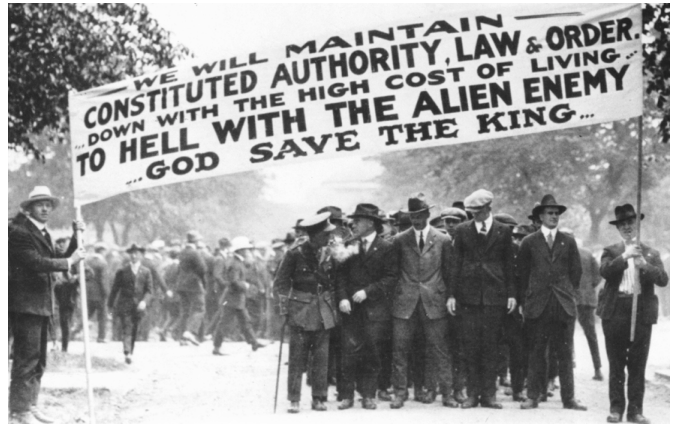


Rendered Captive by Barbed Wire and Maple Leaves



WWI vets protesting the Winnipeg General Strike in 1919, were held captive by all the key narratives of Canada's rampant mass hysteria: Xenophobia, British Imperialism, Muscular Christianity, Law and Order, and antiCommunism.



By Richard Sanders

A century ago, in 1915, a youthful Canada was already waging its second imperialist war overseas.¹ The colony's political and economic elites—ably represented in Parliament by Sir Robert Borden and his pious Anglo-Protestant cabinet—had rallied mainstream Canada behind the imperial hubris of a phoney “war to end all wars.”

Subjected to every propaganda trick imaginable—from patriotic political speeches, popular novels, classroom tripe and religious sermons, to flag-waving parades and church picnics—Canadians were propelled into a mass hysteria that justified not only the war abroad but harsh repression on the homefront.

Exploiting the endemic classism, racism and xenophobia that riddled mainstream Canadian society, opinion leaders demonised their foreign enemies, and rationalised the domestic persecution of a very specific demographic of newcomers. Armed with the wartime pretext that Canada was under siege by diabolical aliens who had infiltrated the gates of our “Peaceable Kingdom,” the Conservative government crafted draconian new security legislation. Passed in 1914—with the loyal support of all Liberal MPs, and the lone Labour Party politician in Parliament—the War Measures Act gave authorities a new arsenal of repressive powers for exerting control over society. Among these powers were tools to monitor and detain anyone even suspected of becoming a potential enemy of the state.

History has been repeating itself ever since. When Harper's Conservative government used Bill C-51 to revamp Canada's institutions of repression, the so-called Anti-Terrorism law was approved with overwhelming Liberal Party support. Armed with these new weapons, Canada's

secret police and spy agencies can now target and pre-emptively jail anyone they believe might possibly threaten the established order of business.

The legal boundaries of the word “terrorist” have been redrawn. Expanded to capture activists said to cause “interference with the economic or financial stability of Canada,” the term “terrorism” also encloses those “unduly influencing a government” by “unlawful means.”² This makes terrorists out of unionists who use illegal strikes, or even pacifists devoted to using Gandhian nonviolence.

After 100 years, Canada's business elites, driven by the same endless pursuit of profits, still wrap themselves in the flag and use simple narratives to instil fear of fiendish enemies. And, Canada's security- fixated, state institutions are still the gravest threat to our civil rights.

While the foreign enemies *du jour* are now said to be radicalised Muslims, Canadians of a century ago were caught in an epidemic of fear stirred up by dire warnings that east European aliens—mostly Ukrainians—were being radicalised by socialist labour activists.

Between 1914 and 1920, Canada was held captive not just by jingoism, but by a virtual dictatorship. When MPs *unanimously* passed the War Measures Act, they gave extraordinary powers to Borden's clutch of Tories. His Cabinet—working with the Governor General, a son of Queen Victoria—used the “emergency” of war to bypass Parliament and issue laws they saw as “necessary...for the security, defence, peace, order and welfare of Canada.”³

By dictating the legal definitions captured by these vague grab-all terms, the Governor in Council also became Canada's semantic gatekeeper. But besides being the despotic guardian and ward of the word of law, this official cabal helped har-

ness prevailing national narratives to capture the hearts, minds and loyalties of mainstream society. This public support was required not only to wage the war abroad, but the one at home.

The War Measures Act of 1914 was a reaction to what its framers called “the existence of real or apprehended war, invasion or insurrection.”⁴ Gripped by fear of revolts, rebellions and resistance to authority, global elites were in crisis. Canada was not immune to the political anxiety disorder that plagued imperialists around the world. Canadian elites were preoccupied and obsessed with phobic worries about seditious uprisings by radicalised socialists and labour activists. By 1917, the angst among Conservative/Liberal elites went viral. Canada was under siege by mass, public hysteria. This moral panic attack is known as the “First Red Scare.”

The foreboding that afflicted European capitalists began decades before the Russian revolutions of 1917. Their fear was sparked by popular mutinies that upset imperial and monarchic control on five continents. Popular insurrections and revolutions included: Ghana, 1900; Angola, 1902; Bulgaria, Macedonia, Greece, 1903-08; Armenia, 1904; Namibia, 1904; Paraguay, 1904; Argentina, 1905; German East Africa, 1905-06; Russia, Poland, Finland, Ukraine, Latvia, Estonia, 1905-07; Persia, 1905-09; Romania, 1907; Turkey, 1908; Bali, 1908; Syria, 1909; Morocco, 1909-10; Monaco, 1910; Portugal, 1910; Mexico, 1910-20; China, 1911-13; Mongolia, 1911-1921; Balkans, 1912-13; Ireland, 1912-23; Albania, 1912-14; and South Africa, 1914.

So, for decades prior to WWI, Europe's colonial powers were increasingly terrified by growing social movements for democracy, justice and labour rights that were organising mass protests and huge