



The Bitter Harvest of War: New Brunswick and the Conscription Crisis of 1917 (New Brunswick Military Heritage Series)

By Andrew Theobald

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In 1917, the Canadian Corps captured Vimy Ridge in northern France, and a myth grew that Canada — as a nation — was born on its slopes. But the cost was tremendous: 10,000 Canadians were killed, wounded, or went missing in the three-day battle. Shortly thereafter, Prime Minister Robert Borden assembled a "Union Government" to support conscription and called an election on the issue. Canada split along ethnic lines: English Canadians supported conscription; French Canadians rejected it. By year end, Canada teetered on the brink of civil war.

As Andrew Theobald reveals, New Brunswickers were not spared the bitter divisiveness of the larger national debate. Determined to win the election, federal politicians fanned the flames of ethnic tension, pitting English against French and Irish Catholics against Protestants. In the end, the Conscription Crisis of 1917 fractured the ethnic harmony of New Brunswick, leaving a lasting and tragic legacy.

The Bitter Harvest of War is Volume 11 in the New Brunswick Military Heritage Series.

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Editorial Review

Review

"A significant contribution to our understanding of what went on in 1917 ... Essential reading for anyone interested in the history of Canada during the First World War." (*Chronicle Herald* 2013-01-15)

From the Inside Flap

A prime minister determined to keep the troops in action. Waning support for the war effort. A country divided. These aren't today's headlines.

Picture this: Canadian troops die by the thousands in the muddy fields of Europe. Russia is descending into civil war, and will soon be lost to the Allies. The French army has mutinied. The United States has declared war on Germany, but their army needs time to prepare. German U-boats are turning the seas into floating graveyards. Back in Canada, fewer and fewer men are volunteering to join the fray. Prime Minister Borden's government proposed conscription to replace the dead and wounded. Farmers, fishermen, francophones, and the Liberal Party opposed the Military Service Act. Canada was in upheaval. Many reduced the issue to tension between pro-British Ontario and anti-war Quebec, but there was more.

In New Brunswick, ruptures emerged between rural and urban, liberal and conservative, north and south, Protestant and Catholic, and French and English. The legacy of bitterness and ethnic tensions echo to this day.

From the Back Cover

A prime minister determined to keep the troops in action. Waning support for the war effort. A country divided. These aren't today's headlines.

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