byng" controversy, that when an incumbent Prime Minister loses a confidence vote, the Governor General is not able to turn to an opposition leader to form a government; an election must be held. In 1940 King seems to have established that a government can provide a Speech from the Throne, and then dissolve Parliament with no debate whatsoever, much less a confidence vote.) As Nolan says, King had just spent months virtually promising Quebecers no conscription; now he had to campaign in English Canada and promise, if not conscription itself, something more warlike than no conscription.

Once again King was triumphant. He appealed to national unity—hinting strongly that only he could hold together the different factions that made up Canada—above all, Quebec as opposed to the others. His Tory opponent, Robert Manion, played into King's hands by calling for a National Government, composed of members of all parties. Churchill, attempting to learn some lessons from the First War, had set up just such a government in Britain. King responded that in Canada, a so-called na-

tional government would not draw on “every section of the country” in the way that a Liberal government did. The meaning was that many Quebeckers, not only those who were most staunchly anti-conscription, along with their closest allies, would be out of a “national” government—as had been the case in World War I. King had gone into the political wilderness with his mentor Laurier, and he had no intention of going there again.

Manion was crushed, like a whole series of Tory leaders, and Hepburn lost much of his popularity. A few thousand Canadian men and women were conscripted for wartime production work, but they were specifically exempted from having to serve overseas; men who refused to serve overseas were derisively nick-named “Zombies.” George Drew became the new national Tory leader, and legendary former leader Arthur Meighen ran in a by-election in 1942. In that year, King was pressed again on the conduct of the war, and specifically on conscription. He promised a referendum on the latter issue, which duly took place in April. The results were ambiguous—just as King would have wished.<sup>12</sup> Legislation was passed which freed the Government to carry out overseas conscription—or not.<sup>13</sup> Meighen lost the by-election, and disappeared from politics for good.

It is worth noting that although he was consistently pro-conscription (he was probably Borden’s most loyal attack dog in World War I), and was known for saying “Ready, Aye, Ready” in support of British military action in 1922, Meighen made a bizarre statement on the process of going to war in a speech in Hamilton in November 1925. He said that as a general rule, a decision by Parliament to go to war should be put to the people in a general election at the earliest opportunity—and before troops were sent to fight. Meighen was trying to win a by-election in Quebec, where his party had been woefully weak since the (First) World War, and he repeated his pledge later in French and in Quebec. This was different from proposing a referendum, but arguably worse—or stupider, despite Meighen’s reputation for brilliance. (Meighen’s apparent doctrine was a bizarre anticipation of the “King-Byng” doctrine established in 1926, and supplemented in 1940: that parliament could be over-ruled by an election at any time if the Prime Minister so decides<sup>14</sup>). In any

case, Meighen was consistently overshadowed, in terms of winning elections, exercising political judgment, and getting results, by King.

Perhaps the best demonstration of King's ruthlessness is his treatment of one of his own ministers.<sup>15</sup> James Ralston had been a professional soldier (rising to Colonel) after World War I, and then was a long-serving Minister in King's cabinet—at Defence in the 20s, then briefly at Finance at the outbreak of World War II, then Defence again. In 1942, when conscription first became a major issue, Ralston spoke in favour, and offered his resignation in writing, which King did not accept. In 1944 the small number of troops including "Zombies" had been conscripted, but they were being kept strictly for home defence.<sup>16</sup> King kept reinforcing a public message that Canadian troops abroad were adequate. Ralston as Defence Minister inspected troops in Europe after D-Day and found that reinforcements were needed. When he returned to Canada with the same message, King waited until there was a Cabinet meeting, then brought out the resignation letter Ralston had offered more than two years earlier.<sup>17</sup> King had already lined up a more agreeable replacement, and Ralston was gone.<sup>18</sup> It was only a few months after these events that King announced that conscripts trained only for home defence (as promised to Quebec) would actually be sent to Europe, as Ralston had argued was necessary. King got crucial support for his reversal from his Quebec lieutenant, Minister of Justice, and soon to be successor, Louis St. Laurent. The conscripts arrived in Europe too late to have an effect on the war.<sup>19</sup>

Cook focusses primarily on the conscription issue in both world wars in the conclusion to his book. He provides a nuanced account of the statesmanship of both Borden and King. Coming from something of a pro-military background (as did Stacey), he is convinced that moving to conscription was the right thing to do in both wars, and King should have done it sooner in the second.

Borden may have left a poisoned chalice for his successors, and perhaps the nation, but his goal had always been wartime victory. Could there be any other way when a nation was fighting for its very survival, as he and a majority of Canadians believed? Could

Canada be only partially committed to a war in which tens of thousands of Canadians had already been killed, and more wounded in body and mind? ... Borden did not initially or automatically come to the conclusion that the goal of victory had to subsume all other decisions made by him or his, but the cumulative effects of the war drove him to that position. ... Borden, unlike King, has been portrayed as coming down on the wrong side of history in pressing for conscription. Yet Canada had never faced as grim a year as 1917, when its own total of men killed in action surpassed 30,000 and the Allies faltered on all fronts ... Canada had built its reputation during the war through success and sacrifice. Borden was not about to endanger that legacy, with greater political autonomy within the British Empire as its potential reward.<sup>20</sup>

Cook seems to be arguing that in order to attain a certain degree of independence from Britain, Canada had to show itself as pro-British as possible. This may be an attempt to combine the English Canadian patriotism of Borden's day with something that came later.

On King, Cook seems more certain that the good of one party was put before the good of the soldiers who were already fighting, or of the country.

King's opportunism has left generations wondering if he was more interested in political survival than in leading the nation. For King, however, the two goals went hand in hand: effectively prosecuting the war was always intertwined with political survival, since he believed fervently that only he and the Liberals could lead and keep the nation unified. ... his vision was remarkably consistent. Before the war, he refused to be drawn into colonial or imperial wars, but would defend Britain if it was truly threatened; throughout the conflict, he sought to do anything in his power to support Britain, but would not endanger his nation's unity. And despite the dodging and weaving, equivocating and vacillating, he fulfilled that mission.<sup>21</sup>

Still, Cook thinks King waited too long to enforce conscription.<sup>22</sup> He sums up as follows: “In broad strokes, it can be said that Borden sided with the soldiers at the cost of jeopardizing unity at home, while King did the opposite, choosing unity over the lives of the soldiers overseas.”<sup>23</sup> In a way this probably makes it too easy for King: it is the sworn duty of a Prime Minister to maintain the unity of the country if possible, whereas doing everything possible to save the life of everyone in the military is more the duty of the officers in command.

This brings us to some questions about King’s performance on conscription. Did King sacrifice Canadians in uniform, by refusing to provide timely reinforcements, either because he was ignorant of the situation and wanted to avoid unpleasant conversations, or for his career, or for the sake of Quebec, or the Liberal party—in other words, for something other than the good of Canada? Wasn’t maintaining as much unity as possible very much for the good of Canada? What exactly did King do wrong? Did he fail to provide reinforcements—useful, trained reinforcements—at the exact moment when they were needed in France and Italy? How can any Prime Minister do that? It was up to military planners to decide where to commit Canadian troops, whether there were enough to split between Italy and France, and so on. Especially at such a late stage of the war, there was no point in conscripting raw recruits, who would then require training. King would have to conscript the so-called “Zombies,” who had been conscripted on the specific understanding that they would not be sent out of Canada. Battlefields change from day to day, and Cook quietly admits that by the time there was any possibility of responding to real reductions in Canadian strength by sending Zombies, the Canadian units had been withdrawn from the front for a rest.<sup>24</sup> In other words, the British and American military commanders, based on their judgment on the ground, recognized that the Canadians had suffered, and gave them a break. How was King supposed to know better than those people what was needed?

Have reputable historians of World War II ever suggested that there were too few Canadians fighting in Europe after D-Day? As Cook emphasizes, it would be difficult to argue that

Canada did not commit enough resources to the war, since hardly any country committed more.<sup>25</sup> It comes down to a few days or weeks when there was arguably an emergency—not affecting all the Allies, but primarily the Canadians—and King might have helped by turning to conscription earlier, at the risk of breaking his promises and antagonizing Quebec. King sometimes suggested melodramatically that there was a threat of civil war or mutiny if he had invoked conscription earlier or not invoked it at all, and this is surely unlikely. Still, it is possible that King handled the situation about as well as a Canadian prime minister could.<sup>26</sup> In Borden's case, even though conscription was applied with less than year of the war left, things looked very bad for France and Britain, and a lot happened during the year in question. By the time King, purely because of political pressure that had finally become impossible to overcome, conscripted troops to be sent to Europe in late 1944, there was no doubt which way the war was going. There is a good argument that his late conscription was a mistake that was forced on him; there is less evidence that the earlier failure to conscript was a mistake. Cook seems unable to free himself entirely from Stacey's judgment that King's eccentricities must have somehow contributed to flawed moral or political judgments.<sup>27</sup>

Is conscription—a draft—always a good idea when a country goes to war? Especially in a large-scale war, it might seem more rational to decide who exactly is required to serve, and call on those people, so that operational requirements are met better than they might be by volunteers. (Cook explains that there was very little strategic thinking about matching people to needs in either world war). Part of the problem with conscription for Canada was that it built morale in English Canada, but undermined it in French Canada. Perhaps a case could be made for compulsory military service, even in peace time, so that there are experienced people to draw on, as a continuation of their earlier service, when war comes.<sup>28</sup> Cook does not discuss the example of the U.S. in any detail. The U.S., of course, has drafted troops for several wars. In the Civil War, there was a legal provision allowing draftees to pay someone else to serve for them, and bounties were offered for enlistment—bounties which were often

collected by private brokers, rather than by soldiers and their families. Perhaps the U.S. has been more open than Canada about stating the issue very starkly: the country needs troops, but there are good reasons why individuals might want to avoid serving. Especially because of their experience in Vietnam, the U.S. seems to have turned away from the draft toward a volunteer military. As long as they make a military career seem attractive for monetary and other reasons, they can be highly selective as to who they will accept, and avoid the morale problems that led to enlisted men turning against their officers in Vietnam, and to some extent Korea. There is a potential political problem, however, with a substantial military consisting of mercenaries—to use an older term—living a life that is so distinct from the mass of civilians. It may be too easy for civilians to cheer on a war from a distance—one in which they are not personally involved. In this Canada's situation today may be similar (although on a much smaller scale) to that of the U.S.

Cook's book on Borden and King, like the other books I have mentioned, helps to focus on the question what makes Canadians distinct—not Americans, and not (even as much as English Canadians used to be) British. In the past, the French "fact" has done more than anything to make us distinct in the eyes of the world. Now multicultural Canada seems quite willing to support military action in distant lands such as Afghanistan. We have even made a transition from celebrating "peacekeepers" to engaging in aggressive war for humanitarian reasons. Is this connection between the civilian population and the military the new normal for Canada? Is it different than in the U.S. and other countries? Are we someday going to be asked to accept conscription? These questions and many others are stimulated by these excellent books.

<sup>1</sup> Stacey 1985.

<sup>2</sup> A famous Doonesbury cartoon has a lecturer doing a kind of test to see if students are paying attention: “Jefferson’s defense of basic rights [given his defense of slavery] lacked conviction”; no reaction; “Jefferson was the anti-Christ”; no reaction; “black is white, night is day!”; one student to another: “this course is really getting interesting.”

<sup>3</sup> Boyko 2012.

<sup>4</sup> Boyko 2013.

<sup>5</sup> Cook 2011.

<sup>6</sup> Cook 2013.

<sup>7</sup> Cook points out that King asked Borden for a Cabinet position in the Union (pro-Conscription) government, but Borden refused him; King was still “a small fish,” and he was inclined to believe that if he held Quebec, he had a good chance of winning Canada after the war; Cook 2013, p. 105.

<sup>8</sup> It has been said by more than observer that while German armed forces were (temporarily) defeated, German ideas prevailed throughout the West after World War I. Even if true, this also does not mean it was not worthwhile to oppose German forces in every way possible.

<sup>9</sup> Michael Bliss, in a prolonged response to Stacey, has stressed that no one has shown that King’s eccentricities affected his judgment as leader, and King’s accomplishments stand out among both Canadian prime ministers and American presidents; Bliss 1994, pp. 128-136.

<sup>10</sup> Cook’s treatment of King in World War II starts with Cook 2013 Chapter 12, p. 207.

<sup>11</sup> Nolan p. 41.

<sup>12</sup> Strongly “yes” outside of Quebec, “no” inside. The wording of the plebiscite: “Are you in favor of releasing the Government from any obligation arising out of any past commitments restricting the methods of raising men for military service?” A “yes” would not be “yes” to overseas conscription, but it would free the Government from a previous “no”; see Hutchison p. 305.

<sup>13</sup> Bill 80, following the referendum, removed an earlier limitation on the power of the Government to conscript troops. Proving that King was not mistaken as to the Scylla and Charybdis between which he found himself, a majority of Quebec members voted against the Government on the bill; but this was not a confidence vote, and the Quebec Liberals remained Government members.

<sup>14</sup> The King-Byng doctrine was apparently rejected by Liberal leader Pearson, and insisted upon by Conservative leader Diefenbaker, in January 1958, when Pearson as Opposition leader hoped to have a chance to form a majority in the House of Commons, and Diefenbaker as minority Prime Minister wanted to trigger an election. Since then the doctrine seems to be accepted for Canada,

unlike any other Westminster-style jurisdiction. Effective May 2007, Canada now has legislation requiring elections on fixed dates, except when the Government loses a confidence vote. This seems to mean that the various opposition leaders can trigger an election, subject to the timing of confidence votes, but the Prime Minister cannot unless he or she deliberately provokes a defeat on a confidence vote. Of course, this did not prevent Prime Minister Harper from triggering an election in 2008, saying his own legislation did not apply to minority Parliaments.

<sup>15</sup> Almost a “tick-tock” account appears in Hutchison, pp. 340-361.

<sup>16</sup> The creation of a home defence force was not as ridiculous (or as obvious a sop to Quebec) as it might seem. There was at least some threat of Japanese invasion, at least for a while. Whatever the real threat, King took full advantage of it. [After Pearl Harbor, December 1941] “For both military and political reasons, [King] repeatedly emphasized the danger of Japanese attack, acceded to the demands of a frightened British Columbia government and transported all Japanese residents from the Pacific Coast to the interior . . . .” (Hutchison p. 302).

<sup>17</sup> In 1942, Ralston had disagreed with King about the aftermath of Bill 80. King took the view that even if Bill 80 passed (which it did), the consent of Parliament would be required to actually carry out overseas conscription; Ralston said this would not be necessary.

<sup>18</sup> Incredibly, King persuaded General McNaughton—who had only recently been dismissed—by Ralston—from his command in Europe, to replace Ralston. The Conservatives were trying to recruit McNaughton to be their leader, on a pro-conscription platform. King was determined to try everything to find the soldiers who were needed without conscription, and he expected his Ministers to say that this would work. King’s commitment to McNaughton was that “McNaughton would get the reinforcement [that military people said was necessary] without conscription”; Hutchison, p. 356.

<sup>19</sup> Cook says that “while many of the [new conscripts] received a rough initial reception, by most accounts they fought well”; Cook 2013, p. 334. So they were greeted by their fellow Canadians at the front by being called traitors and worse.

<sup>20</sup> Cook 2013, p. 356.

<sup>21</sup> Cook 2013, p. 363.

<sup>22</sup> At an earlier point Cook says: “One can only conclude that King’s concern for Quebec and its support for the Liberal Party was far more important to him than any anxiety over the overseas soldiers and unnecessary combat deaths”; Cook 2013, p. 335.

<sup>23</sup> Cook 2013, pp. 367-8.

<sup>24</sup> Cook 2013, pp. 334-5.

<sup>25</sup> “... Canada’s wartime exertions were awe-inspiring. The sending of 1.1 million citizens to war put an enormous strain on the nation, yet still Canadians produced an avalanche of war materiel and food. The fighting forces overseas punched far above their weight. The Dominion of Canada contributed as much as it did because of a motivated citizenry, a stable government, strong ministers, a cemented relationship with the United States, and King’s steadiness at the helm of state”; Cook 2013, p. 365.

<sup>26</sup> Wikipedia engages in a debate about whether it would have helped encourage French-Canadian participation in the war if a brigade had been created, uniting the French-speaking units instead of leaving them dispersed among English-speakers, with the use of French always making one a second-class citizen.

<sup>27</sup> Cook deals with King’s eccentricities sympathetically, but he does come back to them from time to time: Cook 2013, pp. 311-313, 345-354. To his credit, Cook says “Perhaps it would have been better—or fairer—if the diaries had not survived his death,” but he provides substantial glimpses of those diaries, which so inspired Stacey, nonetheless. Cook describes Stacey as “one of Canada’s most respected historians,” a judgment that presumably should be corrected if Bliss is correct, and Stacey has substantially distorted King’s record—perhaps primarily because Stacey could not forgive King’s record on Conscription. See Cook 2013, p. 353.

<sup>28</sup> The U.S. still requires males to register for the draft when they turn 18—but no one has been drafted since the Vietnam era. France “suspended” compulsory military service in 1996, and formally ended it in 2001. The French Foreign Legion, along with regular troops, was traditionally used in foreign military campaigns much more than the general run of conscripts; conscripts were used in the Algerian war of 1954-62, but not in the Indo-China (Vietnam) war of 1947-54. The last “call-up” of conscripts in Britain was in 1960, and the last conscript ended his service in 1963. National Service conscripts served in various wars in the 1950s.

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