Canada Divided

Why Conscription?

Conscription (compulsory military service) was proposed in 1917

1917 there are more men killed than new volunteers for the war

English Canadians felt that French weren’t doing their part

French felt disassociated with Britain and Anglophone Canada

French language rights were struggling to survive

Few French spoke English and visa versa

Conscription

1917 Borden introduces the Military Service Act that enforces conscription

Didn’t include men vital for wartime production, the sick, or “conscientious objectors” (religious reasons)

Conscription Opponents

Riots ensued

Pacifists who are against the war faced hostility from war supporters

Henri Bourassa (French nationalist) spoke out against conscription

Argued that Canada has lost enough men and spent too much on a war that doesn’t concern Canada

Farmers wanted their sons to stay to work

Workers in the war industries believed they were already doing their part

Albert “Ginger” Goodwin worked in mines around BC since 1906 and was an active member of labour unions

Became vice president of B.C. Federation of Labour

Suffered from lung disease his whole life

Spoke out publicly against the war because miners were forced to work more without raises

Applied for exemption due to “black lung” but in 1917 he was considered “fit for service overseas”

He went into hiding around Cumberland

July 1918 he is hunted down and shot by the Mounties (sparked a BC strike)

Election 1917 – Khaki Election

Borden calls an election 1917

Khaki (colour of uniforms) election = influenced by war

Borden “rigs” the election so he would win

Military Voters Act allows soldiers overseas to vote

Wartime Elections Act gave the vote to women related to servicemen

Cancelled all votes for conscientious objectors and immigrants from enemy countries within the last 15 years

Liberals under Laurier lost the election

Most of their support came from Quebec

Borden forms the Union Government

Multiparty government

Based on common desire for conscription

Conscription results

out of 400 000 men conscripted, about 300,000 applied for exemptions

in the end, only 25 000 men went overseas due to conscription before the end of the war