

general strikes. The nearly successful Russian revolution of 1905-1907, pushed many capitalist power brokers to conclude that they needed to take even more desperate measures to contain the spread of socialism, if not to crush it completely.

During WWI, Canadian authorities rallied loyal citizens around the Union Jack to support Britain's imperial interests abroad. But the War Measures Act not only consolidated state power to wage a foreign war, it provided special tools to quell a feared socialist revolt within Canada's borders. The war thus furnished a convenient pretext for targeting domestic enemies of the state. Authorities imagined that foreign radicals who had infiltrated Canada's

gated community, were an infection that had to be stopped from spreading throughout the body politic. Cabinet used its new powers of preventative, mass detention to capture and enslave thousands of single, recently-laid off labourers mostly from eastern Europe. These young men—then amassing in Canada's cities—were feared not only as a source of anticapitalist ideas, but as the group at highest risk of being agitated into action by radical socialists.

### Capturing History

The WWI-era repression of Canada's radical left has been all but erased from mainstream narratives about the period. Instead, the war's centenary has created an on-

slaught of spellbinding stories that pull at our collective heart strings and build nationalist feelings that support the armed forces. The government, corporate media and mainstream civil-society groups have memorialised Canada with poignant tales of soldiers who lost their lives in WWI.

Official WWI narratives have also been used to justify Canada's military and foreign policies. "Nothing has changed," said then-Prime Minister Harper at a 2014 ceremony marking WWI. Continuing with what the Canadian Press called a "veiled reference to Canada's tough stands in support of Ukraine and Israel," he went on to say that "Canada is still loyal to our friends, unyielding to our foes," and stands "once

## Empire and Sons: From Sir William Otter, to the NDP...

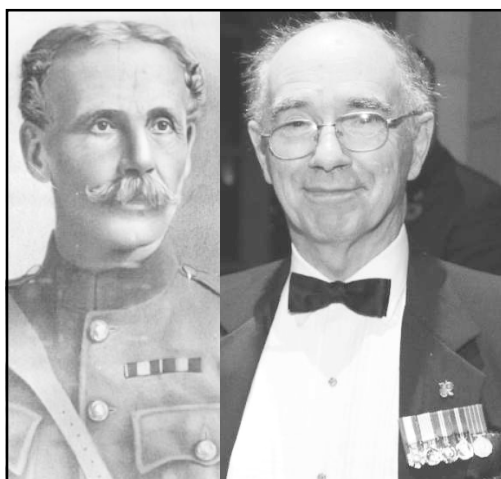
By Richard Sanders

Canada's Major General Sir William Otter is revered as the "father" of Canada's Army. His family tree is laden with archdeacons, bankers, barons, a British Governor of Bermuda, a chief justice of Nova Scotia, and his grandfather was the Anglican Lord Bishop of Chichester, England.<sup>1</sup>

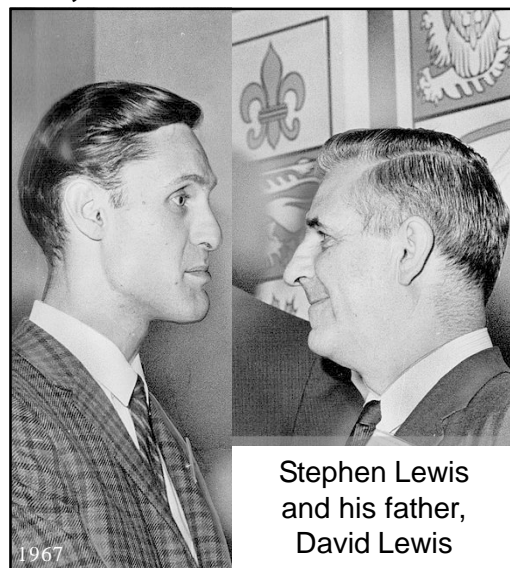
With the war's outbreak in 1914, Otter was brought out of retirement to be appointed Director of Internment Operations. His qualifications included collaboration in two imperial conflicts that involved the mass internment of civilians.

In 1913, Otter was made a Companion of the Most Honourable Military Order of the Bath.<sup>2</sup> For what service to Empire did he receive this title? Was it his role in the North West Rebellion of 1885 when he led a battalion of British troops against a Cree and Métis uprising led by Poundmaker and Big Bear?<sup>3</sup> His role in crushing that revolt led the *Montreal Daily Star* to urge that "Otterism" be used "as a synonym for merciless repression."<sup>4</sup> Otter had dutifully served as an imperial weapon to smash resistance to Canadian land plunder and the genocidal herding of Indians into mass captivity on reserves. (See pp.15-21.) But this crime was only one step on Otter's journey to knighthood.

Otter's next major opportunity to serve imperial conquest came when he led 1,000 troops of the Royal Canadian Infantry Regiment, during the Boer War (1899-1902).<sup>5</sup> This war was fought to secure the British elite's access to diamonds and gold controlled by the Boer (Dutch/African) regime in South Africa. During this



Sir William Otter and his grandson, Desmond Morton



Stephen Lewis and his father, David Lewis

contest of empires, British troops forced 116,000 Blacks into concentration camps.<sup>6</sup> They also herded 118,000 Boer women, children and elderly men into deadly prison camps. Of these civilians, more than 42,000 died from preventable diseases in the camps, including 28,000 Boers<sup>7</sup> and over 14,000 Blacks.<sup>8</sup> In addition, 26,000 Boer men were shipped to British prison camps in India and Caribbean colonies.<sup>9</sup>

In 2014, to honour the Canadian troops who died while assisting Britain's imperial conquest of South Africa, Canada's government added the Boer War, and Afghanistan, to the conflicts that are now officially commemorated at the National War Memorial in Ottawa.<sup>10</sup>

Considering his commanding role in squashing the Northwest Rebellion and in leading troops during the Boer War (in which more than a 250,000 civilians were interned), it is no small wonder that Otter was knighted and then appointed to lead Canada's internment camps during WWI.

Otter was immortalised in a gentle biography by his grandson, Desmond Morton, one of Canada's leading military historians. Morton's narrative on Otter in the *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, presents him in as favourable a light as possible. Morton's narrative on the Boer War, while noting that the soldiers under his grandfather's command "became the ideal symbols of a great victory for the British empire,"<sup>11</sup> makes no mention of war's great success in killing tens of thousands of civilians trapped in internment camps.

Morton, whose father was a Brigadier General in WWII, is perhaps best remembered for his rendition of WWI as *the* defining moment in Canada's long struggle for freedom from its imperial masters. "The Great War," he said, "gave [Prime Minister] King and the Liberals arguments and support enough to take Canada to full and unquestioned independence."<sup>12</sup>

During his tenth year in Canada's army, Captain Morton "was anxious to

again beside allies whose sovereignty, whose territorial integrity—indeed, whose very freedoms and existence—are still at risk.”<sup>5</sup> (Canada’s “tough” support for the Ukrainian and Israeli governments continues apace under the Trudeau Liberals.)

The October 22, 2014, murder of an army reservist at Ottawa’s National War Memorial (built to commemorate our WWI military losses), was used to justify the deployment of troops and warplanes to Iraq. On the next day, Harper told Parliament that “laws and police powers...in the area of surveillance, detention, and arrest...need to be much strengthened.”<sup>6</sup> On October 24, then-Public Safety Minister Steven Blaney said the government was “eyeing the thresholds established in Canadian law for the *preventive arrests* of people *thought* to be *contemplating*

attacks that *may* be *linked* to terrorism.”<sup>7</sup> (Emphasis added.)

The pre-emptive jailing of those *thought* to be *thinking* about actions that *might* be “*linked* to terrorism,” requires extreme paranoia. Ironically, Canada’s current war against IS—framed as a humanitarian attack on ultraconservative religious fanatics—was begun by evangelical neocons keen on restraining domestic civil liberties.

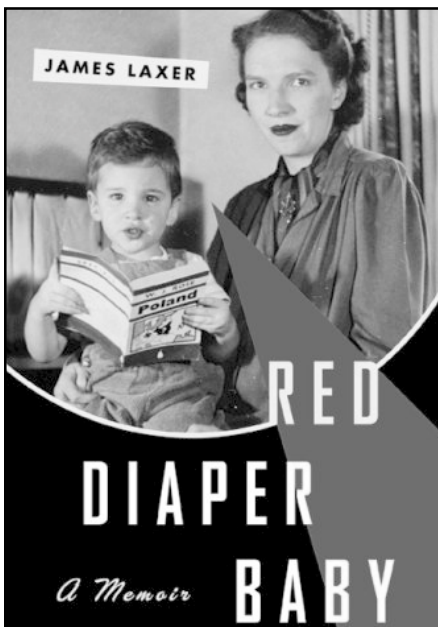
Missing from the militarised human-interest stories of WWI are historical narratives about Canada’s harsh attacks on domestic civil rights. In 1914, when Tories and Liberals passed the War Measures Act, Cabinet was given unlimited powers to restrict and control communications, travel, manufacturing, property and trade. The Act also gave them absolute powers

to arrest, detain and deport anyone, without trial. Cabinet was soon using this power to wage war against a specific set of immigrants. Many of them—not coincidentally—were sympathetic to anticapitalist ideas and radical, labour actions.

While official stories of Canada’s WWI internment now critique the ethnic profiling of Ukrainians, they usually ignore the role of economics, class and politics in targeting them. Such renditions of history are common among Canada’s nationalist Ukrainians. For example, on Remembrance Day 2010, the ultraright Ukrainian Canadian Congress (UCC) said that:

“Thousands of Ukrainian Canadians were jailed in Canadian internment camps....not because of anything they had done, but only because of where they had come from.”<sup>8</sup>

## ...and the Waffle



serve as [the NDP’s] assistant provincial secretary.” So, the party’s executive agreed to “negotiate” Morton’s “release from the armed forces.”<sup>13</sup> He was soon working for the Ontario NDP. In the early 1970s, as a close advisor to NDP leaders, David and Stephen Lewis, Morton was instrumental in helping this father and son team to oust a youthful reform group from the party. In 1971, the “Waffle Movement for an Independent Socialist Canada,” was seen as a threat that the NDP leadership and the Mounties both wanted to contain. A secret RCMP report said the Waffle was hoping “to change the NDP from within and radicalise the NDP socialist policies.... In its present relatively infant form, the Waffle Group is rapidly becoming a melting pot for radicals of all ‘Left’ groups....”<sup>14</sup>

The “Waffle Manifesto” set out a socialist policy of independence from US wars and hegemony. Its platform included nationalising “the essential resources industries, finance and credit, and industries strategic to planning our economy.”<sup>15</sup>

Morton’s 1972 success in ousting the Waffle from the NDP, is similar to when Rev.J.S.Woodsworth led the purge of radicals from the party’s forerunner, the Cooperative Commonwealth Federation in the 1930s and ‘40s. Ousting the Waffle kept radical economic, antiwar and anti-imperialist ideas from infecting the NDP. The Royal Commission into RCMP crimes, said that because of their concern “that Trotskyists and Communists were joining the Waffle,” the Mounties “volunteered information to one leader of a provincial New Democratic Party” to make him “aware of subversives within his Party.”<sup>16</sup>

Besides being spied on by the RCMP and expelled from the NDP, Waffle organisers were also targeted for internment during the Cold War. This top secret Canadian program was called Operation Profunc. (See pp.35, 49.) From 1950 until the 1980s, the RCMP created annual lists of thousands of radical leftists who—in case of a war, or some vaguely-defined emergency—were to be interned. In the 1950s, the first generation of this program targeted communists like Edna and Robert Mendel Laxer. The latter was a WWII veteran who became a paid organiser for the Communist Party, and later a clinical psychologist. Under Profunc, their children, Jim and Gord, were also to be rounded up. Jim, now a York University political science prof, was a leader of the Waffle, which he and his father helped to found.

## References

1. “William Otter” (Bishop of Chichester) [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/William\\_Otter](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/William_Otter)
2. Canadian Troops to South Africa. [albertagenalogy-research.ca](http://albertagenalogy-research.ca)
3. George Maclean Rose, *A Cyclopaedia of Canadian Biography*, Vol. 2, 1888, p.621 [books.google.ca/books?id=dm0ZAQAAlAAJ](http://books.google.ca/books?id=dm0ZAQAAlAAJ)
4. Desmond Morton, “William Dillon Otter,” *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, 2003. [www.biographi.ca](http://www.biographi.ca)
5. 2 SS Bn Royal Canadian Regiment Infantry, South African War, Facts & Myths [www.angloboerwar.com/forum/8-events/9795-2-ss-bn-royal-canadian-regiment-infantry-south-african-war-facts-myths](http://www.angloboerwar.com/forum/8-events/9795-2-ss-bn-royal-canadian-regiment-infantry-south-african-war-facts-myths)
6. Concentration Camps - Blacks [www.angloboerwar.com/other-information/88-concentration-camps/](http://www.angloboerwar.com/other-information/88-concentration-camps/)
7. Women and Children in White Concentration Camps during the Anglo-Boer War, 1900-1902. [www.sahistory.org.za/topic/women-children-white-concentration-camps-during-anglo-boer-war-1900-1902](http://www.sahistory.org.za/topic/women-children-white-concentration-camps-during-anglo-boer-war-1900-1902)
8. Methods of Barbarism? [www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/pathways/census/events/britain7.htm](http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/pathways/census/events/britain7.htm)
9. Prisoner-of-War Camps Overseas [www.anglo-boer.co.za/pow/pow-camps-overseas-2.php](http://www.anglo-boer.co.za/pow/pow-camps-overseas-2.php)
10. Josh Wingrove, “Police presence in Ottawa doubled for sombre ceremony,” *Globe and Mail*, November 11, 2014. [www.theglobeandmail.com](http://www.theglobeandmail.com)
11. Morton, *Op. cit.*
12. Desmond Morton, “Was The Great War Canada’s War of Independence?” [www3.nfb.ca/ww1/independence.php](http://www3.nfb.ca/ww1/independence.php)
13. J.T. Morley, *The CCF/NDP in Ontario, A Biography*, 1984, p.82. [books.google.ca/books?id=ANavAwAAQBAJ](http://books.google.ca/books?id=ANavAwAAQBAJ)
14. RCMP brief to Solicitor General, Jean-Pierre Goyer, March 1971. Quoted in “Commission of inquiry concerning certain activities of the RCMP,” 2nd Report, Vol.1, Ch.3, August 1981, p.483. [epe.lac-bac.gc.ca](http://epe.lac-bac.gc.ca)
15. The Waffle Manifesto: For an Independent Socialist Canada, 1969. [www.socialisthistory.ca/](http://www.socialisthistory.ca/)
16. “Commission...” *Op. cit.*, pp.353-354.