

VIMY RIDGE: 1917-1992
A CANADIAN MYTH OVER SEVENTY FIVE YEARS

by

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Title of Thesis

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A Canadian Myth Over Seventy Five Years

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ABSTRACT

1992 was the 125th anniversary of Canadian Confederation and the 75th anniversary of the battle of Vimy Ridge. Some historians have argued that the latter anniversary was more important as they believe that it was during the Great War that Canada became "a nation". While this belief is often specifically anchored on Vimy Ridge, Canadians are generally unaware of Vimy and the Great War experience. Nevertheless, the Vimy myth persists in Canadian military histories and reappears in other sources on major anniversaries.

To investigate this contradiction, this thesis traces the origins and development of the Vimy myth from its foundations in the period between Confederation and the Great War to its 75th anniversary. The life of the myth is accessed through an extensive historiographical survey of Canadian military histories, Canadian newspapers, British Columbian high-school textbooks and other primary and secondary sources.

The study reveals that, in the period before the Great War, attempts were made to create similar national symbols which lay the groundwork for the creation and promotion of Vimy as a symbol of nationhood. By 1936, with the unveiling of the monument on the ridge, Vimy had become a concentration of the Great War experience, overshadowing

other symbolic events such as the Canadians' first "bleeding" at Ypres. As such a symbol, in 1967 Vimy became central to many works that traced Canadian national history in honour of the Centennial of Confederation. After 1967, with the shift of emphasis towards social history, the divisiveness of the Great War was stressed and this greatly weakened the ability of a symbol tied to that experience to represent Canadian nationhood. By the end of the survey the myth still lives on but is largely confined to military histories.

Despite the marginalization of the myth, the coverage that major anniversaries receive in the media and Vimy's connection to Canadian nationhood make it a useful symbol for politicians and others to use to promote their agendas.

Final conclusions are made regarding the relevance of the Vimy myth to the ongoing search for Canadian identity. Of course there is no single symbol of Canadian nationhood, but, for some, Vimy still represents such a symbol. While Canada seems to lack a specifically Canadian identity, it is argued that Canadians may have asserted their nationalism by looking for it.

To my parents
for their love and support
and
to the men of the Canadian Corps
whose sacrifices helped forge a nation.

•

There they stood on Vimy Ridge that ninth day
of April, 1917, men from Quebec shoulder to
shoulder to men from Ontario; men from the
maritimes with men from British Columbia and there
was forged a nation, tempered by the fires of
sacrifice and hammered on the anvil of high
adventure.

-----Lord Byng of Vimy

•

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction.....	1
1. The Foundations of the Vimy Myth, 1867-1917.....	5
2. The Battle of Vimy Ridge, 9 April, 1917.....	21
3. The Introduction of the Vimy Myth, 1917-1919.....	34
4. The Consolidation of the Vimy Myth, 1919-1936.....	51
5. The Vimy Myth and National Identity, 1942-1967.....	73
6. The Decline of the Vimy Myth, 1967-1992.....	93
Conclusion.....	112
Appendix: Sources and Method.....	125
Bibliography.....	128

INTRODUCTION

On 9 April 1917, the Canadian Corps won an impressive victory in the Battle of Vimy Ridge. This was the first time that the entire Corps fought together and in just a few hours the Canadians achieved a success that had eluded the French and British for two years. Vimy is seen as a turning point in the war for Canadians and Canadian Great War histories often describe the period in terms of pre and post-Vimy. The Canadians, however, are the only ones who isolate the battle and refer to it as the Battle of Vimy Ridge. For everyone else it is a part of the much larger British offensive, the Battle of Arras. That Canadians single out Vimy in this manner demonstrates the importance it has in their perception of the Great War experience.

Vimy had this significance because its influence went beyond the military aspects of the Great War. The victory's impact was felt by the government and on the home front. Many of the soldiers representing Canada had recently emigrated from Great Britain, and, for some, Vimy Ridge was the moment they began to feel Canadian. This birth of identity and growth of pride extended throughout the military and Canada itself as news of the successes of the Canadian Corps spread across the country. In the political arena the success at Vimy Ridge was translated into greater military independence which in turn resulted in greater

political influence among the Allies. The increased voice of the Canadian government in the Imperial War Cabinet, along with Canada's direct military role, helped win Canada a seat at the Paris Peace Conference. The ultimate act, a separate signature for Canada on the peace treaty, signified the world's recognition of Canada's new status.

The idea that Canada achieved nationhood as a direct result of the experiences of the Great War is one that is widely held in military histories of Canada and regularly appears in general histories. Often, this belief is specifically anchored on the victory at Vimy Ridge. In this sense, Vimy Ridge seems to be a concentration of the war experience into a single, remarkable event and as such has become a powerful symbol or myth.¹

As this myth is given such importance by military and other historians, the battle, or at least the general

¹ Myth is not necessarily a pejorative term. Myth is defined by Murray Barkley as being not necessarily opposed to reality, rather an historical myth should be understood as being an instrument or means of self-identification, deriving its justification from an ideological reinterpretation of the historical past. This definition is suitable for describing the "myth" of Vimy Ridge with perhaps one small adjustment. While ideologies do come into play, they represent only a minor role. It would thus be more appropriate to replace ideological with idealistic. The myth of Vimy Ridge very much represents its proponents' ideal image of Canada as a young, vibrant, strong and most importantly united nation. Murray Barkley, "The Loyalist Tradition in New Brunswick." *Acadiensis*. Vol IV(2) 1975, p.5

experience of the Great War, should be familiar to Canadians. Neither Vimy Ridge, nor the war, however, receive this recognition from the general populace. This discrepancy represents a central problem for the Vimy myth and for the wider issue of Canadian identity.

The chronicle of the life of the Vimy myth displays the changing relevance of the Great War to Canadians and, therefore, an investigation into the origins and development of the myth should provide an interesting perspective on how Canada and Canadians can be "identified".

To collect the threads of the Vimy myth this study will begin with an examination of the period from Confederation to the early stages of the Great War to see if, in any way, the ground was prepared for the creation of a national myth along the lines of Vimy. A description of the battle, highlighting many of the key symbolic elements, follows to provide the reader with a point of reference. The Vimy myth will then be traced through a seventy five year historiographical review of selected sources.² While a discussion on Canadian identity will be provided at the end of the study, the focus of the study will, at all times,

² For a discussion of sources and method see Appendix pg.125

remain on the Battle of Vimy Ridge and its importance to Canadians as a historical event and as a symbol of nationhood.

CHAPTER ONE

The Foundations of the Vimy Myth, 1867-1917

Identifying nationalist trends in the period following Confederation is a difficult task. The population of the newly-formed state supported a bewildering array of options for the future of Canada. The two main ideas were nationalism and imperialism. Early studies tended to view the concepts of nationalism and imperialism as being in direct opposition. In the mid-1960's, however, the idea that imperialism in Canada was actually one form of Canadian nationalism became popular.³ Criticism, however, was leveled at this argument's use of language.⁴ The confusion over language was not solely the fault of historians. The imperialists themselves confused the issue by their varying use of the term nationalism.⁵ This, and the fact that there

3 Carl Berger, *The Sense of Power: Studies in the Ideas of Canadian Imperialism, 1867-1914*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1970), p.254

4 The problem lay in the definition of nationalism. Berger and others seemed to be arguing that Canadian imperialists were patriotic towards the Canadian state but were in no way suggesting a difference in nationalities between Canada and the Mother Country. The nationalism of the imperialists was, therefore, actually a local variant of Britannic pan-nationalism combined with a Canadian patriotism. Douglas Cole, "Canada's 'nationalistic' imperialists". *The Journal of Canadian Studies*, V August 1970, p. 48 For a full discussion of this point see Douglas Cole, "The Problem of 'Nationalism' and 'Imperialism' in British Settlement Colonies", *The Journal of British Studies* 10 (May 1971), pp.160-182

5 While recognizing the problems with the use of the word "nationalism" this paper will, for the sake of clarity, use it, and its related terms, in what has become a

were almost as many varieties of imperialism as imperialists, makes the issue extremely complex.⁶ What is important for this discussion, however, is how these imperialists saw themselves. Their loyalty to the Empire did not mean that they wanted to give away any Canadian independence.⁷

From the earliest days of Confederation a connection was made between Canadian military history and her nationhood. Despite their ties to Empire, the Canada Firsters were one of the most influential groups in promoting such a Canadian national sentiment. The Firsters hoped to "evoke an outpouring of 'national sentiment' consistent with the immensity of the task of creating a transcontinental state."⁸

Canada Firsters, such as Robert Grant Haliburton, were disappointed with the businesslike way that Canada came into being and spoke of great nations having enjoyed a "spring time of life, full of freshness, vigour and hope," when

conventional, if incorrect, manner.

6 Carl Berger, *The Vision of Grandeur: Studies in the Ideas of Canadian Imperialism, 1867-1914*, (PhD Thesis, University of Toronto, 1966), p.13

7 Norman Penlington, *Canada and Imperialism 1896-1899*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1965), p.11

8 David P Gagan, "The relevance of 'Canada First'", *The Journal of Canadian Studies*, V November 1970, p.36

patriots, "purified" by "fiery ordeal", had come forward to mold the nation's destiny.⁹ The image of purification by fiery ordeal reoccurs in the rhetoric of the Canada Firsters.

The events at Red River and the Fenian activities of 1870, along with the Treaty of Washington and England's decision to withdraw its imperial garrison in 1871, represented such ordeals and provoked the nationalist side of the imperialist argument. Speaking of Red River Charles Mair said,

Thank God there is such a thing at last as a purely national feeling in Canada. This is a young and vigorous race coming to the front, entirely in earnest, and which is no longer English, Scotch or Irish, but thoroughly and distinctly Canadian....¹⁰

Similar sentiments would be expressed during the Boer War and were often used during the Great War.

In an address given in 1871, William Foster kept the military in focus when he argued only a consciousness of history could provide some bond of union. The history he referred to was the military past, fusing the 1812 militia myth with the loyalist tradition and connecting both to the martial exploits of the French Canadians.¹¹ In the same

9 Ibid., p.37

10 Berger, *The Vision of Grandeur*, p.59

11 Ibid., p.167-8 The 1812 militia myth was the belief

year George T. Denison argued that national sentiment should be the product of a "violent struggle for political existence". He wanted a "defensively warlike" mentality which inspired a national spirit to become a trait of the Canadian identity.¹² The Firsters' calls for nationhood to spring from some violent bloodletting and their attempts to use such incidents as symbols, establish a potential connection with the mythologizing of the Great War experience.

The Canada Firsters soon disappeared from the political landscape, but the economic problems of the 1880's caused Canadians to look to the Loyalist Tradition. Carl Berger argues the Tradition was conceived in response to a deeply felt need to create a cohesive national heritage and that it attempted to impart an historical dimension to the conception of British Canadian nationality.¹³ The tradition boosted the role of the militia in 1812 which was regarded as their first and greatest contribution to Empire building. Through the tradition, Canadians could claim that the Empire was as much theirs as an Englishman's.¹⁴

that it was Canadian citizen soldiers, organized into a militia and led by Brock, rather than the British regular soldiers that turned away the American invaders.

12 Gagan, p.37

13 Berger, *The Vision of Grandeur*, p.181

14 Ibid., p.199

National sentiment, therefore, was focused on the connection to Empire and this connection was further stressed in the 1890's with the advent of the Imperial Federation movement. Growing out of a renewed fear of the United States, Imperial Federation, like the imperialism of the Firsters, did not mean an abandonment of Canadian national development. Reverend George M. Grant defined Imperial Federation in these terms in 1890:

...a union between the Mother Country and Canada that would give to Canada not only the present full management of its own affairs, but a fair share in the management and responsibilities of common affairs. As British citizens, ought we to ask for more? As Canadians and full-grown men, ought we to be satisfied with less?¹⁵

Clearly this call for closer ties with Britain did not necessarily mean a reduction in Canadian autonomy. In fact some proponents foresaw a Canada with a greater capacity for growth than Britain and thus having an eventual leading role in the Empire. But for the meantime, "[t]he empire offered influence and power to a degree which no small nation on her own could hope to achieve."¹⁶

15 Rev. G. M. Grant, "'Imperial Federation': A Lecture", in *Documentary Problems in Canadian History: Volume II Post-Confederation*, Bumstead, J.M. ed., (Georgetown: Irwin-Dorsey Limited, 1969), p.76

16 Robert J. D. Page, "Canada and the imperial idea in the Boer War years", *The Journal of Canadian Studies*, February 1970, Vol. V (1), p. 37

The outbreak of the Boer War intensified imperial fervour. Most of English Canada rallied to Britain's side and, even though he was against direct Canadian involvement, the prime minister, Sir Wilfrid Laurier, was, in the face of popular pressure, powerless to avoid some participation in the war.

For many Canadians isolationism as a national policy was not only cowardly but irrelevant, because Canada would never be left alone in peace and isolation to pursue her own policy.¹⁷

Supporters of participation had practical reasons for wanting to become involved in the war. They saw the inevitable business opportunities and felt that participation represented the insurance fee for British military protection of Canada.¹⁸ Unfortunately, the division between supporters and opponents of the Boer War was essentially drawn on racial lines, between English and French Canadians. English and French tensions grew and even erupted in a violent clash in Montreal. The key figure in the opposition to the Boer War was the French-Canadian nationalist Henri Bourassa. The argument of Bourassa and other opponents of Canadian participation was that the events in Africa held little importance for Canada. They worried that imperial enthusiasm was drawing English

17 Ibid., p.41

18 Carmen Miller, *Painting the Map Red: Canada and the South African War 1899-1902*, (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1993), p.20

Canadians away from their loyalty to Canada.¹⁹ What they really feared was that this war might set the precedent for Canadian involvement in future Imperial wars. The ultimate lesson for the French Canadians in the Boer War was the realization of their weakness in a majoritarian democracy. Even with a francophone prime minister, Quebec's political power was negligible when English Canadians across Canada uniformly rallied around an issue.²⁰

The French Canadians, however, need not have worried that the Boer War would lead to closer ties with Britain. While the beginning of the war had seen an upsurge in imperialist zeal, events of the war reversed that trend. The effect of Canadian achievements on national pride and revelations in the later stages of the war, the burning of farms and the existence of concentration camps among other atrocities, served to diminish the moral intensity of enthusiasm for empire.²¹ For many Canadians participation in the war was akin to a national coming of age. The Canadian victory at Paardeberg was much hailed in Canada and it seemed that the Dominion had become a factor of military

19 Page, "Canada and the imperial idea in the Boer War years", p.46

20 Ibid.

21 Robert J. D. Page, "Carl Berger and the intellectual origins of Canadian imperialist thought, 1867-1914", *The Journal of Canadian Studies*, August 1970, Vol. V (3), p.43

significance in the Empire.²² Laurier commented on the battle in the House of Commons on 13 March 1990:

Is there a man whose bosom did not swell with pride...the pride of consciousness that that day the fact had been revealed to the world that a new power had arisen in the west.²³

Both nationalists and imperialists expressed confidence that a new patriotism based on national unity and purpose would arise.²⁴ Movements for the creation of monuments to the victory were started and for the next fifty years veterans met on the 27th of February to mark Paardeberg Day.²⁵

Historians have referred to the Canadian participation in the Boer War as another step towards independence and self-respect and towards the recognition of Canadian nationhood by the world at large.²⁶ While this overstates the point somewhat, the bout of nationalism created by the war revealed that the existing Imperial relationship was

22 Page, "Canada and the imperial idea in the Boer War years", p.47

23 Ibid.

24 Miller, p.111

25 Despite the existence of better examples of Canadian prowess in the Boer War, Paardeberg remained the battle that was remembered. The descriptions of ceremonies in Miller are similar to those that took place on the anniversaries of the battle of Vimy Ridge. Miller, pp.112, 434

26 George F. Stanley, *Canada's Soldiers: The Military History of an Unmilitary People* rev. ed., (Toronto: The MacMillan Company of Canada Limited, 1960), p.289

unsatisfactory.²⁷ "Now that the Canadians had demonstrated their willingness to support the Empire with more than emotional speeches, was it not only fair that they be accorded some influence over the direction of imperial foreign policy?"²⁸ In the aftermath of the war Canadians experienced an *amour propre* which led Fredrick Borden, Laurier's Minister of Militia and Defence, to push for things Canadian in 1903 such as the Ross rifle and for a Canadian head of the militia.²⁹

During the era of the Boer War the desires of earlier nationalist groups such as the Canada Firsters were, to a degree, realized. Canadians, or at least English Canadians, had experienced a growth of nationalism forged by fire. This pride, while initially focused on the glory of Empire grew into a more specifically Canadian nationalism influenced by the military accomplishments of the Canadian contingent. Thus, the Boer War would seem to be the kind of "fiery ordeal" that the Firsters had envisioned. However, as significant as the war's stimulation of Canadian

27 Robert Craig Brown and Ramsay Cook, *Canada 1896-1921: A Nation Transformed*, (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1974), p.162

28 Carl Berger ed., *Imperialism and Nationalism 1884-1914: A Conflict in Canadian Thought*, (Toronto: The Copp Clark Publishing Company, 1969), pg.3

29 Donald C. Gordon, *The Dominion Partnership in Imperial Defence 1870-1914*, (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1965), p.167

nationalism and the review of Imperial relations was, it also intensified the split between the two developing nationalisms in Canada.³⁰

After the Boer War, despite some negative feeling towards war and the Empire, a movement for a strong militia began.³¹ Supporters of the movement argued that wars were inevitable because neither Christian morals nor social progress had prevented the outbreak of war. They noted that war had positive aspects and argued that war was an instrument of progress as it facilitated the extension of liberty and civilization. In 1902 the historian of the militia wrote

The country realized that its whole life has been stimulated, the standard of its manhood built up, the national character strengthened by the achievements of its sons in the Fenian Raids, the Red River Expedition, the Nile Campaign, the North-West Rebellion and the South Africa War.

True the laurels have been moistened with the tears of Canadian mothers, but a price has to be paid for everything worth having. The mother of a coward does not often weep.³²

Martial training was an antidote to the decay and sloth they saw as characteristic of the industrial and urban population. National drill was to preserve the men's

30 Page, "Canada and the imperial idea in the Boer War years", p.48

31 Berger, *The Vision of Grandeur*, pp.524, 530

32 Ibid., p.525

physique as well as Imperial defense and would make good Britishers of new-comers to Canadian shores. Appeals for cadet training, then, were phrased in terms of loyalty to the Empire and assumed that the martial spirit was a desirable aspect of national feeling.³³

The militia movement, and its connection to British military needs, faced strong opposition in post-Boer War Canada. Opposition came from French Canadians who distinguished between Imperial and Canadian defense and from liberal nationalists who believed any kind of consolidated defense would curtail the expansion of self-government.³⁴ The international pacifist movement had also grown dramatically in the decade before 1914.³⁵ The biggest obstacle that the militia movement faced, however, was a massive public indifference and an isolationism nourished by the notion that Canada was insulated from the European diseases of militarism and war because of their geographic and psychological separation as part of the New World.³⁶ As evidence of this potential for peace Canadians pointed to the 4000 miles of undefended border with the United States.³⁷

33 Ibid., p.579

34 Ibid., p.605

35 Ibid., p.607

36 Ibid., p.531

37 Ibid., p.609

These positions were maintained in the years just prior to the Great War as Canada's naval contribution to Imperial defense was debated.³⁸ Basing their arguments on the influential writings of Alfred Thayer Mahan and an examination of Canadian military history, supporters of the contribution argued that a navy was needed for Canadian survival.³⁹ Those against the contribution fought the subservience to Britain that it entailed, arguing instead for the creation of a Canadian controlled naval force that would be capable of defending Canada's specific interests.

While a supporter of the emergency naval aid bill, prime minister Sir Robert Borden demanded a greater say for the Dominions in the workings of the Empire. Speaking on the subject of Dreadnoughts, Borden argued to the Royal Colonial Institute

...those who are or who become responsible for the Empire's Defence must in the very nature of the thing, have some voice in that policy which shapes the issues of peace and war.⁴⁰

38 In the face of an increased pace of naval construction in Germany, Great Britain was requesting funds from Canada that would be put towards the construction of Dreadnoughts.

39 Mahan's *The Influence of Sea Power upon History 1660-1783* (1890) stressed the importance of the Navy in any measure of military power. It influenced many people, including Canadians, who came to recognize that in the taking of Quebec in their own history there had been two active seamen to each landman. Berger, *The Vision of Grandeur*, pp.534, 541

40 Delivered on July 10, 1912 quoted in Gaddis George

By 1914 the relationship between the Dominions and the Empire had changed. While constitutionally the formulation of foreign and defense policies still lay with the Imperial government, the political reality was that the Dominions had moved from a reliance on Britain for protection to becoming a small but increasingly significant factor in British plans for Imperial defense.⁴¹ Realizing this, Borden would lead Canada into the Great War with the intention of securing greater influence for the Dominion.

Canada greeted the outbreak of war in the same way as it was greeted in the countries of Europe, with spontaneous celebrations. Even some French Canadians initially met the news of war positively.⁴² While the early volunteers were almost entirely recent British immigrants, as the war progressed they were increasingly overtaken by Canadian-born soldiers. So too the enthusiasm shifted from Empire to nation. Canadians were quick to recognize and celebrate their differences with the British. These differences

Smith, *Nation and Empire: Canadian Diplomacy During the First World War*, (Dissertation: Yale University, PhD 1960 (1969)), p.165

41 Nicholas Mansergh, *The Commonwealth Experience Volume One: The Durham Report to the Anglo-Irish Treaty*, (Bath: The Pitman Press, 1982), p.189

42 This is not the place to examine this seemingly generational phenomenon except to say that the celebrants had no conception of what was to come in the fields of Flanders.

ranged from Sir Sam Hughes' near pathological preference for Canadian equipment to social distinctions and differences in attitude. One of the more popular stories of the Canadians in Britain involved the return of soldiers to their base camp.⁴³

Sentry (challenges): Who approaches? Friend or Foe?
 Response: First Grenadiers
 Sentry: Pass Grenadiers all is well.

Sentry (challenges): Who approaches? Friend or Foe?
 Response: What the hell is it to you?
 Sentry: Pass Canadians, all is well.

This shift to national attention was facilitated by the efforts of Max Aitken. In his capacity as the Canadian Eye Witness to the Front, Aitken reported to Canadian and British newspapers tales of the activities of the Canadians at the Front. In direct defiance of the military censors Aitken often provided the names of Canadian units, officers and men and soon Canada was getting the best and most specific publicity.⁴⁴ The impact of Aitken's war dispatches on the United States was such that at times it seemed to them that Canada was fighting the war alone.⁴⁵ Aitken took complaints made about this disproportionate publicity and

43 Herbert Rae, *Maple Leaves in Flanders Fields*, (Toronto: William Briggs, 1916), p.34

44 Peter Buitenhuis, *The Great War of Words: British, American and Canadian Propaganda and Fiction, 1914-1933*, (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1987), p.98

45 Gary Evans, *John Grierson and the National Film Board: The Politics of Wartime Propaganda*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1984), p.21

acclaim for the Canadians as a tribute to his efforts. He often reminded prime minister Borden and Sir Sam Hughes that the more the British were reminded of their debt to Canada, the better for Canada's post-war status and for the great cause of Empire unity.⁴⁶ While still invoking the idea of Empire, Aitken wanted Canada to take the chance to become a nation and this seems to be his motive in the writing of *Canada in Flanders: The Official Story of the Canadian Expeditionary Force*.⁴⁷ Aitken revealed this agenda in his description of the Canadian response to their first action at Ypres in April, 1915. In this battle the Canadians faced the first use of gas (chlorine) in the war and succeeded in holding the line after French colonial troops on their flank panicked and ran from their positions. The recognition given to the Canadians for this feat ranged from glowing accounts in French newspapers to a thank you from the King. Canadians could rightly feel proud of this action but it was Aitken who showed them how to direct that pride.

The wave that fell on us round Ypres has baptized the Dominion into nationhood - the mere written word, "Canada", glows now with a new meaning before all the civilized world. Canada had proved herself, and not unworthily; but those who survive of the men who have won us our world-right to pride are too busy to trouble their heads about history.⁴⁸

46 Anne Chisolm and Michael Davie, *Beaverbrook: A Life*, (London: Hutchinson Publishing Co. Ltd., 1992), p.127

47 Buitenhuis, p.99 In the writing of *Canada in Flanders*, Aitken was aided by his friend Rudyard Kipling. Chisolm and Davie, p.129

48 Sir Max Aitken, *Canada in Flanders: The Official Story*

Aitken, it is clear, was not too busy to think of the historical relevance. The words used to describe the significance of the events at Ypres are similar to those used to describe Paardeberg and later used to describe Vimy. Ypres would have a lasting symbolic impact on Canadians who experienced their first exposure to the numbing lists of names that filled the casualty columns of their local newspapers. "To contemporary Canadians, the names Ypres, St. Julien, Gravenstafel Ridge, and Frezenberg retained a weight that Vimy, Hill 60, or the Canal du Nord would never transcend."⁴⁹ For those Canadians, Canada's first bleeding would always be the strongest image of the Great War experience.

of the Canadian Expeditionary Force Volumes I, II, III,
(Toronto: Hodder and Stoughton, 1916), p.81

49 Desmond Morton, *When Your Number's Up: The Canadian Soldier in the First World War*, (Toronto: Random House of Canada, 1993), p.44

CHAPTER TWO

The Battle of Vimy Ridge, 9 April, 1917

Since 1917 descriptions of the Battle of Vimy Ridge have remained almost static. Changes or additions to the descriptions of the battle became rare once the details originally appeared in the immediate post-war period. Moreover, the information that is presented in each case tends to fit a basic pattern that serves to demonstrate why the battle was a success and why it was significant. This pattern, which began to appear the day of the battle, is an important instrument in the creation and maintenance of the myth of Vimy Ridge.⁵⁰

Vimy Ridge had fallen into German hands during the so-called "Race to the Sea" in 1914, a series of flanking manoeuvres by both sides that resulted in an extended front from Switzerland to the North Sea. From the heights of the ridge the Germans had a commanding view of the entire Arras sector, an important strategic advantage over the French troops facing them. The ridge overlooked Lens to the north, the Douai Plain to the east and Arras to the south. A Canadian soldier remarked that from the ridge "more of the war could be seen than from any other place in France".⁵¹

50 This pattern will be discussed in more detail in the following chapters.

51 Colonel G. W. L. Nicholson, *Canadian Expeditionary*

The ability of the ridge to act as an observation post for whoever commanded it drove the French to attempt to wrestle the ridge from the Germans during the spring of 1915.

In May of 1915, as part of the Battle of Artois, the French achieved the crest of the ridge at a cost of 100 000 casualties. Due to a lack of reserves and artillery they were unable to consolidate their positions and were soon repelled from their perch by an effective German counter-attack. Losses were heavy on both sides and the possession of the ridge became a nationalistic urge for both the French and the Germans.⁵² Both sides sought not only the advantage of the high ground but now needed the symbol of victory that it represented to justify their high losses. A final attempt was made by the French to take the ridge in September which ended in utter failure with a cost of 47 000 French casualties.

With winter approaching, and their forces being too exhausted to mount another assault, the battered and demoralized French sat back and allowed their trenches to deteriorate. In the meantime, however, the Germans fortified their positions on the ridge more than any other

Force 1914-1918: Official History of the Canadian Army in the First World War, (Ottawa: Queen's Printer and Controller of Stationary, 1964), p.244

52 Kenneth Macksey, *The Shadow of Vimy Ridge*, (London: William Kimber and Co. Ltd., 1965), p.25

section of the line turning villages and farmsteads into small fortresses.⁵³ In March 1916 the British took over the French section of the line. The British also coveted the ridge and began a campaign of tunnelling under the German position and detonating mines. This campaign goaded the Germans into launching, in late May, a counter-attack in which the Germans seized 1500 yards of the British front lines and support trenches.⁵⁴ British attempts to regain their position went on until June when the Commander-in-Chief of the British Expeditionary Force, Sir Douglas Haig, ordered them to stop and to study the ridge for a conclusive acquisition.⁵⁵ This decision was no doubt influenced by his plans to conduct a massive offensive in the region of the Somme that summer.⁵⁶

With the failure of the Somme to provide the breakthrough anticipated by Haig and the French exhausted

53 Ibid., p.30 Desmond Morton and J. L. Granatstein, *Marching to Armageddon: Canadians and the Great War 1914-1919*, (Toronto: Lester & Orpen Dennys Ltd, 1989), p.140

54 Nicholson, p.245

55 Macksey, p.30

56 The Somme offensive, one of the most famous of the war, has itself become a concentration of the war experience, particularly for the British. On the first day of the Somme the slowly advancing ranks of British soldiers experienced 60 000 casualties. While not entirely indicative of the campaign itself these figures remain the most telling piece of evidence of the brutality and futility of war. This enduring image tends to overshadow all other images of the Great War.

from the defence of Verdun, attention once again focused on the Arras sector. As the Canadian divisions were withdrawn from their section of the Somme offensive, they were sent into the now relatively quiet lines facing Vimy Ridge. The British Commander of the newly-formed Canadian Corps, Lieutenant-General Sir Julian H. Byng, was told as early as November that he would be assaulting the ridge but it was not until 19 January that he was told that the task would fall to the Canadians alone.⁵⁷

The Corps was to attack a front of four miles, roughly a mile to each division. On their left, the British I Corps would be assigned the Bois en Hache and to their right the south of the Scarpe would be the responsibility of the British XVIII Corps. Their attack was to be an important component of the British First Army's part in the large British offensive that came to be known as the Battle of Arras, a large-scale diversionary assault designed to draw the German forces from a massive French assault to the south of the Arras sector. This French assault became known as the Second Battle of the Aisne or the Nivelles Offensive after its architect General Robert Nivelles.

Byng's preparations for the assault included sending the talented commander of the First Canadian Division, Major-

57 Morton and Granatstein, p.140 and Nicholson, p.245

General Arthur Currie, to study the development of offensive tactics that had taken place under Nivelles's command at Verdun. Currie made a detailed study of both the new tactics at Verdun and those used at the Somme. Among these innovations was the idea that the men should not advance in lines but should move as small units, platoons, so they would be better able to meet resistance from the flank or rear. Currie also felt that maps and air reconnaissance photographs belonged with the front-line troops, not just with staff officers. The ground facing the men was studied, not just maps, and comments and suggestions were invited. Tied to this idea of giving responsibility to the men was the idea that clear objectives should be given. By this he meant that objectives should be easily-identified natural or man-made features not trenches that could be obliterated, or, as was often the case in the past, a confusing map reference number (a practice made all the more confusing as only officers were issued maps!). Finally Currie observed that the attackers should be well-rested, well-fed and happy. To achieve this he recommended that heavy and dirty work be given to units that were not partaking in the assault proper.⁵⁸

58 For a discussion of Currie's adaptation of techniques from Verdun see Morton and Granatstein, p.141 and A. M. J. Hyatt, *General Sir Arthur Currie: A Military Biography*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1987), p.63-66 and Bill Rawling, *Surviving Trench Warfare: Technology and the Canadian Corps, 1914-1918*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992), p.87-93

In a style that was to become typical of Currie's leadership all preparations were long and detailed. Crucial was a steady supply of accurate intelligence. A massive campaign of air reconnaissance was conducted. While costs were high, the value of the reconnaissance was excellent. The courageous pilots were able to supply the Allies with photographs, to direct artillery and to identify targets.

At the same time the Canadians were busy collecting information on the ground. Soon after their arrival at the ridge they began conducting small trench raids on German positions. This gave the troops first-hand knowledge of the lines facing them and provided Staff with prisoners to question. Over the winter the Canadians perfected the trench raid and developed a reputation for prowess in raiding.⁵⁹ By 20 March 1917 the Canadians were raiding the German trenches nightly. Casualties in this later period were high, 1400 wounded and killed, but the information gained was invaluable.

The reconnaissance led to the construction of an amazingly accurate model of the ridge that was constantly

⁵⁹ A low point did occur on 1 March, however, when a large-scale raid that was to use gas went terribly wrong. This disaster nearly destroyed two battalions of the 4th division and is often put forward as an explanation for the 4th's difficulties during the assault on the ridge. Morton and Granatstein, p.143

updated.⁶⁰ All officers were brought to see the large model and to comment on the sections for which they were to be responsible. The Canadians also constructed a full-scale model of the ridge behind the lines using surveyor's tape to mark trenches, strong points and objectives. The assaulting troops were repeatedly drilled on this model until all knew their role and that of those around them.

While those men were practising for the assault, those unfit for the front line, along with the engineer and pioneer battalions, were hard at work preparing the necessary logistics. These troops built and repaired roads, laid 20 miles of light railway tracks, buried 21 miles of signal cable, laid 66 miles of telephone wire and 45 miles of pipe to supply the daily requirement of 600 000 gallons of water for men, horses and guns.⁶¹ Tunneling companies built or expanded 11 underground galleries in the ancient chalk caverns below the ridge. These housed battalion and brigade headquarters, forward dressing stations, munition dumps and water supplies and, most importantly, a secure route for the troops from the rear to their jumping-off points in the front lines. Most of this construction had to be carried out at night to avoid the attentions of German artillery spotters.

60 D. J. Goodspeed, *The Road Past Vimy: The Canadian Corps 1914-1918*, (Toronto: MacMillan of Canada, 1969), p.83

61 Nicholson, pp.249-250 and Morton and Granatstein, p.141

Most important, however, was the incredible concentration and effectiveness of the artillery prior to and during the battle. The concentration was double that of the Somme with one heavy gun to every 20 yards of front and one field gun to every 10 yards of front.⁶² Key to the success of the artillery was the further development of the idea of counter-battery work under the leadership of the Canadian Andrew McNaughton. By day the artillery would engage specific tactical targets. By night they would harass all known approaches. This, along with another Canadian innovation, indirect machine gun fire, prevented or at least hindered repair of those targets attacked during the day.⁶³ Barbed-wire entanglements had always proven difficult to destroy reliably but, coinciding with the need at Vimy, was the implementation of a new artillery shell with a fuse that ensured that the shell went off in the wire (not the ground), thus clearing a path for the troops.

Byng insisted on a two-week bombardment with the intensity to double in the second week. During the first week no more than half the guns were firing at any given

62 Nicholson, p.248

63 Proposed by General Raymond Bruitenel of the Canadian Machine Gun Corps, indirect fire was the technique of firing over the heads of advancing infantry to control such points as intersections. This was based on the theory that a steady stream of bullets would be more effective than intermittent artillery fire. Rawling, p.115

time to hide their real number from the enemy. The second week of shelling was named "the week of suffering" by the German troops as the artillery played havoc with German strong points and communications. Some units were without rations, ammunition or relief for three to four days and were almost starving by the day of the battle. Counter-battery work silenced approximately 83% of the 212 facing guns.⁶⁴ While German morale was crumbling, the morale and confidence of the Canadians was up with Byng often visiting the front-line troops.

Such preparations could not go unnoticed. The Canadians made no effort to conceal the fact that an attack was coming, only the date was kept secret. Byng's opponent was the elderly commander of the German 6th Army, General Ludwig von Falkenhausen. Von Falkenhausen planned a rigid defense with three strong defense lines as had been used at the Somme.⁶⁵ In fact he intentionally refused to implement the new tactics of elastic defense that were being developed. Worse, he kept his reserves a full two-hour march away, assuming that he would have the time to react as had been the case in earlier battles.⁶⁶

64 Nicholson, p.251 and Goodspeed, p.84

65 Goodspeed, p.82

66 Macksey, p.79

At dusk on 8 April the guns fell silent and the Germans emerged from their dugouts to face the Canadian attackers, but none came. The Germans relaxed. The night grew cold and a sharp frost hardened the mud. At 5:30 am 9 April the barrage opened once more. The Canadian Corps, all four divisions together for the first time, rose out of the trenches under the cover of sleet and snow with the wind at their backs. The battle for Vimy Ridge, which von Falkenhausen did not expect for another week, had begun.

The divisions faced varying distances of 700 to 4000 yards determined by the geography of the hill as well as the strength of the fortifications facing them. The battle was to move in four phases through four corresponding lines of objectives. The soldiers would follow a shield of artillery shells, a creeping barrage, moving at 100 yard intervals to each objective.⁶⁷ The First, Second and Third Divisions reached each of their objectives and as the First and Second Divisions, having the furthest to go, crested the ridge the smoke was blown away as a fresh wind swept the summit. The sun broke through bathing the scene in bright golden light. The Canadians could see below them miles of fertile countryside, the trees turning green and red-roofed houses

⁶⁷ While the creeping barrage is often credited to the Canadians at Vimy (by Canadian authors) the French first used artillery in this way at Verdun. What can be argued, however, is that the Canadians, as they did with many innovations, took this innovation, perfected it and made it theirs.

untouched by the ravages of war. It is this moment that is most often romanticized by those who were there and by those who tell the story. Brigadier-General Alex Ross later described that moment, "It was Canada from the Atlantic to the Pacific on parade. I thought then...that in those few minutes I witnessed the birth of a nation."⁶⁸ F. F. Worthington, who had been in Canada for only nine days before enlisting in Montreal's Black Watch, remembered,

I never felt like a Canadian until Vimy. After that I was Canadian all the way. We had a feeling that we could not lose, and if the other Allies packed it up we could do the whole job ourselves.⁶⁹

Only the Fourth Division was unable to take their objective on schedule. They had the shortest distance to travel but they also faced the most imposing fortifications and a front honeycombed with tunnels that allowed the German defenders to counter attack their flanks and rear.

Victory remained elusive. On 11 April the German troops were ordered to withdraw to positions two miles east of the ridge but the Pimple, a high point on the ridge, was reinforced by the vaunted Prussian Guard Grenadiers. A final assault was launched by the Canadians at 5:00 am 12

⁶⁸ quoted in Cedric Jennings, *Canada in the First World War and the Road to Vimy Ridge*, (Ottawa: Veteran's Affairs Canada, 1992), p.12

⁶⁹ Worthington quoted in Herbert Fairlie Wood, *Vimy!* (Toronto: MacMillan of Canada, 1967), p.164

April. Within one hour the last portion of the ridge was taken at a cost of one half the attacking force. The commander of the assault signed his report "Lord Pimple".

The Canadians had succeeded where the great allies had failed. They had captured the key to the Arras sector and had liberated French land that would not fall again until 1940. They had captured 54 guns, 104 trench mortars, 124 machine guns and more than 4000 enemy troops.⁷⁰ This victory was purchased at a cost of some 10 000 Canadian casualties of which some 3500 were fatal.

The Canadians received much unrestrained congratulation and in most Canadian histories that has remained. Some, however, refer to the "wholesale enemy collapse" and point to the incompetence of von Falkenhausen.⁷¹ There is some value to these arguments but one need only look at the reactions of the Germans to judge how much the victory was a result of the Canadians. Crown Prince von Rupprecht said on the 10th of April "No one could have foreseen that the expected offensive would gain ground so quickly."⁷² Chief of Staff General Erich von Ludendorff, who celebrated his 52 birthday on 9 April, confessed to being "deeply depressed"

70 Nicholson, p.265

71 Macksey, p.93

72 Nicholson, p.263

by the loss of the ridge. Ludendorff was perhaps relieved to learn that his new defensive tactics had not failed, as he believed, but rather that von Falkenhausen had actually found them hard to understand and had not used them.⁷³

In the immediate aftermath of the battle von Falkenhausen was removed from active command and made military Governor of Belgium, Byng was promoted to an Army Command and Currie was promoted to lead the Canadian Corps. At last the Canadian forces were under a Canadian commander. Fittingly it was now the turn of the French to come to Vimy to study the tactics of the Canadians.

73 Goodspeed, p.92

CHAPTER THREE

The Introduction of the Vimy Myth, 1917-1919

The first detailed news of the action at Vimy Ridge reached Canadians on 10 April 1917, the day after the battle had begun. Newspapers across the country revised and printed the report of Canadian Press War Correspondent Stuart Lyon. The *Vancouver Sun* ran headlines screaming "Famous Ridge the Scene of Many Gory Battles Was Stormed and Carried by Warriors from Canada", "Historic Achievement of Canada's Soldiers was in Conformity with Past Record".⁷⁴ Immediate comparisons were made to the costly and ultimately disastrous French and British attempts to wrestle control of the ridge from the Germans. The *Halifax Herald* went so far as to print "Brilliant Canadian dash signal for armies left and right to advance", implying that the Canadians took the leading role in the Battle of Arras.⁷⁵ Even the dissident *Le Devoir* devoted much of the first page to translated versions of the news appearing in English-Canadian newspapers.⁷⁶

While some initial reports gave significant coverage to the British participation and the rest of the Battle of

74 *Vancouver Sun*, 10 April 1917, pg.1

75 *Halifax Herald*, 10 April 1917, pg.1

76 *Le Devoir*, 10 April 1917, pg.1

Arras, the Canadian aspect of the battle was quickly singled out for special coverage. The news for the next week was dominated by Lyon's reports from the ridge. Only in *Le Devoir* were subsequent reports relegated to the third or back pages of the paper.

It was in these first reports of the Battle of Vimy Ridge that the pattern for all further writing on the battle began to appear and evolve. While these reports could not go into the detail of later works, their contribution to the establishment of the pattern was in the creation of a frame of reference used to demonstrate Vimy's significance for the war and for Canadians. The key to the early development of the Vimy myth was comparison.

The most important point of reference developed out of an awareness of the previous failures by the French and British to take the ridge. Comparison to other countries, to Britain and to a lesser extent France as "founding" nations, had long been an important way for Canadians to identify themselves. In this battle Canadians found much to compare and much to be proud of.

While the earlier British and especially the French assaults on the ridge had taken place over many days or weeks, the Canadian attack was almost entirely successful in a few hours, with the consolidation of the entire ridge

being completed in four days. During those longer assaults Allied casualties had numbered in the hundreds of thousands. During the Canadian attack casualties were considered light at 10 000 for the assault and capture of the ridge. As the Battle of Arras played out, Vimy was to prove to be the only real success of the entire campaign and so was given even more significance. Finally, it became clear that Vimy was the greatest success, in terms of forward movement and military significance, for the Allies since the war had ground into stalemate in 1914.

The methods used to take the ridge were also crucial to comparisons of national achievement. On 11 April, the newspapers reported that the use of new tactics, used first by the French at Verdun and now by the British at Arras, was responsible for the victory.⁷⁷ Understandably little detail was given about these new tactics but the importance of artillery was stressed. These early reports quite rightly gave the credit for most of the new tactics to the French. As more detail on the tactics came out, however, the amount of credit given to the originators decreased. Canadian writers increasingly attributed the perfection if not the origination of the new tactics to the Canadian Corps. This "Canadianization" of the battle was a trend that would continue in the years to follow.

77 Vancouver Sun, 11 April 1917, pg.1

As the influence the United States had on Canada had grown Canadians had also begun to increasingly compare themselves to their neighbours to the south. In the case of Vimy, Canadians could cheerfully note that the *New York Tribune* wrote that "No praise of Canada's achievement could be excessive. The valour of the Canadian soldier shines with an unquenchable and undimmed brightness".⁷⁸ The *New York Tribune* article was widely quoted in the Canadian print media and Canadians were proud to hear that the Americans, just entering the war, were planning on using the Canadian successes as their model for action in the war.

Comparison to their allies was not the only kind of comparison the Canadians conducted. They also compared themselves to their German opponents. In this regard as the last section of the ridge, the Pimple, was captured the papers were able to report that the "flower of the Hun's army", the much vaunted Prussian Guards, were on the run.⁷⁹ Not only had the Canadians succeeded where their Great Power allies had failed, they had done so against some of the best troops in the German army. Canadians were pleased to hear that the Germans themselves seemed to recognize the quality of Canadian troops. A captured German intelligence report

78 quoted in *Saturday Night*, 21 April 1917, pg.1

79 *Vancouver Sun*, 13 April 1917, pg.1

dated a few days before the attack noted that "The Canadian troops are well suited to assaulting. There are no deserters to be found among the Canadians."⁸⁰ Much was made of this apparent German fear of Canadians. The print media reported with derision the German description of the action at Vimy Ridge as a strategic retreat.⁸¹

Comparison to others had demonstrated to Canadians that their accomplishment was impressive but how important had it been? The second element of the Vimy myth that was developed in this period was the military significance of the victory and of the ridge itself.

Although the attack on Vimy certainly succeeded in achieving its objectives, this was a war in which successful movement was measured in yards and in which major objectives were rarely achieved. Under such conditions a way of evaluating a battle that did not depend on the easily identifiable measures of success was needed. This method evolved around the notion of spoils of war and had quickly become a prominent means of highlighting the accomplishments of the boys from the Dominion.⁸²

80 Ibid., 16 April 1917, pg.1

81 *Saturday Night*, 21 April 1917, pg.1

82 In the terms of this paper the spoils of war refers to the number of enemy men and weapons captured.

In the case of Vimy Ridge the spoils were plentiful. In early newspaper reports the number of prisoners was stressed and was claimed to be one third of the total prisoners taken in the first days of the Battle of Arras.⁸³ Later reports noted that ranking officers and doctors were among those Germans captured.⁸⁴ By 12 April, after withstanding several counter-attacks and having consolidated the entire ridge, the number of German prisoners taken was reported to be 4000.⁸⁵

The number of captured machine-guns and artillery were also widely reported. As each day of the battle passed these numbers were updated to show the progress being made. This is not surprising as it is these two weapons that were considered largely responsible for the trench stalemate and which were the two leading causes of death among soldiers in the Great War.⁸⁶ Numbers took on even greater importance as it was argued that the new artillery techniques used by the

83 Vancouver *Sun*, 10 April 1917, pg.1

84 Halifax *Herald*, 11 April 1917, pg.1

85 Ibid., 12 April 1917, pg.1

86 Figures for the year 1916 demonstrate the importance of these weapons. Artillery and mortars accounted for 58.51% of casualties while bullets (machine guns, rifles, etc) accounted for 38.98% of casualties. While figures were not available, it has been established that of the casualties caused by bullets the majority were from machine guns. John Terraine, *The Smoke and the Fire: Myths and Anti-Myths of War 1861-1945*, (London: Sedgwick and Jackson 1980), p. 127

Canadians had solved the problem of entrenched warfare.⁸⁷

The final manner in which the military significance of Vimy was highlighted was the note taken of its tactical and strategic value. These reports explained why the French, and then the British, had expended so much effort in trying to take the ridge. This strategic importance was generally based on the ridge's geographic character.⁸⁸ The *Globe and Mail* reported on the situation describing that in the battle "Soldiers from Canada wrested from the idolized Hindenburg the hinge of his main line of defence in France."⁸⁹ With the capture of Vimy Ridge the Canadians had taken away an important vantage point from the enemy and had gained an equally valuable lookout for the Allies.

Almost two weeks after the battle had begun *Saturday Night* was able to write about the "Tangible Victory at Vimy Ridge".⁹⁰ This article presented a summary of the newspaper reports, putting together the early elements of the Vimy myth for the first time. It added that the tragedy of French casualties at the ridge was revenged by Canadians with tangible proofs of occupation, prisoners and captured

87 *Halifax Herald*, 11 April 1917, pg.1

88 The geographic position of the ridge is discussed in Chapter 2.

89 *Toronto Globe and Mail*, 11 April 1917, pg.1

90 *Saturday Night*, 21 April 1917, pg.1

armaments. This capitalized on the popularity of the Canadians in France following the capture of the ridge. The French newspapers had referred to the action as Canada's Easter Gift to France.⁹¹ In a letter home, dated 6 July 1917, Canadian soldier A. M. Munro wrote of the French, "They treat the Canadians fine. They almost worship us because of Vimy."⁹² It was no doubt heartening for Canadians to have their greatest moment of the war recognized as such by those to whom they compare themselves.

The recognition that the Canadians received from their allies ranged from praise in the press to congratulations from the British government, from the Governor General of Australia on behalf of the Commonwealth and most importantly from the King of England, George V:

The whole Empire will rejoice at the news of yesterday's successful operations. Canada will be proud that the taking of the coveted Vimy Ridge has fallen to the lot of her troops. I heartily congratulate you and all who have taken part in this splendid achievement.⁹³

The recognition of the Canadian success at Vimy Ridge

91 Desmond Morton and J. L. Granatstein, *Marching to Armageddon: Canadians and the Great War 1914-1919*, (Toronto: Lester & Orpen Dennys Ltd, 1989), p.143

92 *The First World War Letters of A.M. Munro*, Imperial War Museum, London, p.49

93 This message was delivered to the Commander-in-Chief of the British Armies in France, General Sir Douglas Haig. *The Canada Year Book 1936*, (Ottawa: King's Printer, 1936), p.59

did not stop with praise alone. Some sought to share in the Canadian success. In *The Battle of the Ridges: Arras-Messines March-June 1917*, the author complained that many already considered the taking of Vimy Ridge to be the Battle of Arras.⁹⁴ The author accepted that this was an important incident but argued that it was by no means the whole battle. He went on to remind readers that while, at various times, colonials (Canadians, Australians, etc.) had figured prominently in the operation of the British Army, English troops were naturally most numerous and had done their full share.⁹⁵

The Americans also got into the act with George Ralphson's *Over There With The Canadians At Vimy Ridge* published in 1919.⁹⁶ This novelette, part of the "Over There" series, had little to do with the Battle of Vimy Ridge except as an initial backdrop to the adventures of an American who fought along side the Canadians before he

94 Frank Fox, *The Battle of the Ridges Arras-Messines March-June 1917*, (London: C. Arthur Pearson Ltd., 1918), p.19

95 Ibid., p.105 This book appeared at a time when the British army was exhausted from the German Spring Offensive and when the fully rested and trained Canadian troops and the relatively rested Australian troops were naturally taking a leading role in the "Hundred Days" which led to the end of hostilities. It is not surprising that the British would seek to rejuvenate their reputation by seeking recognition of their part in what was still seen to be the greatest single battle victory in the war.

96 George Ralphson, *Over There with the Canadians at Vimy Ridge*, (Chicago: M. A. Donohue & Company, 1919)

embarked on a great spy adventure. The fact that Vimy was chosen as a locale or subject along with the frontispiece (a drawing of artillery in action with the caption "The Canadians were masterful fighters in the early stages of the war.") demonstrates the fame that the Battle of Vimy Ridge and the Canadian soldiers enjoyed internationally. Vimy Ridge was at this time a symbol strong enough to be co-opted or shared by both the British and the Americans.

In early reports, then, Canadians were told of the importance of the victory and given points of reference with which to gauge its significance. These told Canadians how important the victory had been in relation to the war and lay the groundwork for its importance for them nationally. It is to this growth of significance, beyond the boundaries of the war itself, that this study now turns.

The primary theme in newspaper reports on the Golden Jubilee of Canadian Confederation, 1 July 1917, was the story of the Fathers of Confederation. Most papers also discussed Canada's current situation and looked at how the young nation had grown since Confederation. The *Halifax Herald* pointed to statistics of progress, particularly industrial production, to demonstrate the growth of a modern nation.⁹⁷ This growth was tied to Canada's participation in

97 *Halifax Herald*, 2 July 1917, pg.3

the war which was also a common topic on that day. The *Vancouver Sun* noted that Canada's fiftieth anniversary was celebrated by a cannon salvo on the front-line. This was a message to the Germans, the paper reported, that the Canadians were fighting for democratic freedom.⁹⁸ The *Herald* related that Canada's growth and part in the war were proof of the participation Canada was destined to play in concert with her sister nations in promoting world peace.⁹⁹ *Le Devoir*, not surprisingly, was the one dissenting voice choosing to argue instead that Canada's participation in the war was endangering the future of Canada.¹⁰⁰

The editors of *Le Devoir*, in particular Henri Bourassa, had an important point to make. While Vimy Ridge had provided Canadians and the world with an example of what the young Dominion could accomplish, it coincided with a desperate increase in the need for men to replace those injured or killed at the front. Supporters of the use of conscription to fill this need were quick to use the Canadian reputation and history in the war to their advantage. The Military Service Council released a pamphlet in October 1917 that demanded conscription. "The blood shed by valiant Canadians at Ypres, Givenchy, Festubert and on

98 *Vancouver Sun*, 2 July 1917, pg.1

99 *Halifax Herald*, 3 July 1917, pg.1

100 *Le Devoir*, 2 July 1917, pg.1

the Somme, at Vimy Ridge and before Lens, will have been shed in vain if an inglorious peace is imposed upon Britain and her Allies and the German people are strengthened...."¹⁰¹ This was a powerful, emotional argument that made not only the obvious point of a waste of Canadian life but that also suggested that those opposed to conscription were helping to strengthen Germany. Originally written in French, L.G. Desjardins' *England, Canada and the Great War* found its purpose in "exerting patriotism against M. Bourassa's false and dangerous theories."¹⁰² It argued Britain had tried to avoid the outbreak of war and that Germany was responsible. It presented a point for point refutation of Bourassa's main arguments against large-scale participation in the war. The strength of the reaction among English Canadians to Bourassa's arguments was an indication of the growing rift that the war was creating among Canadians.

The victory at Vimy Ridge had a direct impact on Canada's role in the later stages of the war. Although the Canadian Corps had been formed just prior to the Battle of Vimy Ridge it was after the battle that the Corps came under Canadian military control with the leadership of the newly

101 Military Service Council, *For the Defence of Canada*, October 1917, p.17

102 L. G. Desjardins, *England, Canada and the Great War*, (Quebec: Chronicle Print, 1918), p.iii

knighted Sir Arthur Currie. It would be a disservice to the hard work of the Canadian Overseas Ministry to simplify the fight for control of Canadian troops in the war by suggesting that Canadian military talent was the only factor. The performance of Canadian troops in the First World War, however, can not be overemphasized in explaining the degree of influence Canadians achieved. This is evidenced by the fact that the minister responsible, Sir Edward Kemp, had a much more difficult struggle trying to gain authority over the Canadians in France working on railways and in forestry than over those Canadians directly a part of the Canadian Corps.¹⁰³

The end of the war and the Paris Peace Conference are key elements in the creation of significance for the Canadian war effort and in particular Vimy Ridge. The last hundred days of the war have been enshrined by Canadians as a time in which they formed the spearhead of the Allied advance and brought the long-stalemated war to a relatively rapid end. Simple statistics seem to back up this claim. During this period the Canadians and Australians certainly formed the vanguard of the advancing Allies. The Canadians experienced an unbroken string of successes, never failing to reach an assigned objective. During this time the

¹⁰³ Desmond Morton, *A Peculiar Kind of Politics: Canada's Overseas Ministry in the First World War*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1982), p.160

Canadians liberated 500 square miles encompassing 228 cities, towns and villages and met and defeated no less than 47 German divisions, nearly 1/4 of the divisions in the German Army.¹⁰⁴ The Canadians ended their dash to the east on 11 November 1918, the last day of the war, having reached the town of Mons, the precise location of the first action involving British troops in 1914.

By November 1918 Canadians were convinced that their participation had been "that of a nation defending its right to exist and not simply the contribution of a loyal colony to the war effort of a superior state."¹⁰⁵ During the war, prime minister Borden had made several celebrated demands for greater influence for Canada. In perhaps the most often reported, and probably over-stressed communique, Borden, angered by the lack of communication between Ottawa and London, wrote that

It can hardly be expected that we shall put 400 000 or 500 000 men in the field and willingly accept the position of having no more voice and receiving no more consideration than if we were toy automata. Any person cherishing such an expectation harbours an unfortunate and even dangerous delusion. Is this war being waged by the United Kingdom alone, or is it a war waged by the whole Empire? If I am correct in supposing that the second hypothesis must be accepted then

104 Lt-General Sir A. W. Currie G.C.M.G. K.C.B., Commanding Canadian Corps, *Canadian Corps Operations During the Year 1918, interim report*, (Ottawa: Issued by the Department of Militia and Defence)

105 J. W. Dafoe, "Canada and the Peace Conference of 1919", *Canadian Historical Review*, Vol 24 (3) 1943, p.236

why do the statesmen of the British Isles arrogate themselves solely the methods by which it will be carried on in the various spheres of warlike activity and the steps which shall be taken to assure victory and a lasting peace?¹⁰⁶

Another incident occurred when, convinced that the British leaders were not doing what was necessary, Borden commented that "The Americans are in earnest and they and Canada will unite to win the war unless some of the rest of you mend your ways."¹⁰⁷

Canada's increasing call for influence had not gone unnoticed. The report of the Imperial War Conference of 1917 had stated that any readjustment to the constitutional relations of the Empire

...should be based upon a full recognition of the Dominions as autonomous nations of an Imperial Commonwealth, ...should recognize the right of the Dominions and India to an adequate voice in foreign policy and in foreign relations, and should provide effective arrangements for continuous consultation in all important matters of common Imperial concern, and for such necessary concerted action, founded on consultation, as the several Governments may determine.¹⁰⁸

106 Robert Craig Brown, "Sir Robert Borden, the Great War and Anglo-Canadian Relations", in A. I. Silver ed. *An Introduction to Canadian History*, (Toronto: Canadian Scholar's Press, 1991), p.628-629 While Brown notes that Borden intercepted this message before it was delivered to the British he feels its content is consistent with Borden's attitude throughout the war.

107 Philip G. Wigley, *Canada and the Transition to Commonwealth: British-Canadian Relations 1917-1926*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), p.61 Borden delivered this message to the British at the Imperial War Conference, 13 June 1918.

108 Report of the Imperial War Conference, 1917 printed in Robert MacGregor Dawson, *The Development of Dominion Status, 1900-1936*, (London: Frank Cass & Co. Ltd., 1965),

While still falling short of full sovereignty this was a major step towards that independence and represented an important recognition of the new realities of Imperial relations. Canada made further significant gains on the road to independence at the Peace Conference although there is some controversy over the degree to which Borden had demanded separate representation.¹⁰⁹ The decision that the Dominions be given separate signatures was, however, not one that could be made simply between Britain and her Dominions. The other allies feared that separate signatures would really represent a powerful voting block for the British. The members of the Commonwealth fell short of full representation on the peace accord but their signatures, appearing separately as members of the British Empire, represented the international recognition of their change in status. The events of 1919 allowed prime minister Borden to report to the House of Commons on September 1919,

The same indomitable spirit which made her capable of that effort and sacrifice made her equally incapable of accepting at the Peace Conference, in the League of Nations, or elsewhere, a status inferior to that accorded to nations less advanced in their development, less amply endowed in wealth, resources, and population, no more complete in their sovereignty and far less conspicuous in their sacrifice.¹¹⁰

p.175

109 Fitzhardinge, p.169 Fitzhardinge claims that William Morris Hughes of Australia was the key figure in pushing for separate signatures and that Borden joined him reluctantly at the last minute.

110 Robert Borden, "The Treaty of Peace", Delivered to the

Though juridical independence was not to be granted until the passage of the Statute of Westminster in 1931 and even then was not always exerted in practice, Canada's place in world affairs in 1919 was different than it had been in 1914.¹¹¹ People's attitude towards foreign affairs had changed and this came as a direct result of Canada's participation in the Great War. Efforts had already been made to enshrine Ypres as the coming of age for Canada to explain this change, but in the years to follow the concentration of such efforts would shift to Vimy Ridge.

House of Commons 2 September, 1919, *Speeches on Canada and the War*, p.16

111 George Parkin de Twenebroker Glazebrook, *Canada and the Paris Peace Conference*, (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1992), p.127

CHAPTER FOUR

The Consolidation of the Vimy Myth, 1919-1936

Early Canadian works about the war were not reserved in their praise of Canada's role. The Battle of Second Ypres received considerable coverage as the battle in which the citizen soldier had first made good.¹¹² Praise for Vimy Ridge was also widespread. Vimy was described as the most perfectly organized and successful battle of the war and as one of the greatest feats in military history.¹¹³ These early works helped to consolidate the myth and added some important elements to it. The most important addition was the concentration now given to the period just prior to the battle and the extensive preparations carried out. This concentration helped to explain the success of the assault against the ridge but it also served to highlight the number of innovative techniques used and thus made the victory seem even more Canadian. For example, the Canadians were credited with the introduction and perfection of the trench raid.¹¹⁴ The role of the artillery continued to be singled

112 J. Castell Hopkins, *Canada at War: A Record of Heroism and Achievement 1914-1918*, (Toronto: The Canadian Annual Review Limited, 1919), p.135

113 Colonel George Nasmith, *Canada's Sons and Great Britain in the World War*, (Toronto: John C. Winston, 1919), p.298 and Sir Andrew Macphail, *Official History of the Canadian Forces in the Great War 1914-19: The Medical Services*, (Ottawa: F. A. Aclard, 1925), p.92

114 Alan Donnel, "The Canadians at Vimy Ridge", *Canada in the Great World War: An Authentic Account of the Military History of Canada from the Earliest Days to the Close of the*

out for special attention, in particular the development of new tactics and new technologies. One author attributed the keenness of the men in the raid to their knowledge of what was expected of them, another Canadian innovation.¹¹⁵ These authors continued to be influenced by the propaganda and the romance of war, however, as is demonstrated by a description of the Canadians "laughing" in the face of the enemy, nothing could hold them back.¹¹⁶ There was little variation among these works and an early example of what was to become a trend appeared in 1919 when one author dealt with Vimy Ridge in his survey of the war by printing excerpts of an earlier description.¹¹⁷

Another trend was foreshadowed in the first-hand account of Canadian Lieutenant R. Lewis. While this work did not contribute new information to the growing legend of Vimy Ridge, it was one of the earliest works to present the experience from the perspective of an individual involved in

War of the Nations Vol IV The Turn of the Tide, (Toronto: United Publishers of Canada, 1920), p.107 and F. A. McKenzie, *Canada's Day of Glory*, (Toronto: William Briggs, 1918), p.26

115 In the raid on Vimy Ridge the Canadians had taken the almost unprecedented course of action of providing maps and detailed objectives to all men as part of the intense preparations for the assault. McKenzie, *Canada's Day of Glory*, p.71

116 Ibid.

117 Hopkins, p.157 excerpts from F. A. McKenzie's *Canada's Day of Glory*

the assault.¹¹⁸ As such an account it could add little to the "big picture" but it shed some light on how the soldier fighting in his small area of the ridge saw the battle.¹¹⁹ Such personal anecdotes would become the prominent means of telling the story of Vimy Ridge.

Works written at this time were not, however, without controversy. Sir Arthur Currie wrote angrily to General Lord Horne complaining of the omissions in the draft of the British Official History that resulted in a serious down-playing of the Canadian role. Lord Horne reacted with no less temper and responded:

It is true that full credit perhaps is not given in the book to the work of the Canadian Corps, but that Corps is perhaps apt to take all the credit it can for everything, and to consider that the BEF consisted of the Canadian Corps and some other troops. ¹²⁰

This correspondence was typical of the fight that went on

118 Lieutenant R. Lewis, *Over the Top with the 25th: Chronicle of Events at Vimy Ridge and Courcellete*, (Halifax: H. H. Marshall Limited, 1918)

119 This early novel differed greatly from the later work of another Canadian Great War veteran Charles Yale Harrison. In *Generals Die in Bed*, Harrison describes life in the trenches in stark, horrifying detail and is extremely critical of how the war was fought. In contrast Lewis describes the heroic and good deaths/injuries of the soldiers and directs his hatred squarely at the enemy. The work of Lewis demonstrates greater continuity with the writing which preceded the Great War than the post-war trend to the critical and realistic war novel that is well represented by Harrison.

120 General Sir Lord Horne papers, Letter to Currie 27 March 1919, (Reference 10), The Imperial War Museum, London

between the authors of the official histories of Britain and Canada's war efforts. There were often conflicts on the significance of the Canadian role and the effectiveness of Canadian soldiers and their leaders.¹²¹

The most important of the new elements to the Vimy myth, however, was the argument that Canada had started the war a dependent Dominion but ended the war as a nation in a group still called and acting unitedly as the British Empire.¹²² While Max Aitken had brought up the idea of national transition after the Second Battle of Ypres and others had made similar claims during the Boer War, the close of the Great War and Canada's participation in the peace process seemed to lend weight to this argument. Early works recognized the reality of the continuation of Empire but later works would build on the idea of the birth of a national sentiment.

During the week before the fifth anniversary of the battle, newspapers prominently featured articles that detailed a period "When Canadian boys made history that is still gaining luster."¹²³ The battle was described as having definitely turned the tide in the face of Germany's

121 For a discussion of one such controversy see Timothy H. E. Travers, "Allies in Conflict: The British and Canadian Official Historians and the Real Story of Second Ypres (1915)", *Journal of Contemporary History*, 1989 (12).

122 Hopkins, p.334

123 *Toronto Globe and Mail*, 8 April 1922, p.17

best troops.¹²⁴ In Toronto celebrations were held that were attended by Lord Byng and Currie. Byng spoke of the esprit de corps that he experienced. Currie also took the opportunity to use the occasion as a platform to promote an issue near and dear to his heart. He argued that Canadians must allow the returned men to play a part in cherishing the ideals they fought for.¹²⁵ Currie was one of the first to use Vimy's anniversary and its symbolism to bring attention to another issue but he was not the only one. Although no mention of Vimy Ridge was made by Clifford Sifton in his call for full nationhood, it is probably no coincidence that this call was made on the eighth of April.¹²⁶

Four years later the prime minister, William Lyon Mackenzie King paraphrased Byng's statement that the nine provinces "had gone up the hill side by side, animated and united by a common ideal" in the House of Commons on the occasion of Vimy's anniversary.

Surely we in this Parliament will not find it difficult "to go up the hill together" in the solution of whatever problems may still remain in the perfecting of Confederation and the great idea and ideal of national unity it was intended to serve.¹²⁷

Vimy's status as a symbol of nationhood made it useful to

124 Ibid.

125 *Halifax Herald*, 10 April 1922, pg.1

126 *Toronto Globe and Mail*, 10 April 1922, pg 7

127 *Debates, House of Commons*, 1926, III, p.2355

politicians and others to use to promote their visions of Canada.

The tenth anniversary of Vimy Ridge received little attention in the daily newspapers and no attention in the national magazines with the exception of the new magazine of the Royal Canadian Legion, the *Legionary*. While the newspapers dealt only with brief stories on reunions of Vimy veterans, the *Legionary* excerpted a brief account of the battle in which the ridge was described as a "supposed impregnable position" suggesting that the Canadians had accomplished something previously believed to be impossible.¹²⁸

Dominion Day 1927 was celebrated by most papers with descriptions of the accomplishments of the Fathers of Confederation and some of the accomplishments of the Dominion itself. Among the major dailies only the *Globe and Mail* recalled Canada's "thrilling part in the Great War", quoting Currie on how effective the Canadians were and argued that this was a symbol of Canada's rising nationhood.¹²⁹ Not surprisingly *The Legionary* carried on the military subject with a picture on the front page of the area near Vimy. An article in the magazine recalled the

128 John Buchan, "The Battle of Arras", *Legionary*, 1 April 1927, p.5

129 *Toronto Globe and Mail*, 30 June 1927, p.27

Golden Jubilee of Confederation on Sunday 1 July, 1917. It was felt that the manifestation of heroism and loyalty by Canadians in the field was the most fitting way the Jubilee could have been celebrated.¹³⁰

Despite the recognition that Vimy was receiving in this period it still competed with the Battle of Second Ypres as the symbol of Canadian accomplishment during the war. In *A New History of Great Britain and Canada*, a textbook in use in British Columbia in the early thirties, the Canadian role in the war is set up with a description of their action at Ypres. From then on, the text continues, the Canadians were among the best troops on the Western Front and formed the spearhead in the last days of the war. A short glorious account of the war follows.¹³¹ Another textbook asked "What Canadian does not thrill with pride at the name Ypres!"¹³² In this textbook, Vimy Ridge did receive attention, and the conclusion of the author was that Canadians need fear no comparison in the Great War and that their pride in their achievements serves to strengthen their

130 *Legionary*, July 1927, p.5

131 W. Stewart Wallace, *A New History of Great Britain and Canada*, (Toronto: The MacMillan Company of Canada, 1929), p.195 The balance of the war was described in a series of "It was they (the Canadians) who..." comments. eg. It was they who stormed the Ridge at Vimy etc.

132 B. A. Garnell, *History of Canada*, (Toronto: W.J. Gage and Company, 1926), p.266

resolve to make her noble in times of peace.¹³³

Only the *Vancouver Sun* gave detailed coverage of Vimy's fifteenth anniversary. A description of the preparations and the battle conducted by the shock troops of the Allied armies was juxtapositioned with a note of how pride pushed back the grief of the soldiers' families' sense of loss.¹³⁴ Coverage in other papers was again limited to the noting of various reunion dinners. While such events demonstrated the continued relevance of Vimy to its participants, the Vimy myth did not seem to be spreading to the public at large. An issue of *Saturday Night* published on 9 April, the anniversary, spoke of Canada's treaty-making power and present freedom of action as the result of a long imperial evolution and traced the workings of the Imperial Conferences without mentioning the Great War.¹³⁵ It seems a glaring omission to neglect the environment in which the Conferences took place and the events that certainly affected the Dominions' ability to negotiate. *Maclean's*, however, remembered the war and continued its series "Thirteen Years After".¹³⁶ A large part of the article is

133 Ibid., p.274

134 *Vancouver Sun*, 9 April 1932, pg.1

135 *Saturday Night*, 9 April 1932, p.19

136 Will R. Bird, "Thirteen Years After", *Maclean's*, 1 April 1932, p.20 This was a series of articles comparing the battlefields of the Great War with the way they appeared in 1932. This issue dealt with Vimy Ridge. A physical description of the area is used as a springboard for

set in the present, however, detailing the progress and appearance of the Vimy memorial which is described as a heritage in stone comparable to "Flander's Fields" by McCrae.¹³⁷ The author feels that veterans will be glad they were "in on it" and that Canadians to follow will be proud to be Canadian.

Of the newspapers, only the *Halifax Herald* brought up the war in their articles on Dominion Day. This is perhaps not too surprising as the number of articles on Dominion Day in general had greatly diminished in the papers, sometimes to the point of exclusion. The *Herald* argued that Canadians had shown a singleness in purpose in marshalling the resources and manpower of the country behind the cause of Empire and Allies.¹³⁸ The war is used as both a symbol of national cohesiveness and ability, nothing is said of the threat to Confederation that the war, in the form of the conscription crisis and other divisions, presented to Canadians.

In the years following the war Canadian participation received a steadily declining presence in the country's

recollections of events at Vimy.

137 Bird describes the construction of the Vimy memorial in some detail and mentions the injuries encountered due to unexploded shells. *Ibid.*, pp.50-1

138 *Halifax Herald*, 1 July 1932, p.5

newspapers. One issue, however, the building of the Vimy Memorial, served to keep the sacrifice of their soldiers on the minds of Canadians.

The creation of permanent memorials had begun before the war ended. Their supporters felt that some monuments should be erected at the site of Canadian actions. In 1919, questions were raised in the Canadian House of Commons about reports in the newspapers that Vimy Ridge had been donated by the French Government to Canada. The government's response was that there was no official information received from France on this issue but they could say that France had dedicated the land where Canadian and other soldiers were buried as cemeteries in perpetuity.¹³⁹

In 1920 the government announced that eight sites in France, including Vimy Ridge, had been selected for the erection of monuments.¹⁴⁰ It also announced that the highest point of the ridge had been acquired from private owners for this purpose. In 1922, from the approximately 160 submissions considered by institutes of architects from Canada, Britain and Paris, the two-pillared design of Walter S. Allward was recommended to be placed at the height of

139 Canada, *Parliamentary Debates* (Commons), Second Session 1919, Vol. II, p.1058

140 Canada, *Parliamentary Debates* (Commons), 1920, Vol. II, p.1460

Vimy Ridge.¹⁴¹ The Battlefields Memorial Committee unanimously decided that the names of the missing be placed on the base of the large memorial.¹⁴²

With the building of the memorials proceeding and the decision to build the main memorial on the site of Vimy Ridge having been made, prime minister William Lyon Mackenzie King voiced a desire that a considerable tract of land along the ridge be acquired as a permanent memorial.

Whilst sculpture may do a great deal to commemorate the sacrifices of our men, Vimy itself is one of the world's great altars, on which a perceptible portion of our manhood has been sacrificed in the cause of the world's freedom.

As a national memorial nothing can equal the preservation of the ridge itself, if it can be acquired. I hope the commission will go just as far as it can in acquiring what to Canada will ever be consecrated and hallowed ground.¹⁴³

At the opening of the 1923 session in the House of Commons, the announcement that the government of France had made a gift of a tract of land on Vimy Ridge, consisting of 250 acres, to Canada fell appropriately to the Governor General of Canada, Sir Julian Lord Byng of Vimy. In the House, prime minister Mackenzie King described the text of the agreement with France and how it came about.¹⁴⁴ During

141 Canada, *Parliamentary Debates (Commons)*, 1922, Vol. III, pp.2098-2099

142 Ibid.

143 Ibid.

144 Canada, *Parliamentary Debates (Commons)*, 1923, Vol. I,

the interval between sessions the Speaker of the House, Rodolphe Lemieux, had been sent to France to negotiate for the acquisition of the land. King attributed the gift as much to the tact and diplomacy in international affairs of the Speaker as to the generosity of France.

The conditions of the donation were that the Government of Canada would erect a monument on the ridge to commemorate the memory of Canadian soldiers fallen on the field of honour in France during the war of 1914-1918. This monument would include the names of other units that fought at the ridge (presumably French and British). The government of Canada was to assume responsibility for the maintenance for the monument and the surrounding park.

King closed the resolution for the official acceptance of France's gift to Canada with a description of the significance of Vimy Ridge. In it he compared the bloodletting of the First World War to the crucifixion of Christ.

In the tragedy of the late war, it was not one life only, it was an appreciable portion of humanity, which was sacrificed for the sake of the larger freedom of mankind. History will look upon the battle-grounds of the Great War as the places of sacrifice. Among the number, no altar will be more conspicuous through the years than that of Vimy Ridge.¹⁴⁵

The resolution was met with resounding approval. Arthur Meighen, as Leader of the Opposition, stated that "The site of Vimy is, beyond comparison, of the various battlefields of the war, the most closely associated in the hearts of the Canadian people with all that the war involved in story and sacrifice."¹⁴⁶ The leader of the Progressives, Robert Forke, Ernest Lapointe (Minister of Marine and Fisheries), Vimy veteran R. J. Manion, W. S. Fielding (Minister of Finance) and J. G. Robichaud, representing Acadians, approved the motion with much talk of glory, freedom and sacrifice.¹⁴⁷ Some time later the House received a letter from French President Alexandre Millerand who indicated that he had read the debates with great emotion and said that he felt the ties between France and Canada were growing daily.¹⁴⁸

The construction of the Vimy memorial was brought up in the house on an annual basis from the time of its ground breaking to its completion. Each time the Parliament discussed the issue when covering the Memorials Fund in the national budget. The most common questions were repeated queries as to a completion date. The usual answer was to push back a previous estimate or to leave it at a vague time

146 Ibid., p.182

147 Ibid., p.182-184

148 Ibid., p.1538

in the future. The most important of the delays experienced was a problem with finding the proper quality granite.

Lemieux, who had been at the ridge in October 1929, reported to the House that such stone had been found in Yugoslavia and that the foundation was complete and the work on the pylons had begun.¹⁴⁹ He also noted that the Societe des Architects in France had admitted that it would be the most imposing memorial on the battlefields of Europe.¹⁵⁰ In 1932 the image of Vimy Ridge was invoked for the cause of unity during the Budget debates when it was noted that the soldiers had died side by side and that their "ashes" are mingled. "Let us forget our differences and our children will be proud of their fathers".¹⁵¹

In 1931 the Imperial Graves Commission published the *Introduction to the Register of the Vimy Memorial*. This pamphlet explained the memorial's role as being the chief witness of the Canadian share in effort and sacrifice, first of all a National Memorial and second as a memorial to the Canadian dead in France with no known grave. The pamphlet argued that the list of Canada's honours, beginning with her 62 Victoria Crosses won during the war, gained her an

149 Canada, *Parliamentary Debates* (Commons), 1929, Vol. III, p.3612

150 Ibid.

151 Canada, *Parliamentary Debates* (Commons), 1932, Vol. II, pg.2228

undisputed place of her own in the final councils of the Allies. Vimy familiarized the world with the qualities of a nation hardly known to Europe and gave Canada a strengthened national consciousness and memory of a supremely great common effort.¹⁵²

In the years leading up to the unveiling of the Vimy Ridge Memorial in 1936 there was no shortage of works praising the Canadian role. In 1934 David Lloyd George published his war memoirs. Despite having earlier attributed the capture of Vimy Ridge to the British he went on to describe the Canadians in very complimentary terms. About 1916 Lloyd George wrote,

In that month the Canadians entered the Somme Battle, where they played a part of such distinction that thence forward they were marked as stormtroops, and for the remainder of the War they were brought along to head the assault in one great battle after another. Whence the Germans found the Canadian Corps coming into the line, they prepared for the worst.¹⁵³

This quote was soon to become a favorite of Canadian historians. Lloyd George went on to say of Vimy Ridge that there was "no finer display of resistless intrepidity in the whole War".¹⁵⁴ A former senior Chaplain of the First

152 Imperial War Graves Commission, *Introduction to the Register of the Vimy Memorial*, (London: Imperial War Graves Commission, 1931), p.13

153 David Lloyd George, *War Memoirs of David Lloyd George Volume VI*, (London: Ivor Nicholson & Watson, 1934), p.3367

154 Ibid.

Canadian Division, George Frederick Scott continued the praise in his *The Great War as I Saw it*. Scott wrote that 9 April was a day that would always shine brightly in the annals of war, the Canadians drunk of victory and glory that night.¹⁵⁵ Scott was certainly not one to follow the trend of the realistic war novel.

In 1934 the House of Commons was told that completion of the memorial was expected for the end of 1935. Delays were again encountered but by 1935 those responsible for the monument were confident that it would be complete in time for a pilgrimage to the ridge to take place in the summer of 1936. In 1935 the Royal Canadian Legion published a pamphlet "Official Pilgrimage to Vimy and the Battlefields June-July 1936".¹⁵⁶ The first intention of the pilgrimage, according to this pamphlet, was to be there at the unveiling to honour those who made the extreme sacrifice. The pilgrimage was also to impress on the rising generation the glorious efforts made by Canada and the British Empire in the Great War and, at the same time, bring home the appalling tragedy.

155 Frederick George Scott, *The Great War as I Saw It 2nd ed*, (Vancouver: The Clarke & Stuart Co. Limited, 1934), p.167, 172

156 Canadian Legion, *Official Pilgrimage to Vimy and the Battlefields June-July 1936*, (Ottawa: The Canadian Legion, 1935)

While the pilgrimage was planned to be a great event, the prime minister of Canada would not be in attendance. In his diary King wrote that he did not want to be absent from Canada two years in succession nor did he want too many ministers overseas. Further, he had not been in the war and preferred that the participating ministers be those who had represented Canada during the war.¹⁵⁷

At least two publications appeared describing the events during the pilgrimage. The *Legionary* produced an impressive souvenir book *The Epic of Vimy* while a local work *The Vimy Pilgrimage July 1936* was published in North Vancouver. The pilgrimage began with an eighteen coach special train leaving Vancouver 12 July being met with band music at each stop across British Columbia. On 16 July thirteen special trains arrived in Montreal and five specially-chartered liners left for Europe.¹⁵⁸ As the ships sailed down the St. Lawrence and past Quebec City the guns at the Quebec citadel were fired in salute, fireworks rose into the sky and

157 Public Archives of Canada, *W. L. Mackenzie King Papers*, MG 26 J13, p.186, 7 May 1936. King was recording a conversation with the Minister of Defence, Ian Alistar Mackenzie. King was upset that the Defence Department seemed to ignore his part in securing the memorial. The issue of Lord Byng's role at Vimy was not raised and King recorded, "I said and thought nothing of the Byng association, and indeed will suggest a special invitation to Lady Byng."

158 Herb Morden, *The Vimy Pilgrimage July 1936*, (North Vancouver: North Shore Press Limited, 1936), p.12-15 and *Legionary*, April 1937, pp.12-13

smaller vessels circled.¹⁵⁹

For the ceremonies a large crowd made up of soldiers, pilgrims, civilians and dignitaries surrounded the monument. Among the dignitaries were the widows of Lord Byng of Vimy and General Sir Arthur Currie. Ex-prime minister Sir Robert Borden was in attendance as were representatives from Great Britain, France, the United States, Poland, Japan and Italy and a large number of French citizens from the surrounding area.¹⁶⁰ The service was broadcast live on radio to Canada and around the world.

After reviewing the guard of honour from *H.M.C.S. Saguenay* King Edward dedicated the memorial. Following the King's speech the French President, Albert Lebrun, addressed the crowd. Major C. G. Power, Minister of Pensions and National Health and a Vimy veteran, then read the prime minister's message. The message called upon the nations of Europe to avoid war for "'A world at peace', Canada believes, is the only memorial worthy of the valour and the sacrifice of all who gave their lives in the Great War".¹⁶¹

¹⁵⁹ Morden, p.18

¹⁶⁰ J. Castell Hopkins, *The Canadian Annual Review of Public Affairs 1935 and 1936*, (Toronto: The Canadian Review Company, Limited 1936), p.187

¹⁶¹ quoted in Hopkins, *The Canadian Annual Review of Public Affairs 1935 and 1936*, p.189-190 King had wanted to give his address live over the radio or at the very least have sent it on a record but was unable to do so. Consequently, he was very upset as he believed that Power

This sentiment of peace was echoed by other dignitaries who gave short speeches.

In the days following the ceremony the pilgrims were invited to other events, such as a dinner at Les Invalides hosted by French veterans. The highlight of these events was a Garden Party at Buckingham Palace.¹⁶² The event was largely commemorated with the issuing of Vimy stamps, buttons, a medal by the government of France and a medal by the Canadian Legion.¹⁶³

The unveiling of the memorial seemed to bring Vimy back to the forefront of Canadian awareness. The *Legionary* recalled a "Vimy Memory", an article describing the pilgrimage of the year before. Advertisements in the *Legionary* announced a first anniversary shipping tour to visit Vimy Ridge and that the *Epic of Vimy*, the *Legionary's* chronicle of the pilgrimage had sold out its 3000 copies of the first edition and most of the 2000 copies of the second printing. An article likened Vimy to Agincourt where 15 000 English soldiers had defeated 50 000 Frenchmen. Those

had not read his message with enough sympathy, and had made his prayer almost a curse. King would later come to suspect that he had been the victim of a deliberate double-crossing by the Defence Department. PAC, MG 26 J13, pp.262-264, 26 and 27 July 1936.

162 Hopkins, *The Canadian Annual Review of Public Affairs 1935 and 1936*, p.190

163 Morden, p.30

soldiers' reputation was not built as a class but as a nation. Since Vimy, the article continued, there had been a quickening of national consciences in Canada and a new sense of individuality among Canadians as a people.¹⁶⁴

Coverage had returned to the papers but it was still limited to announcing the unveiling of memorials and anniversary dinner and dances being held in communities across Canada. The *Globe and Mail*, however, spoke to the significance of Vimy arguing that it was second only to the Armistice in the calendar of remembrance.¹⁶⁵ The monument at Vimy, it was argued in some papers, symbolized the unity of Canada.¹⁶⁶ While most discussion of Vimy was focused on remembrance and on its symbolic value to Canada one speech warned of the danger of another war in Europe. The speaker argued that the same things were worth fighting for at this time as they had been at the time of Vimy. The veterans, friends and families were told that they had to be ready to fight for their own defense; they could not seek shelter behind the Monroe Doctrine. Britain and Canada must again go to war or they will see the dissolution of the Empire.¹⁶⁷

164 *Legionary*, April 1937, p.25

165 *Toronto Globe and Mail*, 9 April 1937, p.18

166 *Ibid.*, and *Winnipeg Free Press*, 10 April 1937, p.3

167 Major M. A. MacPherson at a Vimy Reunion Dinner, *Winnipeg Free Press*, 10 April 1937, p.1

July saw no such bleak warnings of the storm to come but the military was more in view than in other years. Maclean's published pictures covering the seventy years of Canadian history including a picture of Sir Arthur Currie taking the salute on a bridge across the Rhine river in Germany on December 13, 1918, a powerful symbol of Canada's victorious role in the Great War.¹⁶⁸ The *Legionary* advertised the premier of the film *Salute to Valour*. This film was a demonstration of the spirit of patriotism from the war and the goodwill towards all nations brought on by the pilgrimage.¹⁶⁹ The *Vancouver Sun* was less respectful of the military heritage of Canada when it announced that there would be a Veteran's parade on Dominion Day with "the usual military tributes to the dead".¹⁷⁰

The great monument at Vimy Ridge was never meant to just memorialize the battle but was rather to be the main Canadian memorial for the entire war and for all her missing dead. It is not surprising, then, that the Vimy myth would become more concrete because of the unveiling. So it seems, by 1937, Vimy had largely won the struggle with the Second Ypres and had come to symbolize the Canadian war experience.¹⁷¹ Key to this consolidation of the Great War

168 Maclean's, July 1937, pg.29

169 *Legionary*, July 1937, p.13

170 *Vancouver Sun*, 2 July 1937, p.1

171 Textbooks did, in some cases, continue to present an

experience around Vimy was the idea that Vimy had caused the birth of a nation. One Vimy veteran, however, when asked whether he had a sense of Canada becoming a nation at the time of the battle, responded that that impression did not hit home until the unveiling of the memorial in 1936.¹⁷²

exception as they still described the courage and endurance of Ypres where the Canadians proved they were equal to the seasoned British regulars. They now also recognized Vimy as one of the finest achievements of the war, however. Duncan McArthur, *History of Canada for High Schools rev. ed.*, (Toronto: W.J. Gage and Company, 1938), p.469, 470

¹⁷² Perce Lamont in *A Vimy Vet Remembers*, a film by the War Amps of Canada, 23 February 1987.

CHAPTER FIVE

The Vimy Myth and National Identity, 1942-1967

9 April 1942 marked the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Battle of Vimy Ridge but now the ridge was back in the hands of the Germans and there was no front from which the Canadians could launch a similar assault. Given this situation it is surprising how rarely the symbolism of Vimy Ridge was called upon. The *Legionary*, as always, provided the best and clearest example of the use of Vimy's symbolism. A headline read "Remember Vimy!"¹⁷³ That moment was "great as a century" in the history of Canada, the article stated, but now the pals who "went west" slept in enemy-held soil. The author continued to say he knew Vimy could be retaken, but only by an all out effort and total support to the cause. He called on Canadians to remember Vimy when they went to the polls on 27 April to vote in the conscription plebiscite. Now, twenty-five years later, Vimy seemed to have been brought once more into the maelstrom of the conscription crisis; a symbol of Canadian unity and accomplishment in the midst of disunity and dangerous division.

In the papers the anniversary of Vimy Ridge was sometimes used to relate to the current military situation.

173 *Legionary*, April 1942, p.17

It was noted that the First Canadian Army had been inaugurated almost twenty-five years to the day from the Battle of Vimy Ridge (it was just before that battle that the Canadian Corps had been formed during the Great War).¹⁷⁴ The *Halifax Herald* noted that McNaughton's men would fight with the same courage and resolve as the Canadians under Byng.¹⁷⁵ The Vimy Lesson was well learned. Vimy was a Canadian show that revealed the ingenuity, resourcefulness, and superb fighting qualities that the Canadians possess.¹⁷⁶ Some notice of Vimy banquets and reunions appeared and a few days later the American consul-general was quoted as having said that if it was not for the Canadians, the Germans would be masters of the world today.¹⁷⁷ Another speaker argued that Canadians would again demonstrate that its army was second to none in the world and that they would take Vimy again.¹⁷⁸

The *Vancouver Sun* was one of the few to make any mention of the military in connection with Canada's seventy-fifth

174 *Halifax Herald*, 7 April 1942, p.1, 4 and *Winnipeg Free Press*, 6 April 1942, pg.1

175 *Halifax Herald*, 9 April 1942, p.6 Andrew McNaughton, a Lieutenant-Colonel in the Canadian Artillery in the Great War, was one of the key figures in the victory at Vimy Ridge and now commanded the Canadian Army in England.

176 *Halifax Herald*, 9 April 1942, p.6

177 *Winnipeg Free Press*, 13 April 1942, pg. 3

178 *Ibid.*, F. J. A. Orchard, President of the Valour Road branch to a Vimy reunion.

anniversary and this was only to note that 29 June to 5 July was Army Week.¹⁷⁹ From this, however, it is certain that, outside of the printed media, celebrations were being made of Canada's military role. It is important to note that Canada's most recent and largest action in the war, the Dieppe Raid, had occurred in June. After years of relative inaction the Canadian Forces had finally been given an opportunity to face the Germans. Unfortunately this raid was a terrible disaster and, while heralded at the time as a great learning experience for the invasion to come, it is certain that Canadian morale was affected. *Maclean's* was the only other printed media to bring up Canada's war effort in an article that recognized that Canada had come out of the Great War with the status of a nation, recognized by the nations of the world.¹⁸⁰ This article, however, brought up the conscription crisis of 1917, a recognition that for Canada the military experience was not simply a unifying force but also a dividing one.

In the years immediately following the Second World War the Battle of Vimy Ridge seems to be overshadowed by the horrific events of this latest war. Vimy disappears from most newspapers during this period but when it is brought up its description and myth have survived the war and remained

179 Vancouver Sun, 29 June 1942, pg.1

180 *Maclean's*, 1 July 1942, pg.6

constant. The *Legionary* described April as a Month of Memories but only provided an edited, near verbatim version of the article that appeared in the 1942 edition minus, of course, the call for increased commitment to the war effort and for conscription.¹⁸¹ The use of this editorial article is the most concrete evidence of how the story and significance of Vimy Ridge appears to become codified especially in the *Legionary* and consequently among veterans. In *Saturday Night*, W. W. Murray, a *Legionary* writer and author of the *Epic of Vimy*, stated that on 9 April 1917 Canada gave a perfect demonstration of what a united Canada could achieve.¹⁸² Murray stressed the potency of the Canadian Corps as a fighting force and the "legendary" ingenuity of the Canadians in the development of trench raiding. Adding to the myth, he noted that there had been reports between 1940 and 1944 that the Germans had profaned the monument on Vimy Ridge but these reports proved to be untrue. He seemed to be hinting that even the Germans, the defeated enemy at Vimy, respected the accomplishment. The *Winnipeg Free Press* took up the story of the monument during the war and reported that the veterans of Vimy Ridge and the sons of Vimy veterans serving in France during the liberation were taken to the monument for a ceremony before being returned to their units.¹⁸³

181 *Legionary*, April 1947, pg.27

182 *Saturday Night*, 5 April 1947, pg.14

183 *Winnipeg Free Press*, 11 April 1947, pg.4

The concept of Canada becoming a nation had, by this time, become the key element of the Vimy myth. Related to this element was the image of a strong, united Canada. Lord Byng of Vimy is quoted in *Up the Stream of Time*:

There they stood on Vimy Ridge that ninth day of April, 1917, men from Quebec shoulder to shoulder to men from Ontario; men from the maritimes with men from British Columbia and there was forged a nation, tempered by the fires of sacrifice and hammered on the anvil of high adventure.¹⁸⁴

The national symbolism was also stressed in the high-school textbook *Canada: A Political and Social History*. Vimy occupies a uniquely symbolic place in Canadian military annals, argued the author, and Canada's participation added emphasis to changes in imperial relations and the need to define new relationships in precise terms.¹⁸⁵ On those relationships he felt that the common war effort had increased imperial unity but the Canadians' pride in their achievement increased their nationalist outlook and aspirations.¹⁸⁶ "Canadian Firsts" were central to another

184 Viscountess Byng of Vimy, *Up the Stream of Time*, (Toronto: The MacMillan Company of Canada Limited, 1946), p.118

185 Edgar McInnis, *Canada: A Political and Social History*, (Toronto: Clarke, Irwin & Company, Ltd, 1974 (1947)), p.415

186 This textbook continued to be used in British Columbia for a considerable period and was even reprinted in 1974 almost thirty years after its initial publication. This effectively demonstrates the lack of change in the way Vimy Ridge is taught in Canadian schools.

text that used Canadian innovations during the war to demonstrate the importance and lasting impact of the Canadian participation in the Great War.¹⁸⁷

The foreword of the first biography of General Sir Arthur Currie also made much of the national character of Canadian participation. It was in the Great War that Canada had found her consciousness, found herself, and found her secure place in the great world. There her title deeds to the future were written.¹⁸⁸ While the role of Vimy was a highlight in this work, in a high-school textbook published the same year, Vimy did not even rate a direct mention. In the Great War section of this rather juvenile work the British prime minister is quoted as having spoken of the Canadian soldiers in 1915 as having "held high the honour of Canada, and saved the British Army" in their defense of the Ypres salient.¹⁸⁹ This section is very short and Ypres was

187 Arthur G. Dorland, *Our Canada*, (Vancouver: The Copp Clark Publishing Company Limited, 1949), p.393-396 As with other authors, some of the "Canadian firsts" were merely things that the Canadians had made their own through proficiency in that particular area (ie. trench raids). This text, like that of McInnis, enjoyed a long life and continued to be used into the 1950's.

188 Field Marshall the Right Honourable J. C. Smuts in Hugh A. Urquart's *Arthur Currie: The Biography of a Great Canadian*, (Vancouver: J. M. Dent & Sons (Canada) Limited, 1950), p.xiii

189 George W. Brown, et al., *The Story of Canada*, (Boston: DC Heath and Company, 1950), p.345

the only battle specifically mentioned.¹⁹⁰

The *Legionary* was almost alone in noting the Vimy anniversary in 1952. In an article entitled "A Proud Memory: The Battle of Vimy Ridge April 1917" Vimy was described as one of the most striking triumphs in military history.¹⁹¹ The July issue was the only one to mention the military past in connection with Canada's birthday. In this case it was billed as a July Memory with a pictorial and written recollection of the July pilgrimage to Vimy Ridge on 26 July 1936.¹⁹² The *Winnipeg Free Press* was the only paper to mention Vimy's anniversary. No longer appearing on the front page, notice of the annual Vimy dinner and Canadian Corps reunion was relegated to the third page. In this article the occasion was used to warn Canada to stay with the Commonwealth as Communism was looking for chinks in the armour of democracy.¹⁹³ While the descriptions of the battle remain essentially static, the manner in which it is used as a symbol continues to shift to suit current needs.

190 While Vimy seemed to have successfully supplanted Ypres as the symbol of the Canadian effort in the Great War, it is certainly not the case in this work. This can perhaps be explained by the fact that although this textbook was used in British Columbian high-schools it was published in Boston, Massachusetts.

191 *Legionary*, April 1952, p.6

192 *Legionary*, July 1952, cover and pg.3,5

193 *Winnipeg Free Press*, 9 April 1952, pg.3

The anniversary in 1957 demonstrated once again the decrease in attention being given to the anniversary. Even the *Legionary* made little of the moment providing only a cover picture, with the caption Canada on Vimy Ridge - A Proud April Memory, and a small article which contained the assertion that it was on the ridge that Canada's nationhood was founded.¹⁹⁴ The *Halifax Herald* was the only paper to report on the anniversary, noting that a model of the ridge, including the memorial, was on display the day of the anniversary.¹⁹⁵ In a description of the battle, the *Herald* followed the usual pattern closely but also made special note of the fact that the ridge was the only part of the line that did not yield to the Germans during their March Offensive of 1918.¹⁹⁶ This suggested to the reader that the achievement of the Canadians was irreversible and thus even more significant.

The 1960's was a period best known for its peace movements but, with the Canadian Centennial fast approaching, it was also a period that witnessed an increase in works on Canada's coming of age. Canada's military history was central to many of these works, particularly the history of the Great War. Gaddis George Smith, argued that

194 *Legionary*, April 1957, cover and pg.2

195 *Halifax Herald*, 9 April 1957, pg.13

196 *Halifax Herald*, 10 April 1957, p.7

the Great War accelerated the process by which Canadian assumed full control of her external affairs.¹⁹⁷ Canada had entered the war trying to reconcile the principles of encouraging national self-reliance with loyalty to the British Empire. He identifies May 1917 as the high point of Canada's growth. Canada had had its greatest moment of military glory the preceding month in Vimy Ridge and Canadian factories had all the business they could handle. Canada was proving itself on the battlefield as well as in the war councils. For Smith, the First World War was an annealing furnace hardening and strengthening elements of Canadian national consciousness which had been present for decades.¹⁹⁸

Two works which appeared at the beginning of the decade presented slightly different but complementary interpretations of Canadian military history and Vimy's significance in particular. A text book that is still in use today, Ralph Allen's *Ordeal by Fire: Canada 1910-1945*, argued that Canadian nationhood had been half won by 1910 and that the rest was within grasp before the war started.¹⁹⁹ Of Vimy Ridge, however, he argues that on that

197 Gaddis George Smith, *Nation and Empire: Canadian Diplomacy During the First World War*, (Dissertation: Yale University, PhD 1960 (1969)), p. iii

198 Ibid., p.350

199 Ralph Allen, *Ordeal by Fire: Canada 1910-1945*, (Toronto: Doubleday of Canada Limited, 1961), p.1

historic day Canada had learned, to its great pride and dismay, that it had become an important factor in the destiny of nations.²⁰⁰ George F. G. Stanley was straightforward in his lament that Canadians did not know more about the Canadian Corps' participation in the Great War and felt that this

...is a commentary upon our sense of inferiority, our lack of pride in our national achievements, and our failure to appreciate history as a road map through the treacherous and rugged terrain of world politics and war.²⁰¹

Both he and Allen agreed that the battle at Vimy Ridge "may not have not have been the hardest fought or most strategically significant of the war" as the Germans had prepared for withdrawal and it was thus "not a complete victory".²⁰² They both recognized, however, that it was important to Canada as it was the first exclusively Canadian victory. At the end of the war the strongest arguments by Borden for international recognition of Canada's status as an autonomous member of the British Empire came from Canada's successful assertion of military autonomy combined with her brilliant fighting record during the war. Stanley wrote,

200 Ibid., p.142,144

201 George F. Stanley, *Canada's Soldiers: The Military History of an Unmilitary People* rev. ed., (Toronto: The MacMillan Company of Canada Limited, 1960), p.315

202 Stanley, p.322 and Allen, p.146

The soldiers, no less than the politicians, had confidence in Canada as a distinctive nationality; the soldiers no less than the politicians helped remove the remaining vestiges of subordination.²⁰³

Donald Creighton described the decision of Canada to enter the Great War as a deliberate national decision that was more of an expression of an awakening national consciousness than it was an expression of Imperial loyalty.²⁰⁴ For Creighton the experience of the war was a series of battles promoting Canadian independence which represented the near culmination of Canada's evolution to nationhood. He described the immediate post-war period as being one in which Canada had grown the last inches into maturity and was suddenly confronted with the burdens and distractions of its new state.

Despite the laments of authors like Stanley, and the importance the Great War is given by historians like Creighton, the distance from war seems to have had a profound impact by 1962. There is virtually no mention of Vimy Ridge on this anniversary. Even the *Legionary* limited their coverage to a painting of the battle on its cover.²⁰⁵ In Vancouver, Vimy vets were invited to a memorial service

203 Stanley, p.315

204 Donald Creighton, *Dominion of the North: A History of Canada*, (Toronto: The MacMillan Company of Canada Limited, 1962), p.400, 445

205 *Legionary*, April 1962, cover

for a minister who had been ordained on the battlefield and who had held an annual Vimy Service at Renfrew United Church for the past ten years.²⁰⁶ The death of such a figure demonstrated the problem the Vimy myth faced as the ranks of the Vimy veterans were thinned. As the veterans died so to did the impetus to remember. The lack of coverage was soon to change, however, as the occasion of Canada's Centennial and Vimy's Fiftieth Anniversary approached.

In 1964 an official history of the Great War appeared. While it provided some judgments on the battle of Vimy Ridge, noting for example that the facing Germans had been inefficient, it dutifully used the elements of the Vimy myth to provide the battle with significance.²⁰⁷ Focusing these efforts on the element of comparison it noted that at Vimy more guns, prisoners and ground was taken than in any other British offensive. Comparing Vimy to all of military history, the author, G. W. L. Nicholson, described the battle as remaining a classic example of the deliberate attack against strong, prepared positions. The strongest element, however, is the national character of the myth. Nicholson notes that the men who had fought, had fought not as Maritimers, British Columbians or Ontarians or Quebecois

206 Vancouver Sun, 8 April 1962 p.12

207 Colonel G. W. L. Nicholson, *Canadian Expeditionary Force 1914-1918: Official History of the Canadian Army in the First World War*, (Ottawa: Queen's Printer and Controller of Stationary, 1964), p.266, 267, 535

but as Canadians. They returned with a pride of nationhood they had not known before.

Many works published in 1965 seemed to be in general agreement about the development of Canadian nationhood and the Great War.²⁰⁸ While the emphasis on the war varied somewhat, all recognized that, at the very least, the Great War had immensely quickened and sharpened the process. William Kilbourn felt that the Great War had brought the end of Canada's colonial childhood and had given her a new self-confidence and had led to Canada's new role in world affairs.²⁰⁹ He recognized, however, that the nationalism born of war had an ugly face demonstrated by the attitudes towards immigrants and the francophones of Quebec.²¹⁰ The divisiveness of this nationalism had a profound effect on the development of Vimy Ridge as a Canadian symbol.

The recognition of the importance of Great War

208 J. M. S. Careless, *Canada: A Story of Challenge*, (Toronto: MacMillan of Canada, 1965), p.328, Robert MacGregor Dawson, *The Development of Dominion Status, 1900-1936*, (London: Frank Cass & Co. Ltd., 1965 (1937)), p.4, Albert M. J. Hyatt, *The Military Career of Sir Arthur Currie*, (PhD Thesis Duke University 1965), p.iii Here Hyatt refers to the consensus on the impact of Great War participation on Canadian nationhood among historians. W. L. Morton, *The Canadian Identity*, (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1965), p.51

209 William Kilbourn, *The Making of a Nation: A Century of Challenge*, (Toronto: The Canadian Centennial Publishing Company Limited, 1965), p.50

210 Ibid.

participation was strongly stressed in the next few years with the appearance of several works on Canadian Great War history and on Vimy in particular. Larry Worthington established significance and stressed Canadian innovations using the elements of the Vimy myth to tell a story rather than to provide a strict military history.²¹¹ British author Kenneth Macksey also presented a collection of personal accounts to tell the story of Vimy Ridge but he also took the opportunity to remark about the significance of the victory. Canada had raised herself an army which could fight alongside the best in the world and win. She had come of age as a nation. Her prestige was now immense and she could move towards a vastly greater political freedom, carried forward by the prowess of her sons.²¹² While most accounts of the Battle mention that Currie went to study the tactics of the French at Verdun, Canadian military historian John Swettenham added to the Vimy myth by being the first to note that after the battle at Vimy the French came to study the tactics of the Canadians.²¹³

Alexander Mckee, the author of *The Battle of Vimy Ridge*,

211 Larry Worthington, *Amid the Guns Below: The Story of the Canadian Corps (1914-1919)*, (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart Limited, 1965), p.xi, 69-72

212 Kenneth Macksey, *The Shadow of Vimy Ridge*, (London: William Kimber and Co. Ltd., 1965), p.80

213 John Swettenham, *To Seize the Victory: The Canadian Corps in World War I*, (Toronto: The Reyerson Press, 1965), p.161

also chose to rely heavily on first-hand accounts to describe the battle and its significance. Mckee argued that far from being disorderly and unsoldierly the Canadians were marked by a grim thoroughness; nothing but the best results were acceptable to the Canadian Corps.²¹⁴ Other authors had long suggested that the soldiers of the Canadian Corps were the equals of or superior to the British regular soldiers and Mckee suggested that this was because there were fewer class divisions in the Corps and the Canadians did not need an officer there to tell them what to do.²¹⁵ Mckee, like others, noted that British and French official histories saw Vimy as a limited success but he recognized that for Canadians it was something special. For Canadians, Vimy symbolized the point at which Canada went from colony to nation but unfortunately, according to Mckee, the achievement of Vimy Ridge was lost in the general revulsion against the Great War.²¹⁶

In the years leading up to the Canadian Centennial, authors on national development continued to stress the impact of the Great War. For one such author Canada was not

214 Alexander McKee, *The Battle of Vimy Ridge*, (New York: Stein and Day, Publishers, 1966), p.27

215 Ibid., p.232-233 Mckee is joined in this explanation by other Vimy historians, in particular by F. F. Worthington, introduction to Herbert Fairlie Wood, *Vimy!* (Toronto: MacMillan of Canada, 1967), p.5 and by Wood himself, pp.42-3

216 Ibid., p.227

a sovereign state before the war, but a unit within an empire, though grown beyond any known meaning of the word colony.²¹⁷ This changed with the hundreds of thousands who came back and those who didn't from the fields in France. They created a new consciousness of national achievement and a new realization of the compelling power of foreign policy. During the war Canadians had felt that function had moved ahead of status and as a consequence a robust nationalism, bred of action, was manifesting itself.²¹⁸ Richard Preston provides a suitable conclusion to Glazebrook's comments. With reference to the Dominions he wrote:

Their independent status within the British Commonwealth was born not in the halls of Versailles but on the beaches of Gallipoli and in the mud of France and Flanders.²¹⁹

1967 was a year of great significance to Canadians. It marked at once the Centennial of Confederation and the fiftieth anniversary of Vimy Ridge, the battle that was said to have led Canada to nationhood. The *Legionary* gave extensive coverage to the anniversary as may be expected. What is surprising, however, is that the editorial, under

217 George Parkin de Twenebroker Glazebrook, *A History of Canadian External Relations rev. ed. Volumes I*, (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart Limited, 1966), p.145

218 George Parkin de Twenebroker Glazebrook, *A History of Canadian External Relations rev. ed. Volumes II*, (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart Limited, 1966), p.7, 12

219 Richard A. Preston, *Canada and "Imperial Defense": A Study of the Origins of the British Commonwealth Defense Organization, 1867-1919*, (Durham: Duke University Press, 1967), p.497

the heading "Vimy a Canadian Epic", was an unacknowledged verbatim reprinting of the editorial from 1942, again without the references to the conscription crisis or the war effort.²²⁰ Despite this surprising lack of effort, the April 1967 edition was full of references to the symbolism of Vimy. In an article by Herbert Fairlie Wood, Vimy is seen as more than a victory, it made people into Canadians. "As the Battle of Lewes 1264 led to the British Parliament, Vimy Ridge was the turning point in Canadian history".²²¹ An advertisement for *Canada at Vimy* stressed the transformation to nationhood. In this work the author argued that, by this victory, Canada had achieved in one bound what years of political and commercial effort had not accomplished: the transformation from Dominion to nation.²²² The foreword is written by Vimy veteran Alex Ross:

...while other great days seem to be forgotten the memory of Vimy lives on. I like to think that this is because on that day Canada grew up and became a nation in fact.²²³

MacIntyre feels that this transformation has made Vimy take its place in history with imperishable names such as Hastings, Waterloo and the Plains of Abraham in the eyes of

220 *Legionary*, April 1967, p.9

221 *Ibid.*, p.10

222 D. E. MacIntyre, *Canada at Vimy*, (Toronto: Peter Martin Associates Ltd., 1967), p.214

223 Alex Ross introduction to MacIntyre, *Canada at Vimy*, p.vii

Canadians.²²⁴ With this comment MacIntyre has fused two elements of the Vimy myth. He has combined the concept of comparison and of nationhood. Another author, Herbert Fairlie Wood also uses this device to explain the significance of Canada's Great War experience. For Wood the Battle of Second Ypres had been Canada's Crecy, Vimy her Agincourt no more, no less.²²⁵

Despite the great significance given to the anniversary by military historians, both *Saturday Night* and *Macleans'* magazines gave it no coverage. Both the *Vancouver Sun* and the *Winnipeg Free Press* carried three excerpts from Herbert Fairlie Wood's *Vimy!* in their Weekend Magazines and included an article by Gregory Clark "The Symbol". Clark argued that Canada experienced a full sense of nationhood but urged Canadians to remember that symbols are costly.²²⁶ The *Globe and Mail* fittingly ended their coverage with a quote from King Edward VIII made at the unveiling of the monument 26 July 1936 "It is a monument to no man, but a memorial for a nation."²²⁷ In the newspapers even *Le Devoir*, after a long absence of coverage, gave considerable attention to the anniversary.

224 MacIntyre, *Canada at Vimy*, p.205

225 Herbert Fairlie Wood, *Vimy!* (Toronto: MacMillan of Canada, 1967), p.170

226 Gregory Clark, "The Symbol", *Weekend Magazine*, p.2

227 *Toronto Globe and Mail*, 8 April 1967, p.13

While not going to the same lengths as the anglophone papers, *Le Devoir* did cover the ceremonies in France and Ottawa and brought up the Vimy myth, but only by quoting Defence Minister Leo Cadieux's reading of prime minister Lester Pearson's message which described Vimy as a benchmark of courage, gallantry and sacrifice, the crucible that brought forth and tempered Canadian identity.²²⁸ The focus of *Le Devoir's* coverage was on the controversy that arose when the French President Charles DeGaulle refused to participate in the ceremonies because Queen Elizabeth was asked first and the arrangements were made without consultation with the French on whose land the ceremonies were to take place. The Anglophone papers gave some coverage to this controversy but their focus was on the French snub rather than the Canadian one. DeGaulle claimed that he was not participating because the battle was subordinate to the Canadian Centennial and the ceremony was thus a Canadian affair.²²⁹ Reportedly Paris newspapers regretted the snub.²³⁰

While ceremonies were held across Canada, the largest

228 *Le Devoir*, 10 April 1967, p.1,6 While *Le Devoir* said it was French land the ceremonies were, technically, taking place on Canadian land, though undeniably in the middle of France.

229 *Toronto Globe and Mail*, 7 April 1967, p.49

230 *Vancouver Sun*, 10 April 1967, p.3

took place at the ridge in France and was similar to those of the 1936 unveiling. These ceremonies were also broadcast live to Canada but this time they were broadcast on television. Once again, however, the Canadian prime minister, now Lester Pearson, did not attend and was represented by his Minister of Defence. Pearson attended the ceremonies in Ottawa and, like politicians before him and after, took the opportunity to push his policy, in this case peacekeeping. Noting that at Vimy no one had asked which province people were from, it was enough to wear a maple leaf, Pearson argued that the war was proof that national sovereignty should be replaced with collective action towards peace.²³¹ Others had used the move from regional awareness to national consciousness to promote a distinctly Canadian nation. Here Pearson tried to expand this growth of consciousness to an international cause. Some veterans, however, also took the opportunity to use the occasion to put forward their opinions and they suggested that Pearson's modern "unified" army would not be able to take Vimy Ridge.²³²

231 *Winnipeg Free Press*, 10 April 1967, p.1, 8

232 *Vancouver Sun*, 10 April 1967, p.3

CHAPTER SIX

The Decline of the Vimy Myth, 1967-1992

In the years following the Canadian Centennial the "coming of age" aspect continued to be the central element of the Vimy myth. While some went so far as to argue that Canada's Great War record carried Canada to full autonomy,²³³ more sober voices recognized the complexities of Canadian national development.

Canada's participation in World War One and the consequent strains it produced in the Anglo-Canadian relationship provided the opportunity to clarify the objectives of Canadian foreign policy and to achieve responsibility in foreign affairs.²³⁴

Contributors to Hector Massey's *The Canadian Military: A Profile* agreed that Canada's military history had never been paramount or predominant in influence but that it was more significant than most realize. In particular Reg Roy felt that "One might say if the foundations of Canadian nationalism was laid at Queenston Heights, the roof was put on at Vimy Ridge."²³⁵ While recognizing that Canadians were

233 John Swettenham, *Canada and the First World War*, (Toronto: The Reyerson Press, 1969), p.152

234 Robert Craig Brown "Sir Robert Borden, the Great War and Anglo-Canadian Relations", in John S. Moir, *Character and Circumstance*, (Toronto: MacMillan of Canada, 1970), p.203

235 Reginald Roy, "The Canadian Military Tradition", *The Canadian Military: A Profile*, Hector J. Massey ed., (Canada: The Copp Clark Publishing Company, 1972), p.35

convinced that their contribution to the winning of the war entitled her to a standing equivalent to sovereignty, Donald Creighton also noted that the war was not without its strains.²³⁶ In particular the month of Vimy Ridge saw only 4761 men enlist in the army while the battle at Vimy Ridge had cost 10 602 casualties.²³⁷ Creighton's recognition of the war's strains foreshadowed a trend that would take hold in the 1970's.

Even though only five years had passed since the great explosion of material on Vimy Ridge's fiftieth anniversary there was no coverage of the anniversary in 1972. Even the *Legionary* was deficient in this regard. Textbooks, in the early 1970's, however, still discussed the prowess of the Canadian fighting men and described Vimy in glowing terms, e.g., "the most perfectly organized and most successful battle of the whole war".²³⁸ While recognizing the connection between Canadian participation and dissatisfaction with their role in the Empire, these texts stressed the importance of the work of Borden and the meetings of the Imperial War Cabinet and their role in

236 Donald Creighton, *Canada's First Century*, (Toronto: MacMillan of Canada, 1970), p.156

237 Ibid., p.146

238 J. A. Lower, *A Nation Developing: A Brief History of Canada*, (Toronto: The Reyerson Press, 1970), p.158 and H. H. Herstein et al, *Challenge & Survival: The History of Canada*, (Scarborough: Prentice-Hall of Canada, Ltd., 1970), p.321

seeking autonomy for the Dominions.²³⁹

By the mid-to-late 1970's the social elements of Canadian history were being stressed over the military and the diplomatic aspects. The First World War, in particular, is affected by this trend with a greater concentration on the divisiveness of the conscription crisis, the role of women and other home-front issues than on the events of the war itself. While this diminution of attention tends to reduce the significance of the participation in the war, the attention that is given tends to stress the Canadian element to extremes. Some textbooks stressed the importance of Vimy by incorrectly noting that they were under Canadian command in the form of Arthur Currie.²⁴⁰ Despite this Canadianization of elements of the war, there is little connection made between the war and the advent of national autonomy. This appears to be due to the increased recognition of the divisiveness of the war.²⁴¹

In 1977, the *Legionary's* articles commemorating the sixtieth anniversary of Vimy Ridge, once again, included the

239 Lower, p.162 and Herstein, p.318

240 Ramsay Cook, *Canada A Modern Study rev. ed.*, (Toronto: Clarke, Irwin & Co. Limited, 1977), p. 187
Allan S. Evans and I. L. Martinello, *Canada's Century*, (Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson Ltd., 1978), p.158

241 Richard Howard, Sonia Riddoch and Peter Watson, *Canada Since Confederation*, (Toronto: Copp Clark Pitman, 1976)

idea of colony to nation. More recognition, however, was given to the negative aspects of war. "I guess it was a great victory but many would agree with General Wolfe who, after the Battle of the Plains of Abraham quoted the famous line from Gray's *Elegy*: The Paths of Glory lead but to the grave".²⁴² The tone in the *Legionary* was echoed in the newspapers of the time with concentration on the horrors of war. Surprisingly, however, more attention was given to ideas of nationhood and recognition in the newspapers than in the *Legionary*. Even *Le Devoir* recognized the anniversary in a "It happened on this day in history" format.²⁴³ In the *Halifax Herald* an article from a London correspondent stressed the superiority of the Canadian soldier and noted that Vimy is also remembered in the Legions of Britain, Australia and South Africa.²⁴⁴ The ideal of Vimy was recalled in the *Vancouver Sun* which argued that the spirit that is Canada showed itself that day on Vimy Ridge. Calling on the national element of the Vimy myth, hope was expressed that that spirit would live on in the present struggle for unity in face of the separatist "quitters".²⁴⁵

As the 1970's drew to a close, works on the Canadians in

242 David Moir, "At What Price", *Legionary*, April 1977, p. 50

243 *Le Devoir*, 9 April 1977, p.6

244 *Halifax Herald*, 9 April 1977, p.7

245 *Vancouver Sun*, 9 April 1977, p.4

the Great War continued to stress the social impact of the war but, with the exception of textbooks, continued to recognize the importance of the military participation to Canada's international position. *Canadians at War 1914-1918: Canadiana Scrapbook* by Donald Santor was an exception to this trend, focusing almost entirely on the military aspects of the war. Little new on Vimy appeared in this work as it relied heavily on large excerpts of Herbert Fairlie Wood's *Vimy!* (1967) and Larry Worthington's *Amid the Guns Below* (1965).²⁴⁶ In contrast Heather Robertson's excellent collection of Canadian art from the two world wars, *A Terrible Beauty: The Art of Canada at War*, recognized the conflicting interpretations of the war experience. She noted that for some, war gave Canada a national identity, a sense of solidarity, shared goals and a common effort that defined Canada in the eyes of the world.²⁴⁷ The war was, however, fought as bitterly at home as at the front and that transformed Canadian society. Two quotations in her work highlight this conflict. Referring to Vimy Ridge and the small fires lit by soldiers trying to keep warm in the hours before the battle, H. R. H. Clyne said,

246 Donald Santor, *Canadians at War 1914-1918: Canadiana Scrapbook*, (Scarborough: Prentice-Hall of Canada, 1978)

247 Heather Robertson, *A Terrible Beauty: The Art of Canada at War*, (Toronto: James Lorimer and Company, 1977), p.9

And I saw that night Henry V at Agincourt wandering around from little fire to little fire. "And gentlemen of England now abed will curse the day they were not here." It was exactly that. That exact scene.²⁴⁸

In contrast Desmond Morton was quoted, "If War is one of those shared experiences which transform a people into a nation, Canada indeed became a country of two nations."²⁴⁹ Morton continued his argument regarding division, noting that despite Canadian resentment regarding the American claims to have won the war and the Canadians' taking pride in their own war efforts, he saw little evidence of such national pride in the immediate aftermath of the war.²⁵⁰ While the war effort endeavored to unite Canadians, concludes Morton, instead it divided them.

The printed media's coverage of the sixty-fifth anniversary of Vimy continued the trend towards recognizing the event but not discussing it. The majority of the media surveyed passed the event over entirely. What was included in the papers tended to be the Canadian Press wire service's article in various edited forms. The *Legionary* also gave relatively sparse coverage to the anniversary but did include an interesting excerpt from Currie's diary.

248 Ibid., p.68

249 Ibid., p.11

250 Desmond Morton, *Canada and War: A Military and Political History*, (Toronto: Butterworth & Co. (Canada) Ltd., 1981), p.81

Easter Monday April 9 1917. Truly magnificent, grandest day the corps has ever had...The sight was awful and wonderful. Men hugged the barrage.²⁵¹

The exception among the newspapers, as it often has been, was the *Halifax Herald*. While Vimy was not considered front page news, it nevertheless received the attention of a large article which managed to touch upon most of the significant points included in the pattern of Vimy accounts. The often-repeated quotation of Brigadier General Alexander Ross that it had been "Canada from Atlantic to Pacific on parade. I thought then...that in those few minutes I witnessed the birth of a nation" highlighted the national element of the Vimy myth.²⁵²

In the early 1980's, Canadian military historians continued to argue that the Great War and Vimy in particular had led to Canadian nationhood.²⁵³ For one author, John Swettenham, Vimy was the greatest national achievement of the Canadian people since the Dominion came into being.²⁵⁴

251 *Legionary*, April 1982, p.14

252 *Halifax Herald*, 9 April 1982, p.7

253 Ian R. Munro, *Canada and the World Wars*, (Toronto: Wiley Publisher of Canada Limited, 1979), p.49, Kathryn M.Bindon, *More than Patriotism: Canada at War 1914-1918*, (Toronto: Personal Library, 1979), p.7, Patricia Giesler, *Valour Remembered: Canada and the First World War*, (Ottawa: Department of Veteran's Affairs, 1982), p.27

254 John Swettenham, *Canada and the First World War*. (Canadian War Museum), p.55

On this question of the development of nationhood Stephen Harris has provided the best analysis in *From Subordinate to Ally: The Canadian Corps and National Autonomy, 1914-1918*. Harris argues that the claim of D.J. Goodspeed, put forward in his *The Road Past Vimy Ridge*, that the achievement of nationhood occurred on the day of the battle of Vimy Ridge and no other date is too strong. While Harris is convinced that Canada's military prowess was extremely important in the development of national autonomy he recognizes that the First World War had become a source of discord as much as a unifying force. In particular he attributes the failure of Vimy Ridge to serve as the symbol of national pride, spirit and identity because of its close relation to the conscription crisis which so divided the nation. The success of the Corps, however, did serve to reinforce Borden's bid for international recognition of Canada's emergence as an autonomous Dominion within the British Commonwealth, and it legitimized the existence of a purely Canadian armed forces that would serve under national command in co-operation with, not subordinate to, friends and allies.²⁵⁵

Textbooks, in the mid-1980's, continued their seemingly contradictory movement towards a focus on Canadian social

²⁵⁵ D. J. Goodspeed quoted in Stephen Harris, "From Subordinate to Ally: The Canadian Corps and National Autonomy 1914-1918." *Revue Internationale d'Histoire Militaire*, No. 54 1982, p.111, 112, 126

history while conducting a "Canadianization" of the Great War, as Vimy was reported to be planned by a Canadian and carried out by Canadians.²⁵⁶ In a more specific text-book, however, the authors argued that even "if the blunders against French Canadians were not made it is doubtful whether the average French Canadian would have identified with Britain's cause at Vimy Ridge and Passchendaele. Never in any sense a military people, French Canadians were little inclined to fight in a foreign land for a foreign cause."²⁵⁷ While this seems too much a simplification of why Canadians were fighting in Europe it certainly helps to explain the rift that the war created and that continues to be evidenced by the lack of attention Vimy Ridge receives in the primary French-Canadian newspaper *Le Devoir*.

In the second half of the decade attention to Vimy Ridge temporarily increased, no doubt driven by the publication of Pierre Berton's best-selling *Vimy*. While some of the claims of Berton in this work amount to little more than the Canadianization of military innovations, this work is an invaluable look into soldiers' experience on the ridge.²⁵⁸

256 David Francis and Sonia Riddoch, *Our Canada: A Social and Political History*, (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1985), p.394

257 Janet Morchain and Mason Wade, *Search for a Nation: Canada's Crises in French-English Relations 1759-1980*, (Canada: Fitzhenry & Whiteside, 1984), p.51

258 Berton claims that the Canadians were the first to use the creeping barrage and the first to launch a trench raid. The origin of these and other military tactics is unclear

Other works had focused on first-hand accounts but this is the most extensive and most effectively written of these works and, due to the advanced age of the veterans, most likely the last. In an article written for the *Toronto Star* the year that *Vimy* was published Berton claimed that "Vimy: World War I Battle 'Created' Canadians".

The stunning victory produced a wave of national feeling that had a profound effect on Canada's future relations with the mother country and on the image that Canadians had of themselves. In the measured march toward Canadian autonomy Vimy was always seen as a turning point.²⁵⁹

Other authors of the period helped to maintain the focus on the link between Vimy and nationhood. Duncan Fraser argued that Canada was constitutionally independent with the signing of the Statute of Westminster in 1931 but was psychologically independent on 9 April 1917.²⁶⁰

Recognition of the significance was not confined to Canadian historians. Two British authors were quoted in the newspaper coverage of the 1987 anniversary. Peter Simkins, a historian at the Imperial War Museum in London, noted that

but the evidence suggests that such innovations evolved out of the experience of all armies in the Great War. Berton is correct, however, in arguing that the Canadians developed and perfected these innovations and thus made them theirs. Pierre Berton, *Vimy*, (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart Limited, 1986) Berton on trench raids, p.113 Berton on the creeping barrage, p.63

259 Pierre Berton, "Vimy: World War I Battle 'Created' Canadians", *Toronto Star*, 6 April 1986, p.A12

260 *Halifax Herald*, 6 December 1986, p.7

"It was one of the events of the First World War which gave Canada a sense of identity."²⁶¹ John Terraine commented on Vimy's significance to the rest of the war, marking the victory as "one of the most dramatic in the entire conflict....The full value of what the Canadians had accomplished was seen the following year when Vimy Ridge became the backbone of the British defense system against the German Offensive of March 1918."²⁶²

For the most part, however, coverage of the anniversary was limited to photos of the ceremonies and the repetition of the national element of the Vimy myth through quotations from such figures as George Hees, the Minister for Veteran's Affairs: "On this ridge, on this day, a nation was forged".²⁶³ Curiously, coverage in the *Legionary* was almost non-existent while *Le Devoir* did cover the event (although it limited itself to some pictures and the idea that "3500 died in this 'terrible' battle").²⁶⁴ When Vimy vet James deLaLanne was told that it is said that at Vimy a young country came of age and finally gained its true independence he responded that that was ridiculous. No doubt they were Canadians before the battle!²⁶⁵

261 *Winnipeg Free Press*, 9 April 1987, p.56

262 *Toronto Globe and Mail*, 9 April 1987, p.1

263 *Vancouver Sun*, 9 April 1987, p.B8

264 *Le Devoir*, 9 April 1987, p.3

265 *Toronto Globe and Mail*, 9 April 1987, p.1

Works on the Canadians in the Great War in the next few years continued to conclude with the transformation of colony to nation depicting Vimy as a key point in this metamorphosis. The pattern of Vimy Ridge had been firmly established and was not deviated from except in small degrees in the more specific works and some scholarly works. Myths of Canadian qualities and accomplishments continue to appear as in *The Oxford Book of Canadian Military Anecdotes* which equates the Canadians' success in the trenches with their qualities as a people. The qualities in question of course being those of the frontier "dogged endurance, physical toughness; a willingness to organize and plan with common sense; enthusiasm and scepticism at the same moment."²⁶⁶ Some authors balanced this kind of focus on things Canadian as when A. M. J. Hyatt stressed Sir Arthur Currie's administrative prowess and his ability to take on other people's ideas and improve upon them rather than any ability to innovate.²⁶⁷

Desmond Morton introduced a new element to Vimy symbolism in his collaborative effort about the return of

266 Victor Suthren, *The Oxford Book of Canadian Military Anecdotes*, (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1989), p.5

267 A. M. J. Hyatt, *General Sir Arthur Currie: A Military Biography*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1987), p.60-66

Great War veterans to civilian life in the years following the war. Morton found that the pilgrimage to Vimy Ridge in 1936 marked the transformation of the veteran's movement from struggle to commemoration.²⁶⁸ For Morton this achievement was the winning of the second battle for these soldiers. Morton also argued that the war propelled Canada to an independent role in the world. Here he falls short of arguing that Canada became a nation. This is because, in this work as in others, he recognized the correlation between Vimy and the conscription crisis and thus the divisiveness of the war.²⁶⁹

Not all authors writing about the Canadians in the Great War wanted to talk about Vimy Ridge, however. Stuart Robson resented the focus on the impact of the war on Canada and the resulting attention this focused on Vimy. He argued that it obscured the effect that Canada had on the war, in particular the important period following Vimy Ridge.²⁷⁰ Robson is correct in noting that the attention focused on Vimy has detracted from the details of the Hundred Days.

268 Desmond Morton and Glenn Wright, *Winning the Second Battle: Canadian Veterans and the Return to Civilian Life 1915-1939*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1987), p.XL

269 Desmond Morton, *Towards Tomorrow: Canada in a Changing World History*, (Toronto: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Canada, 1988), p.60, 55

270 Stuart Robson, "Tipping the Balance: The Canadian Corps in 1918", *The Beaver*, October-November 1989, p.17

Vimy had, by this time, however, become a symbol or concentration of all of Canada's Great War experience and Vimy happened to coincide with important gains made towards Dominion freedom of action during the Imperial War Conferences of 1917. The impact of the war on Canada, however, was entirely dependent upon Canada's impact on the war. Even if the Hundred Days are only occasionally and indirectly recognized, they are crucial to all Canadian Great War and, thus, national history.

Canada's 125th birthday and Vimy Ridge's seventy-fifth saw another increase in attention paid to Vimy. National celebrations for both events took place in the heavy atmosphere of an intense constitutional debate. Newspaper articles were full of quotations from historians and veterans. From the former came the national significance of Vimy, the transformation to nationhood. From the veterans came the personal significance and memories. The memories ranged from the amusing (the British put the Canadians there because they thought the Germans would be so scared it would force them to quit) to the sad (many recollections of lost friends and brothers), to contradictions of glory (one veteran felt that those involved in the battle saw it as no big deal, just another day).²⁷¹

²⁷¹ Winnipeg *Free Press*, 9 April 1992, p.B23 "There was no sense of glory on April 9, 1917, no sense of destiny and no panoramic vision of Canada on parade. Hyperbole, Smith said, was for the generals." Cyril Smith, Canada's 54th Battalion, Vancouver *Sun*, 9 April 1992, p.B1

Historians and veterans were not the only quotable figures during the ceremonies. In the days leading up to and including the ceremonies the politicians were quick to have their voices heard. In particular the prime minister, Brian Mulroney, repeatedly used the occasion to indirectly call for support for his widely unpopular constitutional reform package. Mulroney stated that if he had to pick a time when Canada realized all it was and could be Vimy Ridge would be it. The capture of the ridge had signalled to the world Canada's coming of age as a promising and prosperous nation. "Now it is our turn to make our own infinitely more modest sacrifices to strengthen Canada's unity".²⁷² "We are here to say the great sacrifices they made to strengthen the unity of the world's most admired nation were not made in vain."²⁷³

On this 75th anniversary, Vimy received the widest recognition in the printed media since the day of the battle. Even *Le Devoir* featured prominent coverage of the ceremonies. The Montreal newspaper was also one of the few to emphasize the fact that while Mulroney had brought up the National Question the president of France, Francois

272 Vancouver Sun, 6 April 1992, p.A4

273 Vancouver Sun, 10 April 1992, p.A13

Mitterand, had avoided it.²⁷⁴ The national magazines were the exception, as always, virtually ignoring the event deemed so important by all other forms of media. The key points of the Vimy story were highlighted again and again in papers across the country and the impressive ceremonies were carried live on television and were covered extensively by all media.

Despite a surprisingly lack of in-depth coverage in the *Legionary*, the Royal Canadian Legion was very active at this time and along with the Ministry of Veterans Affairs, the Army, Navy and Air Force and Veterans in Canada sent out a package of informational materials in March to aid in the establishment of commemorations in towns across Canada. Included was a form for the towns of Canada to proclaim the week of 6 April Vimy Week. The text recognized that Vimy was the first place where all Canadians fighting in France did so together, that the battle was a great triumph for the Canadians in the First World War and that it is recognized as a turning point for Canada in gaining recognition as a truly independent nation.²⁷⁵

Other official efforts at recognizing the anniversary

274 *Le Devoir*, 10 April 1992, p.A2

275 Proclamation for Vimy Week, distributed March 1992 by the Royal Canadian Legion, Ministry for Veteran's Affairs and the Army, Navy and Air Force Veterans.

were made, such as the publishing of *Canada and the Battle of Vimy Ridge, 9-12 April, 1917* by the Department of Defense's Directorate of History. This large commemorative volume was richly bound and filled with photographs. This work is an excellent summary of the battle and its significance. The authors stress the development of nationhood and quote the great Canadian military historian C. P. Stacey

...as they looked out across the Douai Plain from the conquered ridge they felt that their nation had come of age. If a single milestone is needed to mark progress on the road to national maturity, one might do much worse than nominate that famous Easter Monday.²⁷⁶

While the discussion of the development of nationhood is concentrated on the prowess of the troops and the political leverage this afforded Canada, the authors recognize the important concept of social engineering on a grand scale. Most Canadians did not travel much beyond the boundaries of their provinces and had little common identity. Being a member of the Canadian Corps in France forced these men of diverse backgrounds to mix and relate to each other. They note that the soldiers brought home with them a new concept of nationhood based on their war experience and consciously or unconsciously began to spread it across the land.²⁷⁷

276 Brereton Greenhous and Stephen J. Harris, *Canada and the Battle of Vimy Ridge, 9-12 April, 1917*, (Ottawa: Canada Communication Group - Publishing, Minister of Supply and Service Canada, 1992), p.148

277 Ibid., p.142

Another official publication of lesser note, *Canada in the First World War and the Road to Vimy Ridge*, echoes the description of Vimy and the entire war experience's importance in nation building. Its conclusion recognizes that Canada's symbols, Vimy included, have adapted to the changing needs of Canadians.

In recent times, the Vimy memorial came to symbolize Canada's long commitment to peace in the world, as well as its stand against aggression, and for Liberty and the rule of international law.

...Canadians have demonstrated their valour on many battlefields but today the message of the Vimy Memorial is one of peace - upheld for by the Canadian Armed Forces. The message of Vimy, is in fact, a deterrent to war.²⁷⁸

Perhaps the last word on Vimy in 1992 should go to Sandra Gwynn, author of *Tapestry of War*, who like Desmond Morton recognized the duality of the significance of Vimy. Of the two anniversaries, Canada's 125th and Vimy's 75th, she thought Vimy's marks the more important rite of national passage. For Gwynn, as for so many others, the Great War marked the real birth of Canada and she felt that even without the separate signature upon the peace accords, Canadians knew they had won that status. Vimy's anniversary, however, is also the 75th anniversary of the Conscription Crisis. Gwynn quotes Talbot Papineau, writing

²⁷⁸ Cedric Jennings, *Canada in the First World War and the Road to Vimy Ridge*, (Ottawa: Veteran's Affairs Canada, 1992), p.20

to Henri Bourassa, as having argued that they had the chance to use the trial by ordeal that they were undergoing to "cement a foundation for a true Canadian nation". Instead, by tragic miscalculation and misunderstanding, Canadians hardened themselves into two solitudes.²⁷⁹

279 Sandra Gwyn, *Tapestry of War: A Private View of Canadians in the Great War*, (Toronto: Harper Collins Publishers Ltd., 1992), p.xvii, xviii

CONCLUSION

The pre-Vimy period, from Confederation to the early stages of the Great War, saw nationalism surge and recede. At most times this nationalism, or the more forceful variations of it, was in some way tied to imperialism. While there were nationalists who advocated independence, often with a benevolent recognition of the French Canadians' difficulties with imperialism, most English-Canadian nationalists seem to have seen the Empire as the medium in which Canada could best grow to maturity. While the turn to the Loyalist Tradition and towards Imperial Federation stressed the relation to Empire, it is clear that even these imperialists did not want to see Canadian independence reduced. The Boer War revealed that the imperial relationship was not keeping pace with the growth of the Canadian nation. As the naval debates demonstrated, Canadian nationalists, and even imperialists, increasingly sought to redress the balance in Anglo-Canadian relations and, at the very least, to gain greater influence in the making of decisions that had implications for the Dominions.

While a period of review of imperial relations, it was also a period of searching for identity. Canadian nationalists (and imperialists) actively sought a symbol around which the country could rally. Beginning with the Canada Firsters this search focused on the accomplishments

of the young nation. Accomplishments in society, government, agriculture, industry, and even race were considered but the focus was on the more traditional producer of national sentiment, history. The most important element of history for these nationalists was the military aspect. Not only did they look to the past for their "national" history, they also looked to the present and even to the future. Attempts were made to make events such as Red River and the battle of Paardeberg into symbols of nationhood or at least national feeling but these failed to gain wide acceptance. Unfortunately, the concentration on history, military history in particular, antagonized and alienated the French Canadians. The English-Canadian military victories of this period tended to represent direct or indirect political or military losses by the French Canadians and this made it unlikely that they would accept such a symbol as representing their vision of Canada. The emphasis on military history and the active search for a Canadian Agincourt or War of Independence continued, however, and this set the stage for the treatment that the Battle of Vimy Ridge would receive.

By 1917, then, forces were ready to take advantage of the opportunity that the victory at Vimy Ridge represented. Vimy proved to be the kind of "fiery ordeal" that people like the Canada Firsters had yearned for. The levels of significance and symbolism in Vimy were many and were

quickly pointed out to Canadians. In the early period Canadians were not just informed of the victory, rather they were given the means with which to understand its significance. Through comparison, the Canadians learned that their boys had accomplished what, for the major allies, had proven impossible and the praise received from those allies strengthened that image. From the start, the Canadian aspects of the battle were highlighted by concentrating on the new techniques and innovations used. The military significance of the victory was made clear through measures of captured men and materials as well as the strategic location of the ridge. Soon after the battle these different elements were drawn together to consolidate the new myth.

Immediately following its consolidation the myth was thrust into its first and most dangerous use as a symbol. The victory at Vimy Ridge was used during the crisis of 1917 to argue in favour of conscription. The cost of the battle itself, when compared to enlistment figures, made it clear that the volunteer system could not sustain the Canadian effort for much longer. As Vimy was thrust into this divisive debate on the homefront it continued to have an impact on the Canadian Corps in France and in Britain. The morale of the Canadian Corps was high and its independence as a fighting force had never been greater. Vimy was paying political dividends as well, giving weight to prime minister

Borden's calls for more control over Canadian soldiers and more influence in Imperial policy.

By 1919 Canadians were convinced that the importance of their participation in the Great War entitled them to a greater say in the workings of the Empire. Those desires were met by the deliberations of the Imperial War Conferences and were symbolized by Canada's separate signature on the Peace Treaty. While few demanded complete independence, Canadians felt that that signature represented the world's recognition of Canada's new status as a nation.

The period from 1919 to 1936 was crucial to the formulation of the Vimy myth. The preceding years had provided the basis for the establishment of a Canadian legend and this base was quickly built upon. Early works noted the vast preparations carried out prior to the battle and the innovations used. They also began to use the stories of veterans to describe the battle. The concentration on preparation and innovation stressed the Canadian aspects of battle and the veterans' stories only served to strengthen this focus.

The most important addition to the Vimy myth, however, was the suggestion that Vimy had led to Canadian nationhood. Shortly after the war works appeared that recognized the connection between the Great War experience and the advances

made towards a true national sentiment. The national element of the myth made it a useful symbol for people to use to promote their agendas, anything from unity, to independence, to the plight of returning soldiers.

While the myth seemed to be getting stronger and more inclusive, it was also being weakened in the face of post-war pacifism and the simple passage of time. Revulsion against the butchery of the Great War and memories of troubles on the home front prevented the myth from taking hold in the collective consciousness of Canadians.

With the unveiling of the monument in 1936, however, the Vimy myth reached a peak of strength and general acceptance. After this occasion, Vimy overshadowed other events of the war. The unveiling, taking place almost twenty years after the battle, marked the moment that Vimy overcame the Battle of Ypres to become the symbol of the Great War experience. Having become this symbol strengthened Vimy's claim to be the moment when Canada became a nation. While some stated that they felt Canadian at Vimy Ridge, the consolidation of the myth around the unveiling of the memorial in 1936 explains why some said they did not recognize that Vimy had created a nation until then.

From 1936 to the Canadian Centennial in 1967 the Vimy myth went through a period of decline followed by a strong

recovery. The national element of the myth had become central and other details and elements had become secondary. These other elements stressed the Canadian aspects of the battle and the differences between the Canadian and British armies. A relatively new addition was the trend of comparing Vimy to other battles with great historical significance. This focus made the myth appear stronger and gave Canadians a new means to weigh its significance.

There was little change in the overall manner in which the battle was described but what continued to change was the manner in which the symbol of Vimy was used. Near the beginning of this period the ridge was in German hands once more and Vimy was again used to call for conscription. After the war Vimy was used to warn Canadians against communism. By the end of the period Vimy was used to call for international peacekeeping and to warn of the weakness of the "new", integrated Canadian armed forces.

A number of works on Canadian history appeared in the years leading up to the Centennial. As the national element had become so central to the Vimy myth and as it was also the fiftieth anniversary of the battle, it was not surprising that Vimy should figure prominently in many of the descriptions of how Canada became a nation. These histories served to validate and enshrine the already consolidated national element of the Vimy myth. While the

Great War was seen as an important step towards independence in these histories, they also began increasingly to note the terrible cost of the war both in terms of casualties at the front and divisions at home.

After the Centennial, nationalism continued to be an important part of the Vimy myth and was used as a symbol against the Quebec separatists. While a rapid Canadianization of virtually all elements of Canadian participation occurred in text-books, there was an equally dramatic move away from looking at strictly military and national facets. Recognition of the costs of war became the central theme in general histories and became an important part of military histories. At last, historians were giving full measure to the impact of the Great War on Canada. Desmond Morton noted that the Great War changed our lives more than any other single event but also noted that not all of those changes were positive.²⁸⁰

In this last period under review the myth was once more revived on a major anniversary after a period of steady decline. Its national role was constantly stressed in all forms of reporting: newspapers, television and books. This idea was seized upon by the politicians of the day to push their view of how a united Canada should be. It was perhaps

²⁸⁰ Desmond Morton, *Album of the Great War*, (Toronto: Grolier Limited, 1986), pg.3

to their disadvantage that they chose a national symbol that had strong connections to the very division in Canadian society that they sought to prevent. Vimy and the Great War, it seems, served as both a positive and a negative catalyst in Canadian history.

* * * * *

An overview of seventy five years of Canadian history has revealed that the strength of the Vimy myth went through cyclical fluctuations. The myth reached its peak in 1936 with the unveiling of the monument. By that time the Battle of Vimy Ridge, or at least the image of the ridge, had come to represent the Canadian Great War experience. This peak, however, was, in a sense, artificial. Even in this period, the relevance of the ridge to Canadians was limited and, except for a brief growth of interest, was steadily declining. Through the next fifty years interest in the ridge would flare on anniversaries, especially major ones, but the real trend was a steady decline in the myth's relevance. While coverage of the seventy-fifth anniversary, in 1992 was almost as extensive as that of 1936, this had more to do with the structure of the modern media than with any real renewed interest. Why did this happen? Why did this symbol, so ripe with multi-layers of significance ultimately fail?

There are several possible explanations. Paul Fussell notes that irony was often used during the Great War as a means of making a particular experience stand out amongst all the other intense experiences.²⁸¹ In this model, a loss such as Gallipoli would be a stronger memory than a victory such as Vimy Ridge. Alternatively, perhaps the story of the battle itself (usually the shortest section of any work on Vimy Ridge) was not thrilling enough to capture the popular imagination. Australian Great War General Sir John Monash noted that there were no stirring accounts of such great set-pieces as Messines, Vimy, Hamel and many others. There was nothing to write of them because all that happens in a well-planned battle is the regular progress of the advance according to the plan arranged.²⁸² While Vimy was able to overcome other events of the Great War to become a powerful symbol, perhaps it was ultimately overwhelmed by the "official" Great War anniversary known originally as Armistice Day.²⁸³

281 Paul Fussell, *The Great War and Modern Memory*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975), p.30

282 John Terraine, *The Smoke and the Fire: Myths and Anti-Myths of War 1861-1945*, (London: Sedgwick and Jackson 1980), p.198

283 Renamed Remembrance Day after the Second World War, Armistice Day became a general day of remembrance for the participants and victims of all wars and as such lost much of its symbolic connection with the Great War. Nevertheless, in *Canadian Mythology and the Great War* (unpublished work by author), David Inglis found a steady decline in the relevance of Remembrance Day to Canadians which was very similar to the decline experienced by Vimy.

What is more likely, however, is that Vimy did not become a popular myth because, as Heather Robertson noted, "The Great War was fought as bitterly at home as abroad."²⁸⁴ While military historians like Brereton Greenhous note that the Great War represented social engineering on a grand scale, they rarely come to grips with the depths of division that the war created in Canadian society.²⁸⁵ Russell Hann has termed this the text-book myth of the war.²⁸⁶ That is the story of how Canada rallied loyally to Britain's side in 1914, proved their mettle on the battlefields while the country rallied on the home front and emerged from the war a nation state. What is missing in this story, Hann argues, are the strikes, the division of the conscription crisis and the mutinies among returning soldiers. This exclusion may be due to the same problem that Robin Gerster uncovered among the historians of Australia's Great War experience. Gerster noted that the writers seemed to be unable to deal with the conflict between presenting a critique of the war

284 Heather Robertson, *A Terrible Beauty: The Art of Canada at War*, (Toronto: James Lorimer and Company, 1977), p.9

285 Brereton Greenhous and Stephen J. Harris, *Canada and the Battle of Vimy Ridge, 9-12 April, 1917*, (Ottawa: Canada Communication Group - Publishing, Minister of Supply and Service Canada, 1992), p.35

286 Russell Hann, introduction to Daphne Read et al. *The Great War and Canadian Society: An Oral History*, (Toronto: New Hogtown Press, 1975), p.25

and being a publicist for the Australians.²⁸⁷ Except for some highly detailed and scholarly works, Canadian military histories have done little in the way of critiquing the actions of Canadians in the Great War or of performing any real reevaluation of their role and its significance.

More recent histories, however, have increasingly taken into account social implications as well as the strictly military issues. A reviewer of these works noted that "the reality and enormity of what happened cannot be mythologized without uncomfortable distortions and cannot be packaged in the pre-1914 diction once so acceptable as the appropriate language for dealing with war".²⁸⁸ In one of the most recent evaluations of the Great War, two Canadian historians asserted that Canada would have discovered her sense of nationality without capturing Vimy Ridge and it hardly required a war to reveal the frustration of "imperial federation".²⁸⁹ Hann would agree as he has argued that the Great War did not introduce any new social trends but rather acted as a catalyst.²⁹⁰ Canada was quickly and radically

287 Robin Gerster, *Big-Noting: The Heroic Theme in Australian War Writing*, (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1987), p.257

288 Alan R. Young, "The Great War and National Mythology", *Acadiensis*, XXIII(2) Spring 1994, p.166

289 Desmond Morton and J. L. Granatstein. *Marching to Armageddon: Canadians and the Great War 1914-1919*, (Toronto: Lester & Orpen Dennys Ltd, 1989), p.260

290 Hann in Read, p.26

changed by the Great War. These changes, it can be argued, were already beginning. It cannot be disputed, however, that the Great War accelerated those changes and laid them bare to the eyes of Canadians. This idea of the war as a catalyst for both positive and negative forces has been generally accepted in more recent, scholarly works.

Did the Vimy myth fail completely? For some people of the generation that witnessed the war and of the generation that witnessed the unveiling of the monument, Vimy was the moment that they identified with the birth of national sentiment. Some members of later generations have shared this belief but they tended to be people with a specific interest in military history.

Associated with a larger event that accentuated the divisions between Canada's two founding peoples, Vimy could not serve as the symbol of national pride, spirit and identity; instead it has been all but forgotten as its veterans have passed from the scene and as Canadians of succeeding generations have found other things to celebrate and have searched for other symbols of unity.²⁹¹

For the majority of Canadians Canada's military past has not been that relevant and has been inextricably linked to serious divisions. But, as W.L. Morton noted, "...one of the blessings of Canadian life is that there is no Canadian

291 Stephen Harris, "From Subordinate to Ally: The Canadian Corps and National Autonomy 1914-1918", *Revue Internationale d'Histoire Militaire*, No. 54 1982, p.112

way of life, much less two, but a unity under the Crown, admitting a thousand diversities."²⁹² While his comment seems dated and optimistic, today the sentiment lives on. The people of Canada, from the beginning, have had too varied a range of interests to share one symbol of national sentiment. J.M.S. Careless wrote in 1969,

What may be newer, however, is the notion that if the Canadian people have fallen short of the Canadian dream (held, that is, chiefly by historians and intellectuals) it could be because their interests were elsewhere - and that they nevertheless shared in a viable Canada, if not that laid up in heaven for them.²⁹³

From the Canada Firsters through post-war activists, the federalism of the 1970's to the constitutional debates of the late 1980's, people have tried to find a symbol for Canadians to rally around. All such attempts have failed. But perhaps these failures and the continued attempts are not without value. "Many nations have manifested their nationalism through great public acts; Canada has asserted its nationalism by looking for it".²⁹⁴

292 W. L. Morton, *The Canadian Identity*, (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1965), p.111

293 J.M.S. Careless, "'Limited Identities' in Canada", *The Canadian Historical Review*. Vol. 1, No. 1, March 1969, p.2

294 Craig Brown, "The Nationalism of the National Policy", Peter Russell ed., *Nationalism in Canada*, (Toronto: McGraw Hill Ryerson Limited, 1966 (1972)), p.155

APPENDIX

Sources and Method

The original intent of this thesis was to examine how Canadians viewed Vimy Ridge. To keep this investigation of the Vimy myth manageable, limitations had to be placed on the number and kinds of sources that were to be included in the historiographical survey. While attempts were made to include as many Canadian sources on the Great War as possible these sources were limited by their availability in the collections of three British Columbia universities: Simon Fraser University, the University of British Columbia and the University of Victoria. General histories were not extensively surveyed due to their large number. Those that were included were used to provide an idea of how the Great War was being discussed outside of the realm of military histories. These works were also used to aid in the discussion of Canadian identity.

While military histories demonstrate how Vimy was being discussed among a segment of the population, they do not necessarily reveal how the general populace viewed the battle. To investigate this wider audience of the myth, newspapers, national magazines and high-school textbooks were sampled.

A. Newspapers and Magazines

Five newspapers from across Canada and three national magazines were sampled every five years from 1917 to 1992. The papers and magazines were reviewed for articles about Vimy Ridge for a week before and following the battle's anniversary. Because the idea of the "birth of a nation" is central to the Vimy myth, these sources were also sampled for mention of Vimy Ridge, or the Great War in general, on the days surrounding Dominion Day, the anniversary of Canadian Confederation.

B. Textbooks

To investigate what Canadians were being taught about Vimy and the Great War, high-school textbooks were similarly sampled every five years from 1917-1992. Because education is a provincial responsibility and because extensive travel was not possible, this survey was limited to textbooks used in British Columbian high-schools. Evidence suggests, however, that many of the texts were used throughout Canada. These textbooks were traced in the historical textbook collection of the Education Library at the University of British Columbia. The use of the textbooks included in this study was confirmed by government produced curriculum guides and financial reports that detailed which books were purchased each year. School

stamps in the texts themselves provided additional confirmation of the texts' usage.

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b) Imperial War Museum, London

General Lord Horne Papers

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3. Newspapers and Magazines

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