

CHC2P Unit 3: 1939-1959: War and Peace

Activity 4: War at Home

Overview

In this activity, you will examine the war effort in Canada and the many sacrifices made by the women, men and children that remained at home to support the troops overseas.

Lesson

The End of the Depression

In previous activities, you examined the major events in World War II and Canada's role in the war. Now, you will focus on happenings inside Canada during the six years of warfare.

When World War II broke out, the demand for such items as ships, planes and weapons helped to bring an end to the Great Depression. The droughts ended on the prairies and there was no more unemployment.

Victory Bonds and Rationing



Canadians purchased Victory Bonds to help finance the war. For example, if a person bought a bond worth \$10, the money was lent to the government, and the person could redeem the bond at the conclusion of the war, and receive back \$12 with \$2 earned in interest on the bond.

During the war, Canadians lent the government \$12 billion through the Victory Bonds program.

In Canada, the war was like a hungry machine, demanding more and more products and labour. As a result, Canada ran short of consumer goods and workers. When there are shortages, prices and wages rise. In this situation, the federal government brought in price and wage controls.

The government also limited the amount of goods a person could buy. This is called rationing. Each month, everyone received a ration book containing coupons for goods like butter, nylons, liquor, and gasoline. One could only buy the amount of goods that was indicated on the coupons.

Through rationing, Canada was able to send sufficient food and products to the British people and to the Armed Forces.

Women on the Canadian Home Front



In Canada, women stepped into the jobs that were vacated by the men serving in the Armed Forces in the same manner as women had done during World War I. Over a million women worked in Canadian industries.

Day care centres were set up in many plants. Women wore overalls, goggles, and bandanas (to keep hair out of machinery) as they went about their various tasks. They worked with competence and enthusiasm while being paid less than men doing similar jobs.

A number of patriotic tasks were spearheaded by women. They recycled paper, tin, and even old tubes of toothpaste, to preserve valuable resources. They grew fruit and vegetables in home “victory gardens.” They sewed and knitted their own clothing and the clothing of those serving overseas. They worked as volunteers in hospitals and blood banks. Canadian women gained skills and confidence in their new positions, but at the conclusion of the war, most were prepared to return to their traditional roles in society.

Assignment

1. List 4 reasons that helped to end the Great Depression.
2. Describe the purpose of Victory Bonds.
3. Describe “rationing” and why this was imposed during WWII. List 4 items that were rationed.
4. List 5 important things that women did to help with the war effort while on the home front.