

**A City Reborn:**  
**Patriotism in Saskatoon During the Second World War**

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By  
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### **Abstract**

In the last decade historians have focused greater attention on the Canadian home front during the Second World War. This increased scrutiny has led to studies of not only the war's impact on the nation at large, but also on specific urban communities. A weakness in all of these urban accounts, however, is that patriotism is too often taken for granted. An examination of Saskatoon between 1939 and 1945 provides a case study for how patriotism was fostered in a community thousands of kilometers away from the battlefield. Of particular interest here were the ways in which Saskatoon's collective imagination, stifled for nearly a decade by the Great Depression, nourished the city's patriotic zeal. Patriotism is considered from three main perspectives. The ways in which Saskatoon re-created at home the war "over there" are examined first. Instrumental to this endeavour were a deep and sympathetic interest in England's weathering of the Nazi *Blitz*, a fear that the Germans might attack North America, and an idolization of the Canadian soldier, both abroad and in the city's own midst. Secondly, Saskatoon's vicarious experience of the Second World War in turn energized the countless patriotic initiatives in the city. Saskatonians, from women to the smallest children, were encouraged to "do their bit" to contribute to the war effort on the home front. Finally, there was also a darker side to the patriotic imagination: a disturbing xenophobia dominated Saskatoon during the war years. People of German and Japanese ancestry, as well as those on the left of the political spectrum, were suspected of being fifth columnists. Using the *Star-Phoenix* newspaper as a mirror of the community, this thesis provides new insight into patriotism, Saskatoon, and the Second World War.

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## Introduction

In 1995 Desmond Morton and Jack Granatstein, Canada's two leading military historians, wrote, "There is as yet no good published study of life in wartime Canada."<sup>1</sup> For a long time the Second World War was considered the stuff of soldiers, with accounts of battles and martial operations dominating historiography on the subject.<sup>2</sup> Those scholars who turned to the Canadian home front before 1995 focused on highly specific issues: the beginnings of the welfare state, the growth of industry, the expanded role of women in the workforce, the conscription debate of 1942, the British Air Commonwealth Training Plan, the reintegration of veterans into society, anti-Semitism, and the evacuation of Japanese Canadians from the West Coast.<sup>3</sup> But over the last decade historians have started to take a more wide-ranging interest in wartime Canada. *Saints, Sinners, and Soldiers: Canada's Second World War*, by University of Ottawa historian Jeffrey Keshen, is evidence of this new approach. With a keen eye for both

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<sup>1</sup> Desmond Morton and Jack Granatstein, *Victory 1945: Canadians From War to Peace* (Toronto: Harper Collins, 1995), 255.

<sup>2</sup> For a more detailed discussion of Canada's military involvement in both the Great War and the Second World War see Tim Cook's *Clio's Warriors: Canadian Historians and the Writing of the World Wars* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2006).

<sup>3</sup> For the beginnings of the welfare state, see Malcolm Taylor, *Health Insurance and Canadian Public Policy* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1978) and J. L. Granatstein, *Canada's War* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1974). For the growth of industry in Canada during wartime, see Robert Bothwell and W. Kilbourn's biography of C. D. Howe, the minister of munitions and supplies, *C.D. Howe* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1979). The best study of the role of women during the Second World War remains Ruth Pierson's "*They're Still Women After All*": *The Second World War and Canadian Womanhood* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1986); see also Jean Bruce's *Back the Attack!: Canadian Women During the Second World War* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1985). For the conscription debate of 1942 see J. L. Granatstein and J.M. Hitsman, *Broken Promises: A History of Conscription in Canada* (Toronto: Copp Clark, 1985). For studies of the British Commonwealth Air Training Plan, see Peter C. Conrad, *Training for Victory: The British Commonwealth Air Training Plan in the West* (Saskatoon: Western Producer Prairie Books, 1989); Brereton Greenhous and Norman Hillmer, "The Impact of the British Commonwealth Air Training Plan on Western Canada: Some Saskatchewan Studies," *Journal of Canadian Studies*, Vol. 16, nos. 3 & 4 (Fall-Winter 1981); Ted Barris, *Behind the Glory* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1992); Spencer Dunmore, *Wings for Victory: The Remarkable Story of the British Commonwealth Air Training Plan in Canada* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1994). For the reintegration of veterans into Canadian society, see Walter Woods, *Rehabilitation (A Combined Operation)* (Ottawa: Queen's Printer, 1953); Robert England, *Discharged* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1943); Barry Broadfoot, *The Veterans' Years* (Toronto: Douglas & McIntyre, 1985). For anti-Semitism, see Irving Abella and Harold Troper, *None is Too Many: Canada and the Jews of Europe, 1933-1948* (Toronto: Key Porter, 2000). For the evacuation of Japanese-Canadians from the British Columbian coast, see Ken Adachi, *The Enemy that Never Was* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1976); Ann Gomer Sunahara, *The Politics of Racism: the Uprooting of Japanese Canadians During the Second World War* (Toronto: Lorimer, 1981); Patricia Roy, *Mutual Hostages: Canadians and Japanese during the Second World War* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990).

the praiseworthy and the censurable, Keshen shows how the war permeated every level of Canadian society. The “good war,” cautions Keshen, was sometimes the “not-so-good-war,” as often unfounded fears of sexual immorality and profiteering divided civilians.<sup>4</sup> Although long overdue, Keshen’s national perspective is not the only way to write home-front history. Historians Stephen Kimber and Serge Marc Durflinger, for instance, have examined the war’s impact on such individual Canadian communities as Halifax and Verdun, Quebec, respectively.<sup>5</sup> “Just as local history is sometimes criticized for lacking a broader context, so national studies may neglect local conditions and communities,” argues Durflinger.<sup>6</sup> Importantly, urban histories often illuminate how local experiences of the Second World War not only paralleled but diverged from the national one.

Western Canadian cities have benefited from the new urban approach to the home front since 1995. Three prairie communities in particular have received attention: Red Deer, Lethbridge, and Regina.<sup>7</sup> Although replete with colourful anecdotes,<sup>8</sup> these histories lack a clear thesis. By relying exclusively on chronology to organize his account of Red Deer between 1939 and 1945, Michael Dawe, an archivist at the Red Deer and District Museum and Archives, fails to give his work an argumentative edge. Indeed, Dawe’s main idea, that the war “marked [Red Deer’s] transition from a small, quiet parkland community to a burgeoning

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<sup>4</sup> Jeffrey Keshen, *Saints, Sinners, and Soldiers: Canada’s Second World War* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2004), 5-6.

<sup>5</sup> Stephen Kimber, *Sailors, Slackers, and Blind Pigs* (Toronto: Doubleday Canada, 2002); Serge Marc Durflinger, *Fighting from Home: The Second World War in Verdun, Quebec* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2006).

<sup>6</sup> Durflinger, *Fighting from Home*, 4.

<sup>7</sup> Michael Dawe, “Community in Transition: Red Deer in the Second World War,” *For King and Country: Alberta in the Second World War* (Edmonton: Reidmore Books, 1995), 119-138; Aimée Viel, *Lethbridge on the Homefront, 1939-1945* (Lethbridge: Lethbridge Historical Society, 1998); Kathryn Vera Burianyk, *The ‘Home Front’ in Regina During World War II* (Unpublished M.A. thesis, University of Regina, 2003).

<sup>8</sup> In 1942, for example, a soldier training in Red Deer claimed that he had been attacked by two Nazis and that they had bound him to the railway track. Local police later determined that the soldier had actually tied himself up and that, upon seeing a train approaching and unable to free himself, he went into a state of shock. The authorities charged the soldier with attempted suicide (Dawe, “Community in Transition,” 130).

modern centre,” strikes the reader almost as an afterthought, buried as it is in the last paragraph of the article.<sup>9</sup> Aimée Viel’s *Lethbridge on the Homefront, 1939-1945* suffers from a similar lack of focus. A student at the University of Lethbridge at the time, Viel examines the “cultural activities and expressions of a defined community” as well as the more general effect of the war on Lethbridge society.<sup>10</sup> Despite being clearer in her aims than Dawe, Viel is too broad in her approach, a weakness captured in the vague titles to her four chapters: “The War Comes to Lethbridge,” “Together For Victory,” “Wartime Tensions,” and “Facing the Future.”<sup>11</sup> Without a unifying central idea, the otherwise impressive breadth of Viel’s research overwhelms the reader.

In her M.A. thesis *The ‘Home Front’ in Regina During World War II*, Kathryn Burianyk applies two theories common to American scholarship on the home front: the “watershed” and “good war” approaches. Both stress that the war was a decisive and positive turning point: socially, politically, economically, culturally and racially.<sup>12</sup> Burianyk’s theoretical framework is refreshing, as is her challenging of it to show how most “pre-war patterns of thought [in Regina] emerged from the war intact and only slightly affected by the war.” Citizens of the Saskatchewan capital, argues Burianyk, wanted “the past but not the deprivation.”<sup>13</sup> Despite its strengths, however, the dissertation is too ambitious. So all-encompassing are the “watershed” and “good war” theories that they prevent Burianyk from narrowing the focus of her study. The result is that the author compresses every conceivable aspect of Regina’s experience of the Second World War into just over one hundred pages. Limitations aside, home-front histories of Red Deer, Lethbridge, and Regina remain the only

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<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 138.

<sup>10</sup> Viel, *Lethbridge on the Homefront, 1939 to 1945*, 3.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>12</sup> Burianyk, *The ‘Home Front’ in Regina*, 117.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 122.



studies of Western Canadian cities during the war years.<sup>14</sup>

One prairie centre whose history during the Second World War merits attention is Saskatoon. With a population of 43,027 in 1941, Saskatoon was the second largest city in Saskatchewan.<sup>15</sup> What's more, between 1939 and 1945 many military training facilities were located in and around the city. Civilians were brought into direct contact with both soldiers from the Canadian forces and pilots from across the British Empire. Above all, very little has been written on Saskatoon's experience of the Second World War. The city's official history, by local historians Don Kerr and Stan Hanson, concludes in 1932 with the early stages of the Great Depression.<sup>16</sup> A recent pictorial history of Saskatoon contains photos from the city over the last century but, understandably, offers little analysis – the period of the Second World War is encapsulated in five pages.<sup>17</sup> In a special tenth anniversary issue of the *Saskatoon History Review* commemorating the two world wars in the city, there are articles on war brides, war memorials, local naval barracks, and the University of Saskatchewan.<sup>18</sup> Kerr and Hanson, the authors of this last article, also deal with the subject of the university in another piece, specifically the persecution of three pacifists at that institution.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> The history of other Western Canadian cities between 1939 and 1945 has not totally been ignored. Several good provincial histories of the prairies exist which afford a glimpse into the life of individual communities during this period. See Bill Waiser, *Saskatchewan: A New History* (Calgary: Fifth House, 2005); W. L. Morton, *Manitoba: A History* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1967); Howard Palmer and Tamara Palmer, *Alberta: A New History* (Edmonton: Hurtig Publishers, 1990). There are also a number of urban histories of Western Canadian cities that have been written, although the Second World War is given only cursory treatment in all of these. See Alan Artibise, *Winnipeg: An Illustrated History* (Toronto: James Lorimer & Company, 1977); William J. Brennan, *Regina: An Illustrated History* (Toronto: James Lorimer & Company, 1989); Max Foran, *Calgary: An Illustrated History* (Toronto: James Lorimer & Company, 1978); John Larsen and Maurice Richard Libby, *Moose Jaw: People, Places, History* (Regina: Coteau Books, 2001).

<sup>15</sup> *Census of Canada 1941*, "Population by mother tongue and racial origin for cities of 30,000 and over," 256-257.

<sup>16</sup> Don Kerr and Stan Hanson, *Saskatoon: The First Half-Century* (Edmonton: NeWest Press, 1982).

<sup>17</sup> Jeff O'Brien, Ruth W. Millar, and William P. Delaine, *Saskatoon: A History in Photographs* (Regina: Coteau Books, 2006).

<sup>18</sup> *Saskatoon History Review*, No. 10 (1994).

<sup>19</sup> Stan Hanson and Donald Kerr, "Pacifism, Dissent and the University of Saskatchewan, 1938-1944," *Saskatchewan History* 45, no. 2 (Fall 1993): 3-14.

Much remains to be done on Saskatoon's experience of the Second World War. In particular, it is important to study how patriotism inspired the remarkable amount of war-related activity in the prairie city between 1939 and 1945. It is a weakness of urban histories of the Canadian home front that patriotism is too often taken for granted, acknowledged briefly or implicitly but never deemed important in its own right. Such an omission is especially glaring when one considers that it was through patriotism that Saskatonians – indeed, all Canadians – understood and reacted to the Second World War. This fact was not lost on the federal government, whose Victory Loan advertisements consistently tapped into, not to mention helped foster, patriotic fervour. Above all, because of its power to capture totally the collective imagination of a city, patriotism represents the best way to understand the history of the home front. Thousands of kilometers away from its battlefields, Saskatonians lived vicariously the most momentous war of all time through patriotism.

But patriotism did not capture Saskatoon's collective imagination immediately with the outbreak of the Second World War. Neither the news of Germany's invasion of Poland on 1 September 1939 nor Canada's declaration of war nine days later prompted even one popular demonstration in the prairie city. "Scattered handclapping," but no cheering, greeted members of the Saskatoon Light Infantry during the first military parade in the city on 7 October 1939.<sup>20</sup> When the same unit left Saskatoon for Europe in early December as part of the Canadian First Division, it did so to little fanfare.<sup>21</sup> The city's tepid response to the outbreak of war in 1939 was in stark contrast to its reaction to the same news in 1914. Patriotic demonstrations in

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<sup>20</sup> *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 10 October 1939.

<sup>21</sup> All three histories of the SLI imply that the regiment left Saskatoon in December 1939 to little fanfare. If these accounts are correct, only family members and younger soldiers not yet nineteen years of age saw the troops off at the train station. W. F. Cozens, *Saskatoon Light Infantry 39-43* (Saskatoon: n.p., 1989), 5; Ernest Drayton Walker, *A Resume of the Story of 1st Battalion, the Saskatoon Light Infantry (M.G.), Canadian Army, Overseas* (Saskatoon: General Printing and Bookbinding, 1947), 20; Howard Mitchell, *My War With the Saskatoon Light Infantry (M.G.), 1939-1945* (Fiske, Saskatchewan: Rosetown Publishing Company, 1980), 7.

Saskatoon, including singing in the streets, lasted a week.<sup>22</sup> According to the reminiscences of one soldier at the time, each member of the army was given a hero's sendoff at the train station: "It was a nasty wet night when we left Saskatoon, but a record crowd turned out to see that wild band start for the Great Adventure. . . . The mayor and city council and other government officials were present to bid us the soldier's farewell, 'Good-bye, Good Luck, and Godspeed,' and the train pulled out amid such a roar of cheering that the 'Girl I Left Behind Me' was fairly drowned in the waves of departing cheers."<sup>23</sup> The above reference to the "Great Adventure" by this veteran of 1914 holds the ironic key to why soldiers departing Saskatoon in 1939 were virtually ignored by civilians. The Great War, by exposing the horrors of trench warfare and the devastation of modern weaponry, had stripped away naïve romanticism about military conflict. When war was declared again twenty-five years later, Saskatoon's collective memory recalled the cataclysm of the first one.

Two factors ensured a change in Saskatoon's subdued response to the Second World War. With the fall of France in June 1940, Canada became Britain's greatest ally against Nazi Germany, a position it held until 11 December 1941 when the United States declared war on that country. Saskatonians responded to this new situation with alacrity. With the English heroically resisting the *Luftwaffe* Blitz, love of Britain, the heart of the Empire, swept the city. For the first time during the war the home front was energized to "do its bit" to bring about victory. A second reason the war finally captured Saskatoon's imagination in June 1940

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In December 1940, a year after the SLI had left for Britain, former University of Saskatchewan President Walter Murray headed a delegation calling on Saskatoon City Council to purchase a battalion color for the regiment. The move seems to have been a way to atone for the city's indifferent response a year earlier, when the battalion left the city with almost no public recognition (*Star-Phoenix*, 3 December 1940).

<sup>22</sup> Kerr and Hanson, *Saskatoon: The First Half-Century*, 147. Saskatonians did hear marching music and rolling drums in the downtown streets on 1 September 1939 but, far from providing a setting for the European war news, they were designed to ally people to another kind of war: the battle against tuberculosis. The Saskatoon Boys Band was simply playing music to advertise the Christmas seal fund for the prevention of the infectious disease (*Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 2 September 1939).

<sup>23</sup> Sergeant Harold Baldwin, *Holding the Line* (Chicago: A. C. McClurg, 1918), 3-4.

derives from that city's experience of the Great Depression. For those "ten lost years," city life in Saskatoon, one of Saskatchewan's key agricultural centres, became stunted; for many, simply securing food and shelter was the defining feature of existence.<sup>24</sup> Unable to contend with forces beyond its control – drought, insect infestations, a world economic system in ruins – a sense of profound helplessness descended upon Saskatoon. Having emerged from the darkest period of its history, Saskatoon found in the Second World War a sense of purpose that it had not known for nearly a decade. More than anything else, one idea captured the imagination of Saskatoon's citizens: patriotism. A determination to serve both Canada and the British Empire imbued all aspects of city life with patriotic zeal. In control of its destiny once more, Saskatoon embarked on a journey of rediscovery.

With patriotism as the central focus, Saskatoon's experience of the Second World War can be divided into three parts. The first chapter, entitled "From 'Over There' to Over Here: Patriotism and the Imagination," examines how Saskatoon conceived of the war beyond its own borders and how that conflict captured the imagination of a city far from the battlefield. Emphasized in this section are the visit of the royal couple to Saskatoon in June of 1939, accounts in the *Star-Phoenix* of Britain's weathering of the Blitz, the mock blackouts which gave Saskatonians some sense of the horrors of war, and the omnipresence of military personnel in the city during this period. The second chapter, entitled "'Doing My Bit':

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<sup>24</sup> This sense of helplessness was expressed in a letter to Prime Minister R. B. Bennett from Saskatoonian Kevin O'Malley in April 1935: "Mr. Bennit – Dear Sir – I hereby write you a letter and tell you how I am getting used this winter. On this so called Saskatoon relief. I aint getting enough food to eat for my life and famley. Onley about enough for to do about four days, and as far as clothing is concerned we cant get anything for my wife and famley or myself. I have been four days down at the clothing Relief berur trying to get a pair of shoes for my wife. . . . If you can help us out atall we need it. That the shack we are living in aint fit for a pig to live in. We have been trying to get out of it for over a year, as it is cold and drafty and full of bedbugs. And the reason is they are only paying five dollars a month. And our Landlord is marking our rent form for eight dollars a month. And this is a thing you ought to know. If they are charging you for the full amount you ought to know about it." L.M. Grayson and Michael Bliss, eds., *The Wretched of Canada: Letters to R. B. Bennett, 1930-1935* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1971), 138-139.

Patriotism in Action,” explores how patriotism was not merely a passive reflex but an active force. Although the young men who enlisted in the army provide the most obvious example of patriotic initiative, all Saskatoon was encouraged to “do its bit.” Organized charities and Victory Bond drives were crucial to the war effort. There was also a striking emphasis on the role of women as well as on the contributions of young children. The third section, “The Enemy Within: Patriotism and Fear,” explores the negative side of patriotism’s imagination, specifically Saskatoon’s fear that there was a fifth column loyal to Nazi Germany within the city. A climate of intense suspicion took hold as people of German descent became targets of rumour and aspersion. Even Japanese-Canadians, despite their small numbers in Saskatoon, figured into the story when two Japanese families from British Columbia petitioned City Council for permission to move to the city. Finally, fears of fifth columnists were directed against another perceived enemy: the left side of the political spectrum, particularly the socialists of the Cooperative Commonwealth Federation and Communists in the city.

The most important primary source in reconstructing the history of Saskatoon during the Second World War is the city’s daily newspaper, the *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*. No other published material rivals its treatment of everyday life in the prairie city. While the *Star-Phoenix* is not the only source on wartime Saskatoon (whenever possible, other sources were consulted to verify the newspaper’s accounts), it is nonetheless unique in providing a continuous sense of life in the city. From Victory Loan drives to military parades, all war-related activity in Saskatoon was meticulously recorded by its journalists. As William Eggleston, the chief press censor for the federal government during the war, noted, Canadian journalists were patriotic and as “anxious as anyone else to win the war.”<sup>25</sup> Of course, any account which makes extensive use of newspapers as a source must take into account that

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<sup>25</sup> Keshen, *Saints, Sinners, and Soldiers*, 16.

medium's bias. Reporters did not merely document Saskatoon's patriotic fervour: they helped to manufacture it. Far from simply describing events, newspapers are powerful instruments of hegemony; they have their own political agendas and they seek to mould public opinion accordingly. The *Star-Phoenix* was no different in this regard. In 1928 the paper became an unofficial organ of the Liberal Party when Clifford Sifton, best remembered for his work as minister of the interior (1896-1905), bought it.<sup>26</sup> The *Star-Phoenix* remained in the Sifton family until 1995, when it was acquired by Hollinger Inc. The Siftons' political preference was well represented in the person of Jeremiah Sylvester Woodward, who served as the *Star-Phoenix*'s editor from its inception to 1946. An Englishman and a veteran of the Great War, Woodward cut his teeth as a political commentator in the 1920s for the *Manitoba Free Press*, another Sifton-owned paper and the Liberal Party's chief organ on the Prairies. Woodward's political ties remained strong during the Second World War. In 1944 he was selected by the Canadian Wartime Information Board and the British Ministry of Information to conduct a speaking tour of Britain, telling people there of Canada's war effort. Woodward and his fellow journalists toed the government line throughout the war, whipping up enthusiasm whenever they could for Saskatoon's contribution to the Allies' cause.

Ultimately, the *Star-Phoenix*, which boasted in December 1939 of reaching 90,093 readers daily, both described and managed Saskatoon's response to the Second World War. Having read every issue of Saskatoon's newspaper during the war years, I was struck by the comprehensive and continuous perspective on city life. Indeed, by providing historians with a

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<sup>26</sup> Historian Allan Levine observes that Sifton's purchase of both the Saskatoon *Star-Phoenix* and the Regina *Leader Post* in 1928 struck fear into the hearts of Conservatives, both in Saskatchewan and nationally. Without a newspaper sympathetic to their cause, some Tories ominously predicted total defeat in the next federal election. Not ready to surrender the field to the Sifton dailies, Richard Bedford Bennett, the leader of the federal Conservatives, provided financial backing in 1928 for a new newspaper: the *Regina Daily Star*. Mismanaged from the start, the *Daily Star* was a complete failure and ceased publication in 1940. Allan Levine, *Scrum Wars: The Prime Ministers and the Media* (Toronto: Dundurn Press, 1993), 155-156.

uniquely valuable resource for this period, the *Star-Phoenix* must be regarded as the central source for any study of the growth and manifestations of patriotism among Saskatonians.

## Chapter One

### From “Over There” to Over Here: Patriotism and the Imagination

“The city plunged into darkness, columns of military trucks and jeeps loaded with soldiers armed with rifles and machine-guns roared in from concentration points outside the city. Motor trucks carrying the invaders sped through the downtown streets while the sound of rifle fire and explosive charges filled the air. The atmosphere was acrid with smoke.” This vivid description of a military invasion, easily mistaken for a dispatch from Europe on the *Wehrmacht*’s destruction of Warsaw, Rotterdam, or any other embattled European city, actually detailed a mock blitz on Saskatoon in September 1941. Citizens on the street were stopped by the “enemy” and asked to show their registration cards. Even fifth columnists worked their nefarious schemes: at the Canadian National Railway station a civilian opened an innocent-looking delivery trunk only to pull out a machine gun.<sup>1</sup> In October 1942 an even larger “invasion” took place. With Saskatoon bathed in darkness, massed formations of airplanes roared overhead, paratroopers dropped from the sky, and black-garbed enemy soldiers from outside the city, some of them with swastikas and rising suns chalked on their uniforms, advanced on such strategic centres as City Hall, the police station, and the newspaper plant. Local radio station CFQC, also seized by the raiders, broadcast propaganda over its airwaves. Its mayor and civic officials taken prisoner, Saskatoon was bereft of leadership in its darkest hour.<sup>2</sup>

Besides promoting recruitment, these exercises had three other purposes: first, to foster among Saskatonians sympathy for “less favored communities,” centres such as London which had endured a true blitz at the hands of the *Luftwaffe*; second, to offer some preparation in the event of a possible attack on the prairie city itself; and last, to train soldiers who would

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<sup>1</sup> *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 25 September 1941.

<sup>2</sup> *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 20 October 1942.



eventually serve overseas.<sup>3</sup> The organizers of the mock attacks were clearly motivated by serious considerations. Yet in reading the *Star-Phoenix*'s account of the two "invasions" on the city, one senses a large element of revelry which one can only describe as the delight of playing at war. The references to the role of children – who by nature play – are particularly interesting. During the September 1941 blackout, for example, youngsters ran door to door warning people to shut off their lights, sternly reminding forgetful citizens that there was a war on and that enemy bombers flew overhead. These zealous self-appointed policemen of the city received a thrill in the Nutana district upon their discovery of a man who refused all entreaties to extinguish his lights. Convinced that the recalcitrant citizen was a fifth columnist – after all, bright lights on the ground could be used to guide enemy "raiders" in the air – a group of courageous boys advanced on the house. To the children's surprise – not to mention glee – the front door of the dwelling swung open and the offender emerged to fire on them with his revolver – loaded only with blanks, of course.<sup>4</sup>

The exhilaration of playing at war, so acute during the mock blackouts, seems to have exerted a lasting effect. In June 1942, for example, a teenager was caught setting a "tank trap" on a West side street. Ultimately, the crude device – a plank of wood full of nails – failed to knock any tanks out of commission, its only trophy of war a hapless bicycle.<sup>5</sup> This sense of war as festivity, however, did not sit well with at least one Saskatonian. Mrs. Winnifred Guild charged that adults, much like their children, saw in the mock blitz nothing more than a "great show." As a former air raid warden in Britain who had suffered the death of two of her

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<sup>3</sup> *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 15 September 1941.

<sup>4</sup> *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 25 September 1941. The *Star-Phoenix* article went on to mention that in the end the "fifth columnist's" lights were turned off. Although the situation was resolved peacefully, the boys who besieged the home observed that they could have "liquidated" the enemy agent if they had wished. Although it is unclear whether the children actually used the word "liquidate," or whether the *Star-Phoenix* simply imputed it to them, that a word fraught with ominous connotations was so freely used is a striking comment on how the city's imagination of being at war sometimes got carried away.

<sup>5</sup> *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 27 June 1942.

children during the Blitz, Mrs. Guild was eminently qualified to make such an accusation.<sup>6</sup>

Despite such impassioned concerns the element of play in the mock attacks was not necessarily at odds with the seriousness of its purpose, at least from the point of view of patriotism in Saskatoon at the time. Unlike a London or a Leningrad, North American cities had never experienced enemy bombardment. For patriotism to flourish in locales such as Saskatoon, the life “over there” had to be imagined – and at times vicariously experienced – over here. Of course, this imagination did not work in a vacuum: it was nourished by the images of war present in the daily life of the city. The mock invasions, for example, would have appealed to patriotism through the imagination in several ways. In their efforts to understand the Battle of Britain (that is, the sustained bombing of England by Nazi Germany), Saskatonians, especially those of British origin, would have identified with what Winston Churchill later called that country’s time of “intense struggle and ceaseless anxiety.”<sup>7</sup> Another appeal to the love of one’s homeland that emerged in the accounts of the mock attack was the notion that civilians in Saskatoon might be called upon to protect their own city. Would they show the same fortitude that Londoners had? Finally, perhaps the most prevalent form of patriotism in the city was kindled by imagining fellow Saskatonians in battle. Here the popular mind was fed not merely by news reports of Canadians overseas and the accounts of returning soldiers, but, perhaps more interestingly, by the more direct experience of those training in their midst. After all, the very soldiers who attacked Saskatoon in the staged invasion would soon be overseas.

Pride in England, the heart of the Empire, was nourished in Saskatoon largely through a sympathetic imagining of that country’s experience of the Blitz. In an era when around-the-

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<sup>6</sup> *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 22 October 1941.

<sup>7</sup> Winston Churchill, *Their Finest Hour* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1949), 325.

clock news agencies and live video footage from “embedded” journalists on the battlefield was unheard of, the popular imagination had more freedom to construct its own distinct image of Britain’s suffering. To be sure, newspaper and radio accounts helped to feed that popular imagination, but Canadian censorship authorities such as the Wartime Information Board ensured that the grisly nature of war was played down.<sup>8</sup> As a result, the responsibility to convey the torment of war endured by the British sometimes fell on local citizens. One such individual was Saskatoon painter J. V. O’Neil, who contributed to the popular conception of the London Blitz with his surprisingly honest depiction of the horrors of war. In a painting that measured nine feet by six, the Saskatoon artist showed in the foreground a mother lying dead from Nazi bombs with a girl of about eight years old, apparently the woman’s child, sitting at her side. By picturing the mother crushed beneath a large slab of masonry, the painting deliberately leaves the cause of death – that is, whether it was by the direct impact of Nazi bombs or by the ensuing dislodged rubble – ambiguous. There is nothing uncertain, however, about the look on the orphaned child’s face, where intense fear and grief are mingled. Nor is this an isolated incident. Destroyed buildings dominate the background of the work and, further in the distance, a reddish hue to the sky gives the impression that the city is ablaze. To quote the *Star-Phoenix*’s description, the painting brings to life “The indiscriminate slaughter of women and children which the Nazis have carried on in Britain and elsewhere since the beginning of the war.” Yet even such a trenchant phrase as “indiscriminate slaughter” can only go so far in capturing the emotions – horror, anger, pity – that inevitably surface upon a direct viewing of the piece. The painting was displayed in the Hudson Bay Company’s building for three days in September 1941 for all the public to see. With free admission to the exhibition –

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<sup>8</sup> Jeffrey A. Keshen, *Saints, Sinners, and Soldiers: Canada’s Second World War* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2004), 17.

only a voluntary silver collection was made for air raid victims – all of Saskatoon was encouraged to witness the center of the British Empire locked in the gravest struggle of its history.<sup>9</sup>

To understand how the Blitz – and its representations in art – captured the imagination of Saskatonians, one must first grasp how strong the love of Britain was in the prairie city. Although the concept of a “British Empire” seems outdated today, this was far from the case in 1939. As journalist Tom MacDonnell has argued, monarchy and the idea of an imperial connection still exerted a powerful hold on many Canadians in this period.<sup>10</sup> Nowhere was this more evident than in the Royal Tour of Canada in the summer of 1939 by King George VI and his consort Queen Elizabeth. The extraordinary emotional response generated by their majesties’ visit to Canada, a first for a reigning monarch, prompted Lord Tweedsmuir, the Governor General who had helped plan the trip, to remark, “I didn’t realize I was pulling the string of such a shower-bath.”<sup>11</sup>

Saskatoon experienced just such a “shower-bath” of intense emotion when the royal couple passed through the city on 3 June 1939. The prairie centre was ablaze for the occasion with red, white, and blue; flags were draped over buildings, miles of bunting lined the streets, and pictures of the royal couple were everywhere.<sup>12</sup> Saskatoon’s population of about 40,000 swelled to an estimated 150,000 as all north-central Saskatchewan seemed to converge on the city for a glimpse of the monarchs.<sup>13</sup> The most distinctive feature of Saskatoon’s two-hour celebration was undoubtedly its “singing” Union Jack flag, composed of no fewer than seven

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<sup>9</sup> *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 20 September 1941.

<sup>10</sup> Tom MacDonnell, *Daylight Upon Magic: The Royal Tour of Canada 1939* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1989), 274.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 8.

<sup>12</sup> *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 2 June 1939.

<sup>13</sup> *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 5 June 1939

hundred school girls who performed “Land of Hope and Glory” for the illustrious guests.<sup>14</sup> “No longer are kings and queens known only by hearsay, through the printed word, or, at best, by photographs or via radio,” declared the *Star-Phoenix*’s correspondent. The welcome received by the royal couple in the city, continued the journalist, was the best possible answer to “the old libel that Canada, particularly the new parts and those populated by folk of alien origin, are falling away from the British Crown.”<sup>15</sup>

With war looming on the European horizon, the timing of the royal visit to Canada was opportune. While royalty’s crossing of the country in the summer of 1939 might have displaced from the front page media accounts of the deteriorating situation overseas, the trip was fraught with symbolism for the coming conflict. For one thing, the visit of the monarchs was tangible evidence that the world’s democracies were standing together in the face of growing totalitarian aggression.<sup>16</sup> Even more telling was the willingness of their majesties to depart from formal arrangements and to immerse themselves in the cheering crowds who welcomed them, a warm and spontaneous gesture which was in stark contrast to the cold precision of the Nuremburg rallies, where Nazi troops marched under Hitler’s watchful gaze in perfectly coordinated fashion.<sup>17</sup> At Saskatoon’s train station, the King ordered the police lines to relax, allowing thousands to press into a reserved enclosure to steal one final look at the royal couple.<sup>18</sup>

Above all, the royal tour’s stop in the prairie city captured the imagination of a population which, for the last ten years, had suffered greatly during the Depression. This

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<sup>14</sup> *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 2 June 1939.

<sup>15</sup> *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 5 June 1939.

<sup>16</sup> MacDonnell, *Daylight Upon Magic*, The Foreign Office cable to the King on 25 May 1939 read: “A German has been shot by a Pole in Danzig. Alliance with Russia about to be concluded. Japanese warning that it will mean Japan definitely siding with Germany and Italy. I am not without hope that this visit may help to let the peoples of Europe see how firmly the democracies are standing together.”

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 90.

<sup>18</sup> *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 5 June 1939.

phenomenon was not lost on the *Star-Phoenix* when it noted that the royals' procession weaved through streets which "wear evidence of the hard times which have struck Saskatchewan but which also are emblematic of the 'faith' of the citizens." It was this same "faith" that prompted Saskatonians to line the city route with tractors, combines, threshing machines, and, of course, golden wheat.<sup>19</sup> Rather than lamenting those "ten lost years," the prairie centre responded to the royal couple's visit with a display of hope. The presence of King George VI and his charming wife had clearly stirred Saskatoon's imagination and strengthened the bond it felt to the Empire. The *Star-Phoenix* did not exaggerate when it declared 3 June 1939 "the greatest day in Saskatoon's history."<sup>20</sup>

The striking affection Saskatoon showed for the British Empire in June 1939 carried over into the Second World War. Imperial loyalty was bolstered by a sincere belief on the part of most Canadians that the Empire was a progressive force in the world. A case in point was a May 1941 lecture on the evolution of the British Empire delivered by George Wilfred Simpson, head of the History department at the University of Saskatchewan. Simpson argued that the British Empire, initially concerned with simply amassing colonies for the sake of trade, had evolved into a far more laudable institution whereby "the various British nations became partners in a political association, each free and each as co-operative as it pleased." The fall of France, Simpson optimistically predicted, had only inaugurated a new stage in the British imperial system which now "embrace[d] . . . all freedom loving people."<sup>21</sup> Given the aura of benevolence surrounding the Empire, a *Star-Phoenix* editorial which proclaimed that "The members of the British Commonwealth are marching as a solid phalanx in this crisis that

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<sup>19</sup> *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 3 June 1939.

<sup>20</sup> *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 3 June 1939.

<sup>21</sup> *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 28 May 1941.

confronts the Empire and the world” was typical of the period.<sup>22</sup> It is significant to note that the word “Empire” in this sentence takes precedence over “the world,” a syntactical way of expressing a patriotic love for the grand imperial whole of which Saskatoon was proudly a part.

Convinced as to the pre-eminence of the British Empire, it is not surprising that Saskatonians felt a strong bond to the mother country, one which geographical distance could not weaken. Significantly, ninety-eight percent of the men who enlisted in Saskatoon during the first days of the war were of British descent.<sup>23</sup> The idea of fighting for the “old flag” clearly still resonated among citizens. More evidence of this sentiment was provided by a remarkable military parade during the 1940 Saskatoon Exhibition featuring over eighty Saskatchewan veterans from the Victorian era. City Librarian J. S. Wood, the keynote speaker for the event, observed that these men adorned with medals represented “a long page in British history.” Indeed, two of the eighty veterans assembled had actually fought as far back as the Zulu wars of 1878, while others had served in such imperial hot spots as India, Burma, China, Egypt, and South Africa.<sup>24</sup> The *Star-Phoenix*’s prediction that the whole affair would “stir” the patriotism of the crowd proved an understatement when the seven thousand Saskatonians who packed the Exhibition grandstand stood and cheered loudly as the veterans marched past them three abreast to the music of “Soldiers of the Queen.”<sup>25</sup> The parade was a celebration of Canada’s service to the British Empire. That veteran organizations in Saskatoon insisted on

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<sup>22</sup> *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 2 September 1941.

<sup>23</sup> *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 11 September 1939. The 27 September 1939 edition of the *Star-Phoenix* reported that of the four hundred men who had enlisted in the Saskatoon Light Infantry, four out of every five were of British origin, a slight drop from the original ninety-eight percent but still a significant number.

<sup>24</sup> *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 24 July 1940.

<sup>25</sup> *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 23 July 1940, 24 July 1940.

celebrating the anniversaries of imperial battles throughout the Second World War was due to more than a desire merely to commemorate certain historical events. Celebrating the anniversary of the relief of the siege of Ladysmith or the battle of Paardeberg – as Saskatoon veterans did in February 1942 – gave a sense of continuity to the idea of sacrifice in the name of the Empire. Nazis, not Boers, were the new enemy.<sup>26</sup>

Pride in the Empire in Saskatoon was not confined to reminiscing about the Victorian age, regardless of its applicability to the present. Nor were the veterans of those long-ago battles its sole articulators. So ubiquitous was the theme of Empire that parishioners in Saskatoon's churches were liable to hear clergymen preaching on "The Bible, the British Empire, and Hitler" and querying "Will There Always Be An England?" – a question one could safely assume was rhetorical.<sup>27</sup> Radio, too, could offer inspiration. Starting in 1943, Saskatonians could tune in weekly to the "Songs From Empire" programme recorded in Vancouver. "London Will Rise Again" and "British Children's Prayer" highlighted one episode in August of that year.<sup>28</sup> Later, in December, songs entitled "Spring Ploughing," "May Fair," and "O Peaceful England" were played in honour of "this quiet strength of the land which withstands even the fury of war."<sup>29</sup> Appeals to Britain's traditional "stiff upper lip" resonated in Saskatoon where almost seventy percent of the population traced its ancestry to the British Isles.<sup>30</sup> On a national scale, too, pride in Britain was sweeping the country. Eager to

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<sup>26</sup> *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 28 February 1940. Today, of course, such imperial demonstrations would be unthinkable given, as Philip Buckner has argued, the self-induced amnesia of Canadians and their preference to "gloss over" the military role they played in helping color large parts of the map of the world red. Philip Buckner, ed. "Introduction," in *Canada and the End of Empire* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2005), 3.

<sup>27</sup> *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 2 November 1940, 23 November 1940.

<sup>28</sup> *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 17 August 1943.

<sup>29</sup> *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 14 December 1943.

<sup>30</sup> *Census of Canada 1941*, "Population by mother tongue and racial origin for cities of 30,000 and over," 256-257.



capitalize on this popular feeling, one federal Victory Bond advertisement in the *Star-Phoenix* read, “The Drums of Drake are Calling” (see Appendix A1), a reference to the old English legend that when Britain is in peril the drum’s sound may be heard.<sup>31</sup>

When it came to cultivating imperial sentiment in the city, the pulpit and the radio proved no match for the *Star-Phoenix*. Throughout the turbulent periods of the war the newspaper’s Saturday “Letter Box” became a platform to promote British stoicism. In the aftermath of the Dunkirk evacuation, for example, one contributor with a fine-tuned historical sense quoted from Napoleon, who said, “The British lost every battle, but the last; they accept reverses with fortitude.” Adding a personal touch to the letter, its author reminded readers that “The last chapter has not been written.”<sup>32</sup> Another Saskatonian used a similar rhetorical flourish to convince the newspaper’s subscribers of the futility of any German attempt to bring Britain to its knees: “The Nazis’ bombs smashed the sturdy old body of London, but its heart they did not touch. The British heart is older and stouter than the walls that perished. The dust that is stirring in this flame of war is more than just the dust of ages, for age has no merit in itself. This is age made imperishable. A thousand years have seen no abatement of Britain’s glory.”<sup>33</sup> Saskatonians could not have helped being moved by the Churchillian rhetoric of this letter.

Nor did the *Star-Phoenix* limit itself to the missives of its readers in attempting to foster imperial sentiment within the city. With the Battle of Britain in its first phase in early August 1940, one enterprising journalist for the newspaper sought out Frank Sunderland, a ninety-two-

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<sup>31</sup> *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 17 October 1942. The legend of Drake’s Drum is perhaps most famously expressed in an 1897 sea-ballad by the English poet Sir Henry Newbolt, an excerpt of which reads: “Take my drum to England, hang et by the shore, / Strike et when your powder’s running low; / If the Dons sight Devon, I’ll quit the port o’ Heaven, / An’ drum them up the Channel as we drummed them long ago.” Henry Newbolt, “Drake’s Drum,” in *Modern British Poetry: A Critical Anthology*, ed. Louis Untermeyer (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1932), 279-280.

<sup>32</sup> *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 15 June 1940.

<sup>33</sup> *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 4 July 1942.

year-old Briton living in the city, for his thoughts on the crisis. When asked by the reporter whether England could be conquered, Mr. Sunderland replied, “Nobody but a crazy fool would think that Hitler is going to conquer England,” adding that England “is on top today and . . . will always be on top.” Questioned as to what would occur should German parachutists start landing in the English countryside, the old-timer replied unfazed, “These parachute men will wish to God that they were back home eating sauerkraut [for] the people of England will chew them up.” When told of the ruthlessness of Nazi soldiers, Mr. Sunderland reiterated his position that “even if I should meet some of them in hell” no foreigner, above all no German, could scare an Englishman.<sup>34</sup> To Saskatonians concerned for Britain’s security in the dark days of the *Luftwaffe*’s assault, the elderly man’s pluck was no doubt deeply reassuring.

Parades celebrating Britain’s imperial past, stoic letters to the *Star-Phoenix*, and inspiring interviews with the likes of Frank Sunderland all helped Saskatonians to imagine Britain’s experience of war. More powerful, however, than any of these in communicating the life “over there” were twenty-five “guest children” who arrived in the prairie city in late August 1940. Evacuated from Britain to escape the Blitz and a possible German invasion, these youngsters, ranging in age from five to fifteen, were palpable evidence of the horrors of war to a prairie region long nourished by second-hand accounts. It was no coincidence, for example, that when the first guest child reached the city in June 1940, Raymond Maddison of Birmingham was pictured in the *Star-Phoenix* wearing his gas mask (see Appendix A2).<sup>35</sup> Even greater excitement was generated in late August 1940 when twenty-five other guest children arrived (see Appendix A3, A4, A5). The *Star-Phoenix* set the tone when it wrote that the children’s coming marked “The end of a 5,000-mile trail, leading from the bomb-splattered

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<sup>34</sup> *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 2 August 1940.

<sup>35</sup> *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 13 June 1940.

towns and cities of England to the quiet of northern Saskatchewan.” As for the youths’ parents, they were said to have remained behind “to watch the ramparts.” The newspaper was not alone in celebrating British heroism. Three thousand Saskatonians, some of them weeping, packed the front of the railway station to greet the young pilgrims.<sup>36</sup> “They cheered and cheered as if they were glad to have us,” remarked a young British girl.<sup>37</sup> The shock of war was still being felt by some of the British children. Upon being led into a passageway underneath the railway tracks, a young boy asked, “Is this an air raid shelter?”<sup>38</sup>

Its imagination thoroughly captured by the war, Saskatoon, along with other Canadian centres, elevated its guest children to almost mythical status. As Jeffrey Keshen has written, “Brave and unflinching British youth were held up as symbols of a nation that would never surrender.”<sup>39</sup> But there were also moments of vulnerability. Having disembarked from the train, Saskatoon’s British visitors, according to the *Star-Phoenix*, “made rather a forlorn picture with their travel stained clothes and pale little faces,” not to mention the bags containing all their worldly possessions slung over their shoulders. One inquisitive onlooker noticed in the group a silent boy tightly gripping a large red leather book. When asked what he was holding, the British lad replied that his mother had advised him to always keep it close and then held the volume out for the stranger to see: the gold-letting on the front read “Holy Bible.” Such moving episodes enhanced the mythical aura about the British youth. There were lighthearted moments, too. One young guest being driven over the Broadway Bridge remarked that the South Saskatchewan was “just a bit sma’er” than the Thames.<sup>40</sup> Indeed, there was

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<sup>36</sup> *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 24 August 1940.

<sup>37</sup> *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 26 August 1940.

<sup>38</sup> *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 24 August 1940.

<sup>39</sup> Jeffrey A. Keshen, *Saints, Sinners, and Soldiers: Canada’s Second World War* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2004), 194.

<sup>40</sup> *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 24 August 1940.

something exotic about these visitors who chattered excitedly of seeing bears, Indians, and Mounted Police.<sup>41</sup> Yet not everyone was pleased with the attention showered on the guest children.<sup>42</sup> As one irritated local complained to the *Star-Phoenix*, “It would almost seem that these children are a lot of ignorant, uneducated, little savages from the darkest depths of primitive Africa instead of healthy, intelligent children from the most civilized country in the world.” His attacking Saskatoon’s reception of the guest children as “exhibitionist and sensationalist” missed the point of the whole affair.<sup>43</sup> Saskatonians did not interact to the extent they did with their visitors simply to put on a show; rather, prairie dwellers were vicariously experiencing Britain’s war through these youths.

So fascinated were Saskatonians by the Battle of Britain that even inanimate objects captured their imagination. The coming to the city of the “Iron Duke,” a tea wagon which for six months had seen active service in London and East Anglia, was a case in point. A *Star-Phoenix* editorial spoke without sarcasm of the wagon’s “triumphant tour” through Quebec, Ontario, and Manitoba.<sup>44</sup> Named after the Duke of Wellington, best remembered for his victory over Napoleon at Waterloo in 1815, the Iron Duke possessed a charmed existence: frequently fired upon by Stuka dive-bombers, the tea wagon had never been knocked out of commission. Its “bomb-scarred” and “flame-scorched” exterior, however, was indisputable proof of the frightening realities of modern warfare.<sup>45</sup> As the *Star-Phoenix* noted, these same battle scars were also “striking evidence of how London can take it.”<sup>46</sup> Much like Saskatoon’s

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<sup>41</sup> *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 26 August 1940.

<sup>42</sup> As Geoffrey Bilson remarks in *The Guest Children*, Canadian youngsters were sometimes jealous of the attention commanded by the British newcomers. A case in point was a young Saskatoon girl who locked herself in her bathroom for hours at a time to practice her British accent. Geoffrey Bilson, *The Guest Children* (Saskatoon: Fifth House, 1988), 107.

<sup>43</sup> *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 31 August 1940.

<sup>44</sup> *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 15 October 1941.

<sup>45</sup> *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 14 October 1941.

<sup>46</sup> *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 15 October 1941.

guest children, the visit of the Iron Duke to the prairie city allowed its citizens to experience first-hand the war. That five thousand people packed Kiwanis Park to see the tea wagon for themselves was a testament to this rampant curiosity.<sup>47</sup> After a simulated attack on the park, tea was served to Saskatoon officials from the Iron Duke itself in mugs that had been used by soldiers overseas (see Appendix A6). The collective imagination of the crowd was further stirred by a ceremony stressing the close bond between Canada and the Mother Country. One of the British women accompanying the tea wagon presented the city with a phial containing rubble from London's destroyed buildings. In return the president of the Saskatoon Board of Trade presented her with two phials, one containing oil from Lloydminster's gas and oil field and the other hard wheat from the city's immediate vicinity. The gifts were symbolic, in the words of the *Star-Phoenix*, of "northern Saskatchewan's contribution to the arsenal of democracy."<sup>48</sup> If the reaction of Saskatonians to the Iron Duke seems excessive even to the point of fetishism today, it must be remembered that the object was revered because the citizens of the prairie town wanted to be united with the British in their heroic suffering.

Given the widespread and fervent nature of pro-British sentiment in Canada, it was inevitable that the imperial connection proved occasionally to be a source of tension, pitting the most ardent Anglophiles against those whose support of the mother country was more lukewarm. A case in point was a September 1944 letter to the *Star-Phoenix* in which the author bemoaned the substituting of "O Canada" for "God Save the King" as Canada's national anthem. Canadians, according to the letter's author, should never "slacken nor sever even one of the heart-strings that bind us to the British Crown, the British Commonwealth of Nations,

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<sup>47</sup> *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 18 October 1941.

<sup>48</sup> *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 17 October 1941.

and to one another.”<sup>49</sup> More heated was the debate that ensued when the Canadian Active Service Force, in an effort to distinguish itself from the great mass of British troops overseas, adopted a new battle flag in 1939. This move gave rise to rumours that Cameron R. McIntosh, federal Member of Parliament for the Battlefords, planned to resume his perennial crusade in Ottawa for a distinctive Canadian flag at home. Alarmed, the English Speaking League of Saskatchewan swung into action. In a sharply worded statement to the *Star-Phoenix*, it questioned the loyalty of anyone who supported such radical change at a time when the Empire was engaged in “a death struggle to maintain all that the Union Jack represents.” A change in the national emblem, the pro-British body argued, would only show Hitler that Canada was divided over its allegiance to the Empire.<sup>50</sup> In the end, Canada did not receive a distinctive national flag until 1965. That the mere rumour in 1940 that the country might jettison the Union Jack prompted such vociferous opposition shows just how strong the British connection was in this period. The sound of Drake’s Drum, rolling in from over the Atlantic, was clearly audible to many Canadians.

The affinity felt by Saskatonians for Londoners who had suffered through the Blitz was due to more than simply a love of the old imperial connection. Indeed, there was a real fear among inhabitants of the prairie city that they too might be called upon to show a similar fortitude in the event of a German attack on home soil. That many prominent citizens possessed an exaggerated view of the value of the Canadian prairies to Hitler’s military strategy only inflamed the popular imagination. One article in the *Star-Phoenix*, for example, warned residents of the West that the distance from the nearest German flying fields to possible bases in Hudson Bay, itself within easy flight of the prairies, was no greater than the distance

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<sup>49</sup> *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 30 September 1944.

<sup>50</sup> *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 3 February 1940.

from Southampton to Montreal.<sup>51</sup> The secretary of the Canadian Legion in Saskatoon added fuel to the fire when he remarked that a fifth column of merely fifty men could easily conquer any city in Western Canada. Timing would be the only delay on such an offensive action: “This command will be given when Great Britain is under terrific attack and when the announcement that the three Prairie Provinces have revolted to Hitler will be most demoralizing.”<sup>52</sup> Yet it was a speech by C. P. Seeley, the principal of the Normal School in Saskatoon, which offered the most arresting claim that Hitler had Canada in his sights. Speaking to a large crowd at the Vimy Memorial in Kiwanis Park in May 1941, Seeley stressed the enormous value to *der Fuehrer* of such a trans-Atlantic conquest: “Let us remind ourselves that Canada is a pearl of great price today. Jealous eyes have for long years been cast across our broad acres. Our limited population, our vast natural resources, our magnificent location, where the world’s greatest sea lanes meet, offer a tempting bait to the vultures from Mars. From the east and west they’d pounce upon and tear us limb from limb if given half a chance.”<sup>53</sup> What made Seeley’s address so provocative was that, in depicting Canada as a “pearl of great price” in German eyes, he stressed ideas which a contemporary crowd would have recognized as goals of the Nazi programme of expansion. Canada’s “broad acres,” a “limited population,” and “vast natural resources” were of course the envy of Hitler, who constantly spoke of acquiring *Lebensraum* for his more populous and raw mineral-deficient *Reich*. Seeley’s address was a warning to Saskatonians that although Canada might have been overlooked in *Mein Kampf* – Eastern Europe was after all the primary target of German expansion – the country still possessed many of the features its fanatical author sought.

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<sup>51</sup> *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 6 October 1939.

<sup>52</sup> *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 4 June 1940.

<sup>53</sup> *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 29 May 1941.

It is symptomatic of the times that even the typically light-hearted daily cartoon in the *Star-Phoenix* reflected fears of an attack on home soil. In one November 1941 drawing, for example, a Canadian man is pictured comfortably lounging in an easy chair with his feet propped up (see Appendix A7). Behind him and out of his view, however, stands a Nazi (depicted as a monkey), dressed in full military garb with a visible swastika.<sup>54</sup> “Would you kindly oblige me mit a match?” the German soldier asks the seated man. Little does the unsuspecting Canadian in the cartoon know that the Nazi is actually gripping a fuse which, in turn, runs to a gigantic bomb strategically placed underneath his easy chair. The irony of the whole situation becomes even clearer when one sees that the soon-to-be liquidated Canadian is perusing a newspaper whose headline of the day reads, “U-Boats Operating Off Newfoundland.” As well, the words “Easy Living” are inscribed in capital letters on the footstool, and the single word “Complacency” on the plump man’s easy chair.<sup>55</sup> In another editorial cartoon, a civilian is once again pictured seated comfortably reading the newspaper (see Appendix A8). This time the headline reads “More Executions in Occupied Countries,” prompting the man to exclaim, “That man [Hitler] is a fiend! Thank heaven we live in Canada!” But the real warning of the cartoon is found in its upper half: the man’s reading lamp, on which the word “Freedom” is prominently inscribed, is about to have its power severed by a giant pair of scissors branded with the Nazi emblem. “Let us not blind ourselves to facts! Buy more and more war savings certificates,” exhorts the cartoon.<sup>56</sup> Both editorial

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<sup>54</sup> It was no coincidence that the Nazi in this editorial cartoon is depicted as a monkey. As social psychologist Sam Keen argues, the enemy as animal is one of the many archetypes used by wartime societies to dehumanize their foe. As a product of nature “red in tooth and claw,” the animal represents unrestrained violence and thus must be tamed by any means necessary. Sam Keen, *Faces of the Enemy: Reflections of the Hostile Imagination* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1986), 134-136.

<sup>55</sup> *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 18 November 1941.

<sup>56</sup> *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 11 November 1941. It is significant that the arm holding the scissors in this cartoon is abnormally hairy, another creative touch designed to stress the animalistic nature of the Nazis.



cartoons make clear that the gentlemen pictured (and other equally obtuse Canadians) fail to grasp the very real Nazi military threat to the home front.

That the idea of air raid protection squads was considered in the city in April 1941 demonstrates just how seriously Saskatonians took the Nazi danger to North America. An unconfirmed report that month that the Germans had gained a foothold in the sparsely populated Arctic island of Greenland, thereby providing the *Wehrmacht* with a springboard to launch attacks against the Western Hemisphere, seems to have galvanized local citizens.<sup>57</sup> While scholars today know that Nazi motives in Greenland were far less sinister – weather stations and cryolite, a mineral used for the manufacture of aluminum, drew them there – Germany’s bold foray into the Arctic led to fears that North America was not impervious to assault.<sup>58</sup> As well, a widely publicized speech in May 1941 by President Franklin Delano Roosevelt which proclaimed an “unlimited national emergency” dispelled any lingering naiveté that the Nazis were content with simply holding Europe. Never one to mince his words, Roosevelt announced that Hitler would stop at nothing to “strangle the United States of America and the Dominion of Canada.”<sup>59</sup>

News of Nazi incursions into the Arctic and the dark prognostications of a respected American political leader were enough to prompt Saskatonians to prepare for the possibility of a *Luftwaffe* bombing run on their city. Ominous comments by local RCAF personnel during the mock blackouts that the prairie centre would be a “pushover” in the event of a real Blitz no doubt stirred the popular imagination. The crook of the river, the railway tracks which shone in the moonlight, and the crystal clarity of the atmosphere were all cited by military figures as

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<sup>57</sup> *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 28 April 1941.

<sup>58</sup> Malcolm Francis Willoughby, *The U.S. Coast Guard in World War II* (Annapolis: United States Naval Institute, 1957), 95.

<sup>59</sup> Franklin Delano Roosevelt, *Roosevelt’s Foreign Policy 1933-1941: Franklin D. Roosevelt’s Unedited Speeches and Messages* (New York: Wilfred Funk Publishers, 1942), 397.

factors enhancing Saskatoon's vulnerability to air attack.<sup>60</sup> As a result, in January 1942 R. W. Stayner, a distinguished veteran of the Great War, was placed in charge of air raid defence in the city. Concerned Saskatonians were encouraged to take part in training for their community's defence. However, the zeal with which some citizens went about their duties in this regard forced the *Star-Phoenix* to warn confused onlookers not to be alarmed. People were told to remain calm, for instance, if they spotted someone "peering around a corner, crouched and spraying water on a brick" or "dashing about in a Buck Rodgers suit, a pail of water in each hand," since the individual in question was simply taking their air raid precautions seriously.<sup>61</sup> It should be noted that throughout the war various officials in Saskatoon continued to believe that an air attack on the city was unlikely. Then, as now, the invasion from the air most to be feared in Saskatoon was that of mosquitoes, "swooping down on the unwary with the latest wave-bombing technique."<sup>62</sup> Nevertheless, that 1,132 local men and women were engaged in first aid, fire, and police drill in November 1942 was striking evidence that a large segment of the population believed the threat from the *Luftwaffe* real enough to justify their long hours.<sup>63</sup>

The *Star-Phoenix* played a key role in whipping up this war fever. Its special two-page "Nazi" edition of the newspaper (19 October 1942), for example, was a case in point. The premise behind the whole idea – that Nazis had conquered Canada, had Saskatoon in its grip, and had seized the *Star-Phoenix* as their chief organ – would certainly have resonated with nervous inhabitants of the prairie city, at the same time intensifying their patriotic fervour. Renaming the newspaper *Deutsche Zeitung fuer Saskatoon*, they set about filling the two pages

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<sup>60</sup> *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 16 December 1941.

<sup>61</sup> *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 23 February 1943.

<sup>62</sup> *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 10 June 1943.

<sup>63</sup> *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 21 November 1942.

with the darkest stories of Nazi excess imaginable. An address from Hitler, for example, figured prominently on the front page: “The entire German people rejoice with me in the glorious victory of German arms in overcoming the last resistance of decadent democracy in Saskatchewan. . . . The rich farm lands of what the British were pleased to call the breadbasket of their former empire will fit magnificently into our plans for a New Order.”

The amalgam of stories in the *Star-Phoenix*'s Nazi edition was clearly designed to shock different sectors of Saskatoon's diverse population. Local church leaders, for example, surely noticed headlines alluding to the new “*Reichbishop*” appointed by the Nazis for the Canadian “*Gau*” (the German word for province) and the burning of old prayer books which promoted “unscientific Christianity.” Farmers in the rural areas around Saskatoon would have felt a pang of fear upon reading of Nazi plans to ship every ounce of butter they produced back to Germany and to confiscate all livestock, with anyone who resisted shot on site. Finally, those with a medical background in the prairie city were no doubt alarmed to see that the *Star-Phoenix*'s usual health section had become a column promoting Nazi teachings on biology and physiology. Anyone who resisted the new regime was to be removed to the new “concentration camp” at Dundurn. These local stories were intermixed with national ones. It was reported, for instance, that Kitchener, a small Ontario city which had changed its name during the Great War from Berlin to disassociate itself from the European foe, had been levelled to the ground. In Winnipeg 250 people were executed by firing squads, including the Mayor and the entire City Council. Lastly, in Ottawa a group of women and children were shot point blank for stealing from a food depot, along with fifteen Boy Scouts who were guilty of membership in a banned movement. Other stories in *Deutsche Zeitung fuer Saskatoon* were deliberately left blank –

marked only with the words “Censored” and the swastika emblem – giving the impression that the “German World Plan” was far too sinister to print.<sup>64</sup>

The function of the “Nazi” edition of the *Star-Phoenix* seemed less to raise fears about an actual invasion of the city than to educate readers as to what they could expect should the Allies lose the war. In this context it was similar to a March 1942 Victory Loan advertisement which pictured a group of smiling children under the sign “For Sale” and claimed that Canada’s youth would be “doomed to a life of slavery and moral degradation” if the Axis were victorious.<sup>65</sup> Still, the Victory Loan notice and the special issue of the *Star-Phoenix* were effective because they tapped into, and also reinvigorated, fears that Saskatoon, at least at some point, might be forced to confront the Nazi peril on home soil. Seen in this light, then, *Deutsche Zeitung fuer Saskatoon* was another way in which the Second World War was made meaningful to Saskatonians and a clever device by which to stir their patriotism.

More important than fears of an enemy attack, or even the plight of Londoners during the Blitz, it was the heroic image of the Canadian soldier that stirred the patriotic imagination of Saskatonians. Throughout the Second World War the *Star-Phoenix* framed Canada’s military role in heroic terms, regardless of whether a story dealt with an individual soldier or with a larger theatre of war. A good illustration of this latter case was a *Star-Phoenix* editorial praising the raid on Dieppe in August 1942. Calling the attack “thrilling” and “successful,” the piece lauded the “excellent staff work” which had preceded the undertaking. Not surprisingly, reports of Canadian losses were largely glossed over in the dominant heroic tone: “Canadian hearts are filled with sympathy for the families of those who fell in action or are missing, but there is undoubtedly a mounting pride in the country over a job well done and a satisfaction

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<sup>64</sup> *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix* (special edition), 19 October 1942.

<sup>65</sup> *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 4 March 1942.

that apparently all of the details which go to make success were thoroughly attended to in advance.”<sup>66</sup> It is telling that even when the *Star-Phoenix* referred to the August 1942 raid after D-Day, it was to emphasize how the “lessons of Dieppe” – a clear euphemism – had been crucial to the success of the landings at Normandy.<sup>67</sup> As Jack Granatstein and Desmond Morton have argued, the lessons learned from the raid on Dieppe involved the recognition that fatal ineptitude, and not “excellent staff work,” was responsible for this fiasco. By circulating romantic notions of what occurred at Dieppe, the *Star-Phoenix* ensured that it would be a long time before its readers understood the “ten hours of unadulterated hell” Canadian soldiers there endured.<sup>68</sup>

Accounts of individual soldiers in the *Star-Phoenix* were similarly heroic. If the daily newspaper was to be believed, the average Canadian serviceman was the epitome of courage, ingenuity, and resolve. To be fair, returning soldiers to Saskatoon also helped stir the popular imagination by allowing civilians on the prairies to experience the Second World War through their tales of exciting battles and narrow escapes. An April 1941 speech in the city by Ernest McNab, recently returned from Britain where he had been awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross, was a case in point. Addressing a boisterous crowd of six hundred assembled at the Bessborough in his honour, McNab regaled his audience with stories from the Battle of Britain. “We fought habitually at high altitudes, usually far above the clouds in a world of our own – a world of freezing cold, of limitless space and traced with white-plumed trails,” the local hero told eager listeners.<sup>69</sup> Although less poetic, Ron Ratcliffe’s story of German “train busting,” which he dismissed as a “picnic,” no doubt also appealed to war-hungry Saskatonians.

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<sup>66</sup> *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 22 August 1942.

<sup>67</sup> *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 10 June 1944.

<sup>68</sup> J. L. Granatstein and Desmond Morton, *Canada and the Two World Wars* (Toronto: Key Porter Books, 2003), 207.

<sup>69</sup> *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 1 April 1941.

Recounting how he had derailed a German train during one of his nocturnal raids, Ratcliffe attempted to convey to the citizens of his hometown the excitement he felt when, having fired on a number of cars, he saw the entire train suddenly go up in a terrific explosion. He had chanced on a Nazi ammunition train. Even a near-fatal incident over Amiens, where one of Ratcliffe's engines cut out only one hundred feet above ground, was described by the aviator as a "grand and glorious trip."<sup>70</sup>

Stories from overseas, whether heroic or not, rarely alluded to the horrors of war. Emblematic of this studied avoidance was a flippant letter from a former aviation instructor in Saskatoon whose plane had been shot down and who was now being held by the Germans: "Having bags of fun, but wine-women shortage acute. Wish you were here. See you soon."<sup>71</sup> Similarly, a picture sent back to the prairie city showing a group of relaxed and smiling members of the Saskatoon Light Infantry (SLI), complete with the caption "The Saskatoon Spirit in England," was almost surreal in the way that it glossed the chaos these boys would soon face (see Appendix A9).<sup>72</sup> A letter to the *Star-Phoenix* from an SLI member bragging excitedly of how the regiment had made "monkeys" of the famed Toronto Scottish in a machine gun competition gave Saskatonians the impression that war was more play than pain.<sup>73</sup> It is significant that the dark side of the Second World War was not discussed in the *Star-Phoenix* until the late stages of the conflict, when an Allied victory was all but assured. For example, in April 1945 Sergeant John Anderson of Saskatoon bitterly reminisced about the treatment he had received in a German prisoner of war camp. Forced to live on sour bread and water, matters got worse for Anderson when an S.S. man searching him discovered a picture of

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<sup>70</sup> *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 25 April 1944.

<sup>71</sup> *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 5 December 1942.

<sup>72</sup> *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 20 November 1941.

<sup>73</sup> *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 5 June 1940.

his Canadian wife and promptly tore it up.<sup>74</sup> As 1945 progressed and Canadian soldiers slowly began returning to their homes, the *Star-Phoenix* carried similar stories of emaciated men in Axis camps (questionable war activities by the Allies were never reported). Although Saskatonians probably found these accounts jarring, they no doubt reinforced the popular conception of the Canadian soldier as a model of courage and resolve.

Patriotism in Saskatoon was fostered not only by the tales of heroism overseas, but also by the promotion of stories about soldiers who were still at home. This positive image of the serviceman did not crystallize immediately in September 1939, but began to form after the fall of France in June 1940. Canadians as a whole understood that their country had suddenly become Britain's only major ally against the Nazi menace. While not forgetting the Great War's dark legacy, Saskatoon's initial wary response to the new conflict gave way to emotional appeals which stressed the danger confronting "Mother England" and even the city itself. Soldiers stationed in Saskatoon benefited greatly from the prairie city's renewed zeal. Saskatonians realized that these uniformed men present in their midst "over here" would soon be serving "over there." Memories of those who died or who were maimed at Ypres, the Somme, and Vimy Ridge were soon eclipsed in Saskatoon's popular imagination by heroic rhetoric which saw the soldier of the day as the saviour of the British Empire and the defender of democracy worldwide.

Crucial to this burnishing of the soldier's image in wartime Saskatoon was the omnipresence of the military in the Western Canadian city. Between 1939 and 1945 the Canadian forces dominated the life of Saskatoon to a far greater extent than it had during the Great War. In the fall of 1940, for example, Saskatoon's airport became home to a Service Flying Training School for the newly established British Commonwealth Air Training Plan

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<sup>74</sup> *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 7 April 1945.

(BCATP), which aimed to instruct recruits from across the Empire in schools operated by the Royal Canadian Air Force. In 1941 Saskatoon received a second BCATP base when No. 7 Initial Training School opened on the present-day site of SIAST. Not to be outdone, the army used Bedford Road Collegiate as a training centre, as well as the Exhibition grounds, including the stadium and grandstand. The Royal Canadian Naval reserve was also entrenched in the city, occupying land across from city hall from 1943 on.<sup>75</sup> Not even the Saskatoon Badminton Club, whose premises were leased to the Department of National Defence, escaped the growing militarization of the prairie centre.<sup>76</sup> And if all this militia were not enough, only a twenty-five minute drive to the south separated Saskatoon from Dundurn military camp.

Because of the proximity of the Canadian military in Second World War Saskatoon, local citizens were afforded a first-hand glimpse into the life of the average soldier. However, much like the mock air raids, the activities of the army around town often left Saskatonians with the impression that war was more thrilling spectacle than grim undertaking. This distorted view was, in fairness, probably due to the fact that martial drilling far from a theatre of war can never approximate what it is truly like to be in the thick of battle, or what Shakespeare termed in *Henry VI* the “feast of death.”<sup>77</sup>

In the *Star-Phoenix*'s accounts of local military exercises, one senses a deliberate attempt by both the army and the newspaper to make war appear as exhilarating as possible. A case in point was “Army Day” at Dundurn military camp on 28 June 1941 during which civilians were invited to witness soldiers “at grim work and happy play” (see Appendix A10) Prairie inhabitants responded enthusiastically, converging on the camp in cars, special buses

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<sup>75</sup> Jeff O'Brien, Ruth W. Millar, and William P. Delainey, *Saskatoon: A History in Photographs* (Regina: Coteau Books, 2006), 72.

<sup>76</sup> *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 16 March 1943.

<sup>77</sup> William Shakespeare, *1 Henry VI* 4.5.7.



and trains, horse-drawn vehicles, bicycles, and even on foot. Local interest was so great that the highways leading to the camp were congested with heavy traffic. Those who braved the crowds were not disappointed:

The ground activities were climaxed by a thrilling driving display . . . Heavy motor vehicles hurtled through the air. Men rode motorcycles at breakneck speed over the rough terrain in battle formations which constantly changed. Light armored 'blitzkrieg' units engaged in sham battles. Dispatch riders on speedy motorcycles carried important message through fogs of gas to headquarters. Specialists dissipated gas attacks and long convoys of armored vehicles roared to attack against the 'enemy.'

The *Star-Phoenix's* colorful account of "Army Day" is evidence of the way in which the military had stirred Saskatoon's popular imagination. Language describing how vehicles "hurtled through the air," drove at "breakneck speed," and "roared" against an imagined foe was symptomatic of this excitement. Aware of its hold over the collective mind, the army performed drills sure to elicit an emotional response from the civilian crowd. At bayonet training, for example, crowds cheered when an effigy of Hitler was set up for soldiers to impale. A photo of the rather one-sided confrontation appeared in the *Star-Phoenix* under the caption "Hitler Gets Cold Steel in the Vitals" (see Appendix A11). Undoubtedly the climax of "Army Day" occurred at six in the evening when air raid sirens suddenly wailed and planes were sighted in the distance. Far from *Luftwaffe* pilots, however, these were RCAF bombers who, to the delight of the civilian crowds, unloaded their demolitions in targeted areas.<sup>78</sup>

Like Dundurn military camp, the two BCATP bases in Saskatoon also nourished the city's sense of patriotism. Held up during construction as symbols of wartime prosperity and

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<sup>78</sup> *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 30 June 1941.

of the end of the Depression,<sup>79</sup> the flight schools became visible evidence of the city's contribution to the war effort upon completion. Indeed, the BCATP was more successful than the army in stirring the popular imagination. There was something romantic about a scheme which united recruits from across the British Commonwealth (primarily from Canada, Britain, Australia, and New Zealand) and trained them on home soil. Long captivated by accounts of the Battle of Britain, Saskatonians now had in their midst the future pilots who would duel with the *Luftwaffe*. "Hitler and his Nazi gang have sown the wind," declared Churchill in December 1941, "Let them reap the whirlwind."<sup>80</sup> The roar of engines in the sky, both during the day and at night, was a constant reminder of the war atmosphere. The keen interest prairie inhabitants took in their BCATP facilities was shown on 21 September 1940 when Mayor Carl Niderost organized an "Open House" at the airport's new Service Flying Training School. In an interesting twist, Saskatoon veterans attacked Niderost for failing to take into account the possibility of sabotage on the part of civilians, accusing the civic leader of promoting the war effort like a "high powered salesman."<sup>81</sup> In the end, the Open House took place as planned with no reports of sabotage. Niderost's "salesman" tactics clearly worked, as an estimated 30,000 people visited the base in one day. To the crowd's delight, six single-engined Harvard

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<sup>79</sup> Freshly liberated from the Depression, the construction of training facilities in the prairie centre promised an influx of men, money, and markets. As a result, Carl Niderost, Saskatoon's mayor, aggressively promoted the city to federal authorities as an ideal site for the bases. He argued that the prairie, whose climate was generally fog-free and whose every pasture and field was a potential runway, offered ideal conditions for the BCATP. Ultimately, the mayor's persistence paid off and Saskatoon received two air-training facilities. In an editorial on the construction of the first of these, the *Star-Phoenix* observed, "All this involves an immense amount of work," adding that "It will require the labor of hundreds of men during the spring and summer, workers of all types" (*Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 29 February 1940). The newspaper's words could have applied equally to the building of No. 7 I.T.S. in 1941. More than two hundred men worked in double shifts to complete this facility, with the evening resembling a "carnival" as flood lights illuminated the entire area (*Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 1 October 1941). One letter writer understood what the BCATP meant to Saskatoon when he wrote, "This is encouragement for us boys who have been doing nothing but sucking our thumbs for years back" (*Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 9 March 1940).

<sup>80</sup> *The Ever Widening War, 1941*, ed. Martin Gilbert, vol. 3 of *The Churchill War Papers* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2001), 1711.

<sup>81</sup> *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 12 September 1940.

planes and six twin-engined Avro Ansons gave a demonstration of aerobatics and formation flying. "Saskatoon will become the air hub of the West, the same as it is now the railway hub" predicted Archie McNab, Saskatchewan's affable Lieutenant Governor.<sup>82</sup>

Although the roar of Harvards and Avro Ansons provided Saskatonians with thrilling evidence of what it was like to be at war, the close proximity of civilians to air facilities sometimes gave rise to too much excitement. When RCAF trainees released parachute flares over the airport in early January 1941, for example, the office of the *Star-Phoenix* was flooded with calls from nervous citizens who thought that a plane had crashed and burst into flames. To calm these fears, the newspaper grounded its explanation in (rather dull) scientific terms: "These flares floating slowly to the ground, burn magnesium. They throw an exceedingly bright light, which can be seen for miles. . . . The magnesium burns slowly with a white light and will continue to burn for some time, even after landing."<sup>83</sup> The obsession of prairie inhabitants with all things military surfaced only two months later during No. 4 S.F.T.S.'s first fatal accident of the war. In the early afternoon of 12 March 1941 two young pilots, one from Toronto and the other from the British Honduras, collided in mid-air. The wreckage from the grisly accident was strewn about in a one-mile radius just two hundred feet outside city limits. A father and son sitting in a truck were especially lucky to escape unharmed when pieces from the fuselage and engines of one of the planes landed only two feet from their vehicle.<sup>84</sup> Crowds quickly converged on the crash and some civilians even tore pieces from the downed planes to keep for themselves, a response which infuriated one City Councillor on the scene. "I told one woman, who had her arms full with souvenirs, I couldn't imagine what particular pleasure she could get from possessing pieces from planes in which our own boys were killed," fumed

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<sup>82</sup> *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 23 September 1940.

<sup>83</sup> *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 10 January 1941.

<sup>84</sup> *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 13 March 1941.

Alderman Bushe. “You would have thought those were enemy planes, the way people swarmed over them, and helped themselves.”<sup>85</sup> In short, so strong was Saskatoon’s fascination with the cult of the military that citizens in its grip sometimes behaved irrationally.

Because of the numerous military facilities located in Saskatoon and the surrounding area during the war, the figure of the soldier was everywhere in the collective eye. Far from confining themselves to their bases, servicemen were highly involved in the civilian life of the prairie centre. The military’s omnipresence in the city accomplished two things: first, the popular imagination was stirred by such tangible evidence of the wartime footing; second, support for the war effort was strengthened by the friendly interaction between soldiers and common citizens. A photograph of a hockey game at the Arena Rink from the period, for example, where half the building is a sea of khaki, was indicative of how prevalent the military was in Saskatoon.<sup>86</sup>

Saskatoon’s soldiers were more than spectators when it came to sport in the city. With local and intra-University athletics disrupted by the war, athletes in the service filled a vacuum by competing against themselves and against the University of Saskatchewan in baseball, football, and rugby, to name just a few. In November 1943 an advertisement in the *Star-Phoenix* promised “a full evening’s entertainment” at the No. 7 I.T.S. Boxing Night. Ten bouts set the most feared boxers from the Saskatoon aviation school against their counterparts from the Bombing and Gunnery facility at Dafoe, Saskatchewan.<sup>87</sup> Hockey fans in Saskatoon also had reason to rejoice. In the winter of 1944 H.M.C.S. Unicorn, the local navy barracks, finished their hockey season in first place. This impressive achievement was dimmed only by

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<sup>85</sup> *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 14 March 1941.

<sup>86</sup> O’Brien, *Saskatoon: A History in Photographs*, 76.

<sup>87</sup> *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 8 November 1943.

the team's defeat in the playoffs at the hands of the Flin Flon Bombers.<sup>88</sup> Soccer matches were also popular, giving a distinctly imperial flavour to city sports. In October 1941 a R.A.F. team from North Battleford featuring ex-pro stars from such well-known teams as the Wolverhampton Wanderers and the Sivindon Corinthians played a squad from the University. *The Sheaf*, the campus student newspaper, marveled at the skill of the "old-countrymen" who deftly used their heads to pass the ball and darted quickly between opposing defenders.<sup>89</sup> The next year the R.A.F. men from North Battleford met a stiffer challenge when British soccer players from the air base at Moose Jaw traveled to Griffiths Stadium.<sup>90</sup> Saskatoon sports fans benefited the most from the display: quality "football" was a rare attraction in the prairie city.

Soldiers stationed in Saskatoon were also involved in the cultural life of the city. Convocation at the University of Saskatchewan, for example, assumed a martial atmosphere during the war years as scholars and dignitaries were joined on stage by uniformed servicemen. Students serving far from their alma mater in the Canadian Forces were admitted to their degrees in absentia. Indeed, the spirit of sacrifice typified by the soldier was poignantly captured by the words to the Canadian national anthem which opened the ceremony: "O Canada! Beneath thy shining skies / May stalwart sons and gentle maidens rise; / To keep thee steadfast thro' the years / From East to Western sea, / Our Fatherland, our Motherland! / Our true North strong and free!"<sup>91</sup> The military theme was even more prominent during the 1944 Convocation when an honorary degree was conferred upon Andrew McNaughton, the Minister

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<sup>88</sup> *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 24 March 1944.

<sup>89</sup> *The Sheaf*, 16 October 1941.

<sup>90</sup> *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 19 September 1942.

<sup>91</sup> *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 9 May 1941.

of National Defence and the Commander of the 1<sup>st</sup> Canadian Army from 1942 to 1943. The old soldier was feted like a celebrity from the moment of his arrival in the city until his departure. “General McNaughton is certainly one of the most distinguished sons that Saskatchewan has produced,” a *Star-Phoenix* editorial effused of the Moosomin native.<sup>92</sup>

More lighthearted were the numerous dances and parties at which soldiers and civilians mingled. The annual “Night Flight” at the Cavern Ballroom was one such event. Six hundred guests, many of them dressed in their blue-grey uniform, enjoyed an evening of entertainment as the orchestra played popular army songs and couples danced under tiny model aircraft suspended from the ceiling.<sup>93</sup> The Empire Services Club also became a popular destination in Saskatoon for soldiers. With a radio, gramophone, piano, ping pong table, and other games, the building’s lounge was especially busy on weekends.<sup>94</sup> Sunday evening concerts for the troops at the YMCA were likewise aimed at diverting Saskatoon’s military population.<sup>95</sup> The pervasiveness of the soldier figure in Saskatoon prompted the directors of the city’s annual summer Exhibition to choose a random serviceman to open the fair in 1941. The average Canadian soldier, airman, or sailor was declared “The Man of the Hour.”<sup>96</sup> Not to be outdone, the Kinsmen Karnival offered free admission to His Majesty’s Forces in uniform and invited

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<sup>92</sup> *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 12 May 1944. Although given a hero’s welcome by Saskatonians, McNaughton had been less well received by Ontario voters only a few months before. After his resignation from the army in late 1943, McNaughton had been handpicked by prime minister William Lyon Mackenzie King to serve as minister of defence. Lacking a seat in Parliament, the retired general ran in the Grey North by-election on 5 February 1944. While King had predicted an acclamation for McNaughton, the contest turned into one of the most bitter battles in Canadian political history. Unable to shed his anti-conscriptionist image or counter the spurious charge from Conservatives that he had neglected to reinforce the troops overseas, McNaughton was defeated by Tory candidate Garfield Case 7,333 votes to 6,097. According to John Swettenham, McNaughton’s biographer, the accomplished soldier and military scientist was unaccustomed to the rough-and-tumble world of electoral politics: “The General was hopelessly unfamiliar with these strange – and, as he saw it, unscrupulous – weapons.” John Swettenham, *McNaughton*, Vol. 3 (Toronto: The Ryerson Press, 1969), 77.

<sup>93</sup> *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 1 October 1941.

<sup>94</sup> *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 2 August 1940.

<sup>95</sup> *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 19 October 1940.

<sup>96</sup> *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 24 July 1941.

civilians and soldiers alike to try a new game which encouraged participants to “knock off Hitler’s block [and] Mussolini’s too!”<sup>97</sup> The more subdued confines of Saskatoon’s churches also proved congenial to local soldiers. In 1943 a large contingent of RCAF personnel attended Sunday service at Third Avenue United Church.<sup>98</sup> In May 1944 airmen from No. 7 I.T.S. trumped this first group when their military band, in conjunction with a civilian choir, put on a program of sacred music for the parishioners of Knox United Church.<sup>99</sup>

Not even politics was immune to the growing military character of the city. Styling himself as an independent “soldier candidate,” G. H. Bradbrooke, a veteran of the Great War, contested the federal by-election in August 1940. “Never a finer man put on khaki,” declared one Bradbrooke supporter. The country could put its faith in someone who had “shed his blood once before for freedom,” noted another.<sup>100</sup> Prairie inhabitants who opened their homes to servicemen provided one final way in which the bond between soldier and civilian was strengthened. At Christmas and New Year’s, for example, Saskatoon homeowners billeted troops eager to visit the city during the holiday.<sup>101</sup> As well, in an effort to relieve the housing crisis in the late stages of the war, citizens were encouraged to offer soldiers and their families any house space they could spare. “Place your home on active service,” urged the mayor.<sup>102</sup>

Although Saskatoon’s close relationship to its military population helped to rally prairie inhabitants behind the war effort, the city’s idealized image of the soldier was sometimes tainted. The effect could be comic, as when a returning aviator excoriated the national home front for not doing enough but made an exception for Toronto: “They are taking the war pretty

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<sup>97</sup> *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 17 June 1940.

<sup>98</sup> *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 23 October 1943.

<sup>99</sup> *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 27 May 1944.

<sup>100</sup> *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 9 August 1940.

<sup>101</sup> *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 14 December 1943.

<sup>102</sup> *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 17 January 1944.

seriously down in Toronto,” the military man told the *Star-Phoenix*, adding “Toronto is a pretty fine town. My people live there now.”<sup>103</sup> More damaging were criminal acts committed by soldiers stationed in Saskatoon. On several occasions during the war, for instance, cars were broken into and taken for joy rides. In October 1939 servicemen wielding axes ransacked Aunt Martha’s Café on Twentieth Street in response to a rumour that two of their own had been attacked and beaten by civilians in the restaurant’s vicinity. Perhaps to protect the image of the Canadian Forces in Saskatoon, gossip quickly spread that the proprietor of the diner was of German descent. The man was actually Jewish and had served in the Great War.<sup>104</sup>

Undoubtedly the most shocking crime committed by a soldier occurred in July 1943. In that month James William Clark, a twenty-year-old serviceman stationed at Dundurn, murdered fellow trooper Ernest Arthur Clifford. “Packed with spectators as it had not been for years,” Saskatoon’s court house heard the lurid details of the story.<sup>105</sup> Clark and Clifford had been walking together outside Dundurn military camp in the evening of 7 July. What had begun as a leisurely stroll, however, turned into a heated exchange when Clifford slandered Evelyn Weir, a school teacher from the area with whom Clark was romantically involved. In a rage, Clark turned on the other soldier and stabbed him in the back. His left lung punctured, Clifford died of internal hemorrhaging shortly after.<sup>106</sup>

Despite the occasional fragility of the soldier-civilian relationship in wartime Saskatoon, the alliance between the two groups was overwhelmingly positive. A case in point was an original contribution to the war effort in 1939 by Saskatoon song writer Cliff Hubbs. Set to swing music, “We’ve got a party in Berlin” was chosen as the official marching song of

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<sup>103</sup> *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 22 July 1941.

<sup>104</sup> *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 10 October 1939.

<sup>105</sup> *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 11 September 1943.

<sup>106</sup> *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 17 August 1943.



the Saskatoon Light Infantry and even briefly achieved international fame. The lyrics to the chorus were certainly infectious:

We've gotta shout hooray and then be on our way;  
 We've got a party in Berlin.  
 We wanna shout hooray, we might as well be gay;  
 We've got a party in Berlin.  
 We'll carry all heads high, not a foot will we drag.  
 We're gonna stuff old Adolf right into the bag.  
 We've gotta shout hooray and everyone will say.  
 We've got a party in Berlin.<sup>107</sup>

The tone of this piece was more than just patriotic – it bordered on jingoistic. Needless to say the song's optimistic lyrics were exposed as hollow in the years that followed. The striving of the Allies for six years to reach Berlin was not a party. Nor was the division of that city during the Cold War (the Soviet Union too was eager to have a “party” in Berlin). Nevertheless, Cliff Hubbs' song is a fitting symbol of Saskatoon's experience of the Second World War. That conflict, far from being a sobering event, at times took on an almost festive air in the prairie city. The popular imagination, for so long stifled by the Depression's dreary years, was given free rein. By imagining what it was like to be at war, Saskatonians were in spirit with Canadian soldiers overseas from 1939 to 1945. To be sure, the collective mind was sometimes led astray: the idea of an air invasion on the city strikes us now as absurd, as does the tendency of civilians to idealize the military while downplaying the horrors of armed conflict. Still, in spite of all its self-deceptions, the popular imagination was crucial in nurturing the patriotism of Saskatoon's citizens. The war “over there” had to be, and was, transplanted “over here.”

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<sup>107</sup> *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 4 October 1939.

## Chapter Two “Doing My Bit”: Patriotism in Action

The patriotic imagination both created excitement in Saskatoon for Canada’s part in the Second World War and energized the initiatives of the civilian population. It was precisely because Saskatonians took such a vicarious interest in the conflict overseas that they were inspired to further the war effort at home. As military chaplain S. L. Lockhead declared in his 1940 Remembrance Day address at Saskatoon’s Cenotaph, “*everyone* was on active service.”<sup>1</sup> “Doing my bit” (the individual’s contribution) and the “war effort” (the collective action) were perhaps the two phrases most frequently invoked in the pages of the *Star-Phoenix* between 1939 and 1945. Such patriotism in action can be viewed in three realms: the recruitment and enlistment of Saskatoon’s men for service overseas; the various non-military contributions to the war effort by the civilian population, including the actions of women and children; and the ways in which patriotism was the basis for social action of various kinds. While widespread enthusiasm for the war effort was the dominant mood in Saskatoon – the *Star-Phoenix* both reported on this fervour and helped to create it – there were also dissenting voices which challenged the majority’s view of what constituted true patriotism.

Following Germany’s invasion of Poland on 1 September 1939 the *Star-Phoenix* carried stories of Saskatoon men enlisting in the army. That Canada was not officially at war against the Nazis until 10 September was irrelevant to the patriotic citizens who lined up at the Exhibition Grounds. Perhaps to galvanize Saskatoon’s able-bodied men into action, newspaper accounts often highlighted the patriotism of those unable to serve. For instance, one article related the short-lived military career of a sixteen-year-old boy who, after enlisting in the Canadian Active Service Force on 4 September, was relieved of his duties the next day when

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<sup>1</sup> *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 12 November 1940.

his anxious mother informed military authorities that the lad was too young to serve.<sup>2</sup> A man with a glass eye was also turned away despite protesting to an officer, “I was too young for the last war, but I want to get into this one.”<sup>3</sup> As sixty veterans of the Great War discovered on 6 September, old age was no less an impediment to service. Their determined yet fruitless attempts to enlist, however, deeply impressed one military official who marvelled, “If we could enlist veterans of the last war we could have filled the ranks of the Saskatoon units by today.”<sup>4</sup>

The *Star-Phoenix* continued to show a keen interest in the subject of enlistment even after the initial rush to the colors following Germany’s invasion of Poland. In January 1940, for example, the newspaper boasted that Saskatoon was first among Canadian cities on a per capita basis for enlistment in the R.C.A.F.<sup>5</sup> In an effort to stimulate recruitment, new local volunteers to the Canadian Forces were profiled whenever possible by Saskatoon’s daily. If recruits were too numerous to honour individually, group photographs were prominently displayed in the *Star-Phoenix* under the heading “These Men Have Responded to Country’s Call.” Here was the essence of patriotism in action: “From farms and country stores, railway gangs and school rooms, Saskatchewan men are rallying to colors,” a journalist declared.<sup>6</sup> Newspaper rhetoric aside, patriotism was not the sole motivation behind enlistment. Military service, argue historians John Herd Thompson and Allen Seager, provided an immediate escape from the clutches of the Depression, as a generation of young men was given its “first job, first new boots, first decent suit of clothes.”<sup>7</sup>

So pervasive was the theme of “doing my bit” in Saskatoon that even a group

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<sup>2</sup> *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 5 September 1939.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>4</sup> *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 7 September 1939.

<sup>5</sup> *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 26 January 1940.

<sup>6</sup> *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 6 December 1941.

<sup>7</sup> John Herd Thompson and Allen Seager, *Canada 1922-1939: Decades of Discord* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1985), 332.

traditionally ignored by the dominant society was singled out for praise. In the largest mass enlistment to date in the prairie city, eighteen Indians from the Mistawasis reserve under Chief Joe Dreaver arrived in a truck draped with Union Jacks on 13 October 1939 to volunteer for the Saskatoon Light Infantry. This remarkable display prompted the *Star-Phoenix* to wax eloquent about the ties that bound the Crown and First Nations together:

Chief Mistawasis, one of the Indian leaders who signed Treaty No. 6 at Carlton in 1876, rests peacefully today in the Indians' happy hunting grounds. As a young man a bitter enemy of the whites, Chief Mistawasis lived to be a friend of the British, and today he can sleep undisturbed, serene in the knowledge that his descendants not only adhere to the terms of the treaty which he signed with the Great White Queen but that his sons and grandsons, living on the big reserve named after him, north of Leask, are still true Indians, true to a bargain and true to their beliefs. Today, Mistawasis would not find many graves in his wigwams.<sup>8</sup>

The Mistawasis Indians received glowing press above all because they were acting upon their loyalty to the Crown. Although not without its prejudices, the *Star-Phoenix's* article was surprisingly positive.<sup>9</sup> As historian R. Scott Sheffield argues, the piece was particularly unusual for the time in its quoting at length from an Indian chief without the obligatory grunts or pidgin English.<sup>10</sup> Dreaver, a veteran of the Great War, was offered a voice by the newspaper precisely because his articulate statements not only promoted the war effort but had the potential to stir other groups into action. "If people of all the nationalities in Canada rallied to the colors as willingly as the Indians, the people who lost their country to the British and who, by nature and instinct, should be the last to offer their services, this Nation would be an example to the world," Dreaver stated.<sup>11</sup> So impressed was the *Star-Phoenix* by the eagerness of First Nations to serve the country that it published stories on northern Indians forgoing

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<sup>8</sup> *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 14 October 1939.

<sup>9</sup> One such prejudice was the statement later in the piece that the Indians "did not look upon joining the army as anything unusual, the love of fighting still being strong in their veins." As historian R. Scott Sheffield argues, this passage "conjured up the image of the Indian as a natural and bloodthirsty warrior, one of the most compelling and long-standing historical manifestations of the 'Public Indian.'" R. Scott Sheffield, *The Red Man's on the Warpath: The Image of the 'Indian' and the Second World War* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2004), 68.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 69.

<sup>11</sup> *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 14 October 1939.

treaty money to help vanquish “Hitler’s hordes,” and dedicated an entire column to the promotion of Muskeg Lake Indian David Greyeyes to corporal in the Saskatoon Light Infantry.<sup>12</sup> All of this praise culminated in a May 1944 editorial in which the daily called for a “new deal” after the war for Canada’s Indians.<sup>13</sup>

But praise for those who enlisted could easily turn into criticism of those who did not. In December 1941 the headline “3,000 Eligible Men Here Still in Civvies” was prominently displayed on the *Star-Phoenix*’s local news page.<sup>14</sup> More revealing were comments later in the war by Alderman W. B. Caswell at a celebration for returned soldiers at the Bessborough, Saskatoon’s elegant chateau-style hotel on the river. “You are all volunteers and have been members of the active forces,” the civic official lauded those present in uniform, adding “There are no Zombies here this evening.”<sup>15</sup> Caswell’s reference to “Zombies,” the pejorative name for men conscripted for home defence who never fought overseas, prompted the crowd to “burst into enthusiastic applause,” a telling comment on patriotism in wartime Saskatoon. The soldier who risked his life abroad was the quintessence of patriotism in action.

Antagonism towards those who did not fight had to be directed against clearly definable groups to be effective. Students at the University of Saskatchewan were one such target. This might seem strange, given that total enrolment at the university dropped from 2,187 in the 1939-1940 session to 1,444 in 1943-44 (the lowest number since 1927-28), a clear sign that the varsity population was enlisting.<sup>16</sup> For the male students who did not enlist, military training in the Canadian Officers’ Training Corps (C.O.T.C.) became compulsory.

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<sup>12</sup> *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 17 June 1940; *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 13 October 1941. David Greyeyes later earned the Greek Military Cross for his support of the Greek Mountain Brigade during the Italian campaign (Waiser, *Saskatchewan History*, 329).

<sup>13</sup> *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 26 May 1944.

<sup>14</sup> *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 23 December 1941.

<sup>15</sup> *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 9 November 1944.

<sup>16</sup> W. P. Thompson, *The University of Saskatchewan: A Personal History* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1970), 131-132.

Their instructors were often drawn from the faculty, veterans of the Great War who eagerly donned their old military uniforms and, in the words of University President James Sutherland Thomson, were “rather pleased . . . to put up their medal ribbons and, in one or two cases, to display visible emblems of former gallantry in battle.”<sup>17</sup> Naval and air force training units were also established on the campus later in the war.

Yet, despite the military activity on university grounds across the nation, there was a general perception that students in training were not soldiers in action.<sup>18</sup> University leaders responded by pointing to the enlistment policies of the federal government which stated that higher learning need not come to a halt, especially when studies of a scientific, medical, or technical nature were crucial to the war effort.<sup>19</sup> Thus, while the College of Engineering enlisted to a man in the Great War and had to be closed down, everything was done in the Second World War to keep engineers on campus. Even the arts and the humanities were deemed an essential national service, allowing students to continue their studies undisturbed as long as they maintained good academic standing. In President Thomson’s apt phrase, the University of Saskatchewan operated under a system of “voluntary conscription.”<sup>20</sup>

To some Saskatonians, however, the very sight of students not in uniform was an irritant. In one letter to the *Star-Phoenix*, an angry patriot argued that the male university population was made up of two groups: those who were sincere about their schooling and those “who would never have gone to the university if there had not been a war on, but are looking

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<sup>17</sup> James Sutherland Thomson, *Yesteryears at the University of Saskatchewan, 1937-1949* (Saskatoon: Modern Press, 1969), 38.

<sup>18</sup> Historian Jeffrey Keshen notes that more than 14,000 university students obtained deferments from service under the National Resources Mobilization Act (which introduced conscription for service in North America) and sometimes resisted their obligation of 110 hours of officer training during the school term and two weeks during the summer, “all of which drew considerable criticism” (Keshen, *Saints, Sinners, and Soldiers*, 21).

<sup>19</sup> Students enrolled in these areas actually had to receive special permission from the Wartime Bureau of Technical Personnel to enlist for active service (Thompson, *The University of Saskatchewan*, 129).

<sup>20</sup> Thomson, *Yesteryears at the University of Saskatchewan*, 47.

for a safe place.”<sup>21</sup> To deflect such criticism, the University of Saskatchewan staged a parade in October 1940 which played up education as an essential part of the war effort. A float by the College of Engineering, for example, carried an airplane fuselage under the heading “Gunning for Goering.” Animals were scattered about the Agriculture float under the pithy slogan “We grow it, they eat it,” while law students held up a banner which showed Hitler and Mussolini being tried for their crimes. Not to be outdone, the double display of the School of Medicine featured young doctors being taught their profession “over here,” while the second truck demonstrated medics operating on a wounded soldier “over there.” Only the float representing the Arts and Science men’s association – which depicted Churchill violently punching Axis leaders – failed to make a clear link between higher learning and the war.<sup>22</sup>

Two controversies at the University of Saskatchewan in 1938 ensured that such elaborate parades and others shows of patriotism were essential to convince an incredulous citizenry of the campus’ dedication to the war effort. That year numerous patriotic organizations accused the university of being a breeding ground for pacifism. At the center of the storm was a young English professor named Carlyle King. As chairman of the Fellowship of Reconciliation, the leading pacifist organization in Canada, King spoke three times in 1938 against imperialism, preaching instead disarmament and international economic cooperation. Such headlines in the *Star-Phoenix* as, “Should Not Fight for British Empire” and “Professor King in Bitter Attack on Chamberlain” prompted a swift reaction from the public.<sup>23</sup> Calls were

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<sup>21</sup> *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 27 May 1944. Walter Palmer Thompson, acting president of the University of Saskatchewan in 1943, sensed the public’s negative attitude towards the institution when he noted that “the general public tends to be uneasy concerning the real national need of postponement of military call-up of University students in the fifth year of war.” D. F. Robertson, “A Brief Account of the University of Saskatchewan Contingent, Canadian Officers Training Corps,” *University of Saskatchewan Essays* 4, no. 1 (2006): 68.

<sup>22</sup> *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 15 October 1940.

<sup>23</sup> Don Kerr and Stan Hanson, “Pacifism, Dissent and the University of Saskatchewan, 1938-1944,” *Saskatchewan History* 45, no. 2 (Fall 1993): 5.

made for King's dismissal; of eight submissions to the university's board governors, only one brief defended the English professor. Four branches of the Canadian Legion, the Sons of England Benefit Society, and the English Speaking League of Saskatchewan all savaged King in the media. The rhetoric could be extreme. Reverend Samuel Farley of the First Presbyterian Church in Regina allegedly remarked, "We should be courageous enough to *exterminate* from our staff those who seek to discredit or undermine the empire."<sup>24</sup> Carlyle King was ultimately browbeaten into silence, warned by President Thomson that one more "offence" would cost him his job.<sup>25</sup>

With public furor over the King affair subsiding, a new controversy struck the University of Saskatchewan in November 1938. In its special Armistice Day edition, *The Sheaf*, the student newspaper, challenged the very idea behind memorial ceremonies. The front page prominently juxtaposed a painting of soldiers marching to war under the caption "For What?" with an image of a tombstone labeled "For This?" Even more controversial were student columns on war. An isolationist policy for Canada was advocated by Noel G. Powell who argued that "if Europe must destroy itself, we will be ready to build a new civilization upon a foundation greater than strife." Doug Cherry, who later became the University's Dean of Arts from 1969 to 1981, had no sympathy for the deceased of the Great War since they were "fools and dupes . . . hoaxed by the rich into believing that they were fighting for everlasting peace." *The Sheaf's* second page quoted the anti-war statements of such diverse luminaries as Eugene Debs, Ralph Waldo Emerson, and Erasmus of Rotterdam. Under the headline "What Every Young Man Should Know About War," gruesome items derived from the annals of the wartime medical corps painted a grisly picture of soldiering that included references to such

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<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 7.



trials endured by the wounded as the amputation of mangled limbs, starvation, and harrowing visions of dead people.

Responsibility for *The Sheaf's* Armistice Day issue rested with its editor, Cleo Mowers, a theology student and national secretary for the Fellowship of Reconciliation (there is no evidence that Carlyle King, the chairman of the F.O.R., was implicated in the incident). Although his intent had simply been to “shout a few dogmas and display a few obsessions and prejudices,” Mowers underestimated the anger, both on campus and off, which his actions would create.<sup>26</sup> The Student Representative Council stripped the pacifist of his editorship, but by then the incident had made national headlines. One submission to the Regina *Daily Star* read, “These young buffoons with such disloyal minds / Would now be “Goose Stepping” on the Campus Square / So to the University of Saskatchewan / (Where many so-called men should hide in shame) / Clean out the canker eating at your soul, / Throw out the rats, and purify your name.”<sup>27</sup>

Saskatonians had not forgotten the University of Saskatchewan's controversial 1938 by the Second World War. The general public continued to doubt the commitment of that institution's students to the war effort, a suspicion seemingly confirmed by the repeated victories of the anti-conscription C.C.F. in the campus parliament. Yet, had it not been for its president the university might have fared even worse in this period. As a veteran of the Great War, James Sutherland Thomson gave the campus much needed legitimacy. He had fought at the Somme, Vimy Ridge, and Passchendale. Indeed, after one particular stand at Amiens, only Thomson and fewer than twenty others survived from a battalion of six hundred.<sup>28</sup> In a city obsessed with “doing its bit,” Thomson's military record gave him instant credibility when he

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<sup>26</sup> *The Sheaf*, 10 November 1938.

<sup>27</sup> *The Sheaf*, 22 November 1938.

<sup>28</sup> *The Sheaf*, 6 November 1941.

spoke of the need to groom a learned soldiery.

While only grudgingly accepting the university's emphasis on an educated military leadership, Saskatonians did not hide their animosity towards conscientious objectors who refused to bear arms. Particularly vexatious were the province's Mennonites and Doukhobors who, as a condition on their immigration to Canada, had been promised exemption from military service. In December 1940 Ottawa decreed that conscientious objectors perform "alternative service" labour instead of the military training they would have received under the National War Services Regulations.<sup>29</sup> To the public, however, this "alternative service" smacked of preferential treatment. Nativism dating back to the pioneer era, when Mennonites and Doukhobors had settled the land in ethnic enclaves, was reignited, as military exemption validated the old charge that these "foreigners" refused to assimilate. One *Star-Phoenix* letter remarked of Rosthern's Mennonites, "Their bishops have striven to isolate them intellectually, and have fairly well succeeded because of their settlement in large colonies." The letter continued, "They seize avidly upon the rights of citizenship because that gives them political power, but they haven't the haziest idea of the obligations of citizenship."<sup>30</sup> Even government officials engaged in the vitriolic attacks. "It is about time that you people lived with us and take your rightful place in the community," a member of the War Services Board chastised a group of Doukhobors.<sup>31</sup>

Worsening the image of the "conchie" in Saskatoon was the widespread belief that the younger generation of Doukhobors and Mennonites had abandoned the faith of their fathers. The discovery of a "Katechism on Non-Resistance" by an official of the Regina Canadian Legion provided the smoking gun. The four-page circular, printed in both German and English,

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<sup>29</sup> Waiser, *Saskatchewan History*, 333.

<sup>30</sup> *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 24 September 1940.

<sup>31</sup> *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 5 April 1941.

was described as “a short set of questions and Biblical answers on non-resistance for the instruction of young people.”<sup>32</sup> In an Orwellian twist, the Saskatoon Canadian Legion pressed both federal and provincial authorities for the names of all conscientious objectors who had been granted military exemption: “I’m damn sure there would be fewer applicants if they knew their names would be made public,” argued Legion chief H. T. Pizzey. As well, the neighbours of those exempted would be in a position to supply the police and the War Services Board with “valuable information” about applicants.<sup>33</sup>

More infuriating to Saskatonians than questions about the sincerity of Mennonite and Doukhobor religious belief was the stark contrast between soldier and conscientious objector. Whereas the first was the epitome of patriotism in action, the second represented its total negation. A local mother did not mince her words when she suggested in the *Star-Phoenix* how the nation best handle recalcitrant Mennonites, Doukhobors, and Jehovah’s Witnesses: “If I had my way of dealing with them, they would all stand in the front line of battle and fight for the country they live in; or they wouldn’t stay long in the country they didn’t fight for.”<sup>34</sup> Exemption from military duty contradicted the idea of equality of sacrifice charged the Saskatoon branch of the Canadian Legion. At one point during the war this organization of veterans became so incensed that it unanimously passed a motion calling for the permanent disenfranchisement of all conscientious objectors.<sup>35</sup>

Not surprisingly, the very idea of “alternative service” was an abomination to one-time soldiers. It was simply an excuse for a nice holiday, sarcastically remarked the irrepressible Pizzey: “These young men, physically virile, are now to be given a long summer vacation at

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<sup>32</sup> *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 18 March 1942.

<sup>33</sup> *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 22 November 1941.

<sup>34</sup> *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 4 March 1944.

<sup>35</sup> *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 13 August 1940.

our National Park, Waskesiu, where they may for several months commune with nature while carrying out the vital war effort of clearing brush from bosky dells where they are permitted to receive visitors in their Sunday best.”<sup>36</sup> The *Star-Phoenix*, for its part, did more to stoke the fires of controversy than to extinguish them. An article which quoted an anonymous Ukrainian farmer as saying that conscientious objectors should receive the same treatment meted out to the Jews by Hitler was only one example of this yellow journalism.<sup>37</sup> Similarly, in its coverage of the hearings of the War Services Board, Saskatoon’s daily used headlines which placed applicants for military exemption in a bad light. Bolded words announcing that “Mennonite Youth, 19, Would Not Fight if This Country Invaded” enraged citizens of the prairie city.<sup>38</sup>

Given such attitudes, it is not surprising that Saskatoon decisively endorsed the national plebiscite on conscription in April 1942, freeing the federal government from its promise to not introduce compulsory enlistment. Indeed, if the complete lack of debate in the months before that vote was any indication, conscription’s few opponents in the prairie centre refrained from public statements for fear of being branded unpatriotic. That proponents of conscription had an influential ally in the *Star-Phoenix* also helped. The Saskatoon branch of the Canadian Legion, for example, invariably received positive coverage from the newspaper in its push for “total war.” As well, the daily’s Saturday Letter Box frequently carried contributions extolling the merits of conscription. “Must we wait until the enemy has crashed the outer defences, the British Isles, before we meet the challenge. . . . National Service must come, and come quickly,” declared Lorne O’Donnell in July 1941.<sup>39</sup> Six months later the same author wrote,

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<sup>36</sup> *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 25 June 1941.

<sup>37</sup> *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 12 August 1940.

<sup>38</sup> *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 1 February 1944.

<sup>39</sup> *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 26 July 1941.

“Action, Action, that is what is required. Let’s have it.”<sup>40</sup> Nor were calls for conscription limited to the *Star-Phoenix*. At Saskatoon’s first wartime patriotic rally on 28 June 1941, a celebration attended by more than five thousand people, a solemn address on the need for conscription preceded the lighthearted comedy of C.B.C. duo Woodhouse and Hawkins.<sup>41</sup> The efforts of Saskatoon’s pro-conscription forces ultimately paid off. On 27 April 1942 the prairie city voted 16,652 to 2,073 in favour of compulsory enlistment. Only the rural poll of Fleury voted against the measure. The *Star-Phoenix* was ecstatic with the result. The 89% “Yes” vote, the newspaper editorialized, “must be fairly close to a record for the Dominion,” adding that if heavy rains had not made roads impassable in many parts of the province, the landslide would have been even larger.<sup>42</sup>

According to the *Star-Phoenix*, Saskatoon’s support of conscription was indisputable proof that the city was united behind the war effort. Amid such self-congratulatory rhetoric, however, there was a disturbing prejudice towards ethnic groups believed to be opposed to conscription. An evening meeting of the Saskatoon Men’s Liberal Association in February 1940, for instance, was rudely interrupted at the mere mention of the word conscription by the keynote speaker. “That’s what we should have in this country,” shouted a small elderly man jumping to his feet, adding “All these — bohunks should be in the army.” His tirade finished, the gentleman put on his fur cap and left the meeting.<sup>43</sup> In January 1942 United Church minister G. Stanley Packham appeared to call for racial tolerance when he accused Ottawa of fostering unmerited resentment towards Quebec by delaying compulsory enlistment. Yet the speech’s effect was negated when in the next breath the pastor declared, “Conscription would

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<sup>40</sup> *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 10 January 1942.

<sup>41</sup> *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 28 June 1941.

<sup>42</sup> *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 28 April 1942.

<sup>43</sup> *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 6 February 1940. Far from censuring the man for his racism, the *Star-Phoenix* revealingly labelled him a “fiery advocate” of conscription.

give all persons of non-Anglo-Saxon origin a chance to clear their names.”<sup>44</sup>

British ethnocentrism in Saskatoon did not abate after the April 1942 national plebiscite; rather, as a result of conscription’s heavy defeat in the province of Quebec, French Canadians became the new focus of bigotry. Possibly in a pre-emptive move to counter discrimination, one Emile Deschenes issued an apology in the 2 May 1942 edition of the *Star-Phoenix*: “After the result of the plebiscite I have a very painful duty to fulfill. To the new friends I have in Saskatoon I very humbly apologize for being a French Canadian. It is no fault of mine, it is merely an accident of birth.”<sup>45</sup> Not all of Saskatoon’s 1,618-strong French population was so repentant.<sup>46</sup> Local *française* Jacqueline Larocque, for example, offered her own retorts to letters in the newspaper complaining about Quebec’s “shirking,” about the excessive amount of French on the radio, and about the bilingualism of ration cards. Such critics, remarked Larocque, knew nothing of the “proud and glorious history of the men from France who planted the first seeds for what is now our great Dominion of Canada,” or that the Regiment de Maisonneuve, fitted and trained in Montreal, had been the first group of Canadian soldiers ready for overseas service in the war.<sup>47</sup> Though courageous, Larocque’s eloquent responses belied the fact that in wartime Saskatoon the patriotism of French Canadians was considered hollow until proven otherwise.

Saskatoon’s greatest patriots during the Second World War were its soldiers who fought in the Canadian army. Yet training the sights of a rifle on the Axis foe was not the only way for citizens to “do their bit.” Indeed, what of civilians on the home front who would never experience military action? A government war savings advertisement in April 1941 colourfully

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<sup>44</sup> *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 10 January 1942.

<sup>45</sup> *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 2 May 1942.

<sup>46</sup> *Census of Canada 1941*, “Population by mother tongue and racial origin for cities of 30,000 and over,” 256-257.

<sup>47</sup> *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 13 March 1943.

captured their plight: “These are the days when Canadians worthy of the name, unable to fight in our armed forces, burn up in helpless fury and indignation. They have one common thought – ‘what can we do.’”<sup>48</sup> Saskatonians contributed to the war effort in myriad ways. With their dollars, they subscribed to the eleven Victory Loans between 1939 and 1945 and supported other charitable initiatives. Money, however, was not a prerequisite to service, as shown by the popularity of salvage campaigns, victory gardens, and communal patriotic gatherings. Finally, there were the contributions of two groups still largely ignored by historians: women and children.

Victory Loans, in the words of James Sutherland Thomson, were the “sinews of war.”<sup>49</sup> Ranging from \$50 to \$100,000, war bonds gave civilians the sense that they were dealing a personal blow to the Axis. “Right now prove the kind of patriot you are – dig down and help win the war against Barbarism,” encouraged one loan advertisement in September 1940.<sup>50</sup> Saskatonians were told the exact amount of military equipment their dollars would buy. For example, seventy-five Spitfires, “the grandest fighting machines in the skies,” could be purchased with the prairie city’s quota of \$1,975,000 for the Fourth Victory Loan.<sup>51</sup> Local organizers eagerly fostered the impression that the home front was a military war machine in its own right. In October 1942 a giant map was set up on Twenty-First Street and Second Avenue showing a “Dieppe commando dagger” pointing from Saskatoon to Berlin. Every day at noon the knife inched closer to the German capital based on the contributions of Saskatonians to the Victory Loan.<sup>52</sup>

The popularity of war bonds was remarkable, given that the city had just emerged from

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<sup>48</sup> *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 26 April 1941.

<sup>49</sup> *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 11 February 1942.

<sup>50</sup> *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 9 September 1940.

<sup>51</sup> *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 30 April 1943.

<sup>52</sup> *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 15 October 1942.

the devastating Depression of the 1930s. This fact was not lost on the *Star-Phoenix* when citizens raised more than half a million dollars for the First War Loan in a mere two days. It was “no small thing for a community of this size, especially one that has suffered the buffets of many years of drouth heaped on top of depression,” the newspaper remarked.<sup>53</sup> Toronto might have given ten times more than all of Saskatchewan through the first six Victory Loans, a letter to the *Star-Phoenix* noted, but the latter achievement was far greater in light of the “grim fact . . . that the people of Saskatchewan suffered a reduction in income unparalleled in any civilized country.”<sup>54</sup>

Promotion was crucial to the success of Victory Loans. Posters, direct mailings, movie trailers, radio spots, and full-page newspaper advertisements, observes historian Jeffrey Keshen, combined to form the federal government’s most extensive propaganda campaign between 1939 and 1945.<sup>55</sup> The *Star-Phoenix* eagerly assisted Ottawa in promoting the Victory Loans. In April 1944, for example, the newspaper blanketed its front page in casualty lists, superimposing the message “Help stop this – this year. Put Victory First. Buy Victory Bonds” on the names of the dead.<sup>56</sup> To fuel provincial competition, the newspaper also published loan “standings” which ranked city and rural units based on what percentage of their quota they had satisfied. Such contests, however, could lead to unscrupulous practices. In May 1944, one enterprising Victory Loan official in the town of Unity returned to local headquarters with two hundred dimes from a piggy-bank. He had sold a bond to a three-year-old child.<sup>57</sup> War bond appeals were also made in local churches where parishioners heard “Victory Loan” sermons.

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<sup>53</sup> *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 18 January 1940.

<sup>54</sup> *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 27 May 1944. The letter writer’s reference to the “Sirois Report” referred to the Royal Commission on Dominion-Provincial Relations which was established in 1937 to respond to the economic and constitutional crisis created by the Depression. The three-volume report was completed in 1940.

<sup>55</sup> Keshen, *Saints, Sinners, and Soldiers*, 32-33.

<sup>56</sup> *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 24 April 1944.

<sup>57</sup> *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 11 May 1944.



“The first and paramount importance of this loan is to convert our dollars, which we have often used in a selfish, wasteful manner, into arms for our sons in the fighting line,” admonished the pastor of Knox United one Sunday in February 1942.<sup>58</sup> The “Victory Tram” of the Fourth War Loan also reminded citizens of their financial duty (see Appendix A12). Decorated with posters and flags, occupied by bands playing martial music, and carrying the city’s only official “money thermometer,” the street car travelled on all lines for two hours daily.<sup>59</sup> Celebrities also came to the city to promote Victory Loans. In September 1940, for example, Great War flying ace Billy Bishop spoke at a luncheon for the Canadian Club. “It is every person’s duty to back up those men who are carrying the battle at the front,” the famous pilot told his audience.<sup>60</sup> The excitement generated by Bishop’s visit was actually eclipsed in October 1944 when Hollywood actress Gail Patrick stopped at the prairie centre. The sale of war bonds which she sought to promote seemed completely forgotten by the army of children who invaded the corridors of the Bessborough, hoping for a glimpse of the beautiful star.<sup>61</sup>

Victory bonds were not the only way for Saskatonians to contribute financially to the war effort. Local pharmacists, for example, sold war savings stamps at twenty-five cents apiece. In 1943 the druggists scorned their quota of \$2,500, declaring instead that they would raise \$5,000 and outsell Regina and Moose Jaw combined. A softball game pitting the pharmacists against the aldermen, with admission by war savings stamp, was a popular feature of the drive.<sup>62</sup> The Kinsmen Club of Saskatoon was also busy during the war. The “Milk for Britain” campaign, in particular, received widespread support from popcorn and peanut sales. In time for the 1943 spring thaw a new twist was put on these donations. A stake connected by

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<sup>58</sup> *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 23 February 1942.

<sup>59</sup> *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 4 May 1943.

<sup>60</sup> *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 4 September 40.

<sup>61</sup> *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 27 October 1944.

<sup>62</sup> *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 2 October 1943.

wire to a stop clock was driven into the ice of the South Saskatchewan River and citizens were challenged to estimate the day, minute, hour, and second the ice would crack. The winner of the “Ice Sweepstakes” was awarded \$200 in Victory bonds.<sup>63</sup>

Saskatoon’s “Buy a Tank for France” campaign of June 1940 captured the imagination of its inhabitants not only because the project was exclusive to the city (it had no national counterpart), but also because it was a tangible sign of their commitment to the war effort. Local businesses contributed money, children scrounged up nickels and dimes, and, in a moving scene, one elderly woman donated two gold wedding rings.<sup>64</sup> Even the fall of France later that month failed to dampen the city’s spirits. Organizers considered renaming the charity “Buy a Tank for the Empire,” but ultimately donated the tank to Charles De Gaulle’s Free French. The words “*Don de la ville de Saskatoon*” were painted on its turret.<sup>65</sup>

The Soviet Union also benefited from Saskatoon’s generosity. From 1942 on citizens were encouraged to give to the Aid to Russia Fund. A hockey all-star game in January 1943 in support of the invaded ally, humorously observed the *Star-Phoenix*, was “probably the most painless method of extracting money from the public for a good cause.”<sup>66</sup> Naturally, the prairie city was most supportive of Canadian troops. In 1943 it “adopted” the RCAF’s 406 (Lynx) squadron. Although these hardened night fighters resented the condescending term “adopt” – “We ain’t nobody’s darling . . . We’ll adopt a city ourselves . . . and we’ll send them Dead Jerries,” declared one of them<sup>67</sup> – they did not decline the 100,000 cigarettes, 425 Christmas parcels, and three subscriptions to the *Star-Phoenix* which they were sent.<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 27 March 1943.

<sup>64</sup> *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 15 June 1940.

<sup>65</sup> O’Brien, *Saskatoon: A History in Photographs*, 77.

<sup>66</sup> *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 30 January 1943.

<sup>67</sup> *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 6 July 1943.

<sup>68</sup> O’Brien, *Saskatoon: A History in Photographs*, 73.

If salvage drives were any indication, the donation of money was not the only way for Saskatonians to prove their patriotism. Beginning in June 1941 and motivated by such pithy slogans as “Get in the scrap with your scrap” and “Heap it on Hitler,” citizens recycled paper, magazines, boxes, fats, bones, rags, glass bottles, metal of various kinds, and rubber. Advertisements in the *Star-Phoenix* stressed the practical value of scrap: fats made explosives, bones produced glue to build airplanes, and the lowly rag cleaned engines at aviation facilities. “Think of it,” commanded one 1942 salvage notice, “fleets of Stirling and Lancaster bombers – carrying huge two and four-ton block-buster bombs made of metal donated by the citizens of Saskatoon and vicinity – flying over Germany and dropping those bombs on enemy factories, munitions plants, and barracks – and so hasten the day of Victory!”<sup>69</sup> In its zeal to contribute to the salvage campaign, City Council voted to hand over its two German field guns, trophies from the Great War which stood guard over City Hall. Ever patriotic, the *Star-Phoenix* declared that these cannons might yet hurl projectiles at the enemy from whom they were seized.<sup>70</sup> Although most Saskatonians responded eagerly to salvage drives, some citizens were suspicious that a profit was being made on the material collected. Unable to hide his irritation, a local salvage organizer issued the following statement in July 1941: “We do not know whether non-participation in this campaign will hurt ‘the Jews,’ ‘the railways,’ ‘the manufacturers,’ ‘the capitalist system,’ or whatever any non-co-operator happens to dislike, but we are sure that non-co-operation within Canada . . . makes us more likely to lose the war.”<sup>71</sup> Fear of dishonest profit faded from the minds of Saskatonians, however, as the war progressed

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<sup>69</sup> *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 25 September 1942. The government advertisement conveniently omitted the Allied bombing of German civilians. The first 1,000 bomber raid by the RAF on Cologne in May 1942, for example, was especially devastating.

<sup>70</sup> *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 6 January 1942.

<sup>71</sup> *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 9 July 1941. That certain Saskatonians feared that “the Jews” might make a profit is revealing. Not only were a high proportion of salvage yard owners Jewish, but a well-entrenched anti-

and sidewalks dotted with piles of scrap became a familiar sight.

Like recycling scrap, the planting of Victory Gardens was an inexpensive way for Saskatonians to “do their bit.” Citizens were encouraged from 1943 on to grow their own tomatoes, beans, beets, lettuces, radishes, carrots, and spinach. This self-sufficiency provided relief to both overtaxed transportation facilities and the soldiers abroad who received more canned foods. “A garden that is not a success is a waste of materials and manpower,” warned a government advertisement in April 1943.<sup>72</sup> Those who lacked garden space but still wanted to grow a Victory Garden could apply to the city for a vacant lot. In 1943 a total of 1,180 people took out permits, doubling the treasury’s revenue from the year before.<sup>73</sup> With “Dig for Victory – Sow for Peace” as its motto, the Saskatoon Exhibition even sponsored a contest for the city’s best Victory Garden.<sup>74</sup> The Saskatoon Horticultural Society, for its part, published a series of articles in the newspaper entitled “To Help You With Your Victory Garden (What to Grow).”<sup>75</sup> Local businesses profited as well. One advertisement for Birney’s Hardware promoted its line of spades, hoes, rakes, and fertilizer by encouraging citizens to “Mobilize Your Garden for Action!”<sup>76</sup> Yet not even the best gardening tools could prevent sabotage by the “winged enemy,” a plague of mosquitoes that hit Saskatoon in May 1943.<sup>77</sup>

But patriotism in action was more than just practical endeavours: by coming together as a community Saskatonians could build up their own morale. According to Aimée Viel, an expert on Lethbridge during the Second World War, popular culture could bolster a city’s war effort by furnishing and perpetuating the ideals around which people rallied, by boosting

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Semitism stereotyped them as money-grubbers who made exorbitant profits (Keshen, *Saints, Sinners, and Soldiers*, 39).

<sup>72</sup> *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 8 April 1943.

<sup>73</sup> *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 20 April 1943.

<sup>74</sup> *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 21 April 1943.

<sup>75</sup> *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 17 April 1943.

<sup>76</sup> *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 8 April 1943.

<sup>77</sup> *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix* 18 May 1943.

morale, and by providing a sense of normalcy in troubled times.<sup>78</sup> Saskatoon's churches contributed to these aims through "V for Victory" sermons, patriotic rallies, and services in honour of the troops. War-related news provided ample material for sermons: the first Sunday after the Quebec Conference of 24 August 1943, for instance, Saskatoon's Apostolic Church explored the "prophetic significance" of the multilateral talks; a month before D-Day, People's Church parishioners heard "The Second Front – Hitler's Bloody Comedy Ends"; "Will War Criminals Escape Justice?" questioned the Church of the Nazarene in April 1945 as Allied armies marched towards Germany.<sup>79</sup> In the more rambunctious milieu of the University of Saskatchewan, students burned an effigy of Hitler for Reunion Weekend in October 1939.<sup>80</sup>

As for the city in general, weekly community sing-songs in Kiwanis Park were especially popular, with anywhere between 4,500 and 12,000 citizens assembled to sing such melodies as "Solid Men to the Front," "With Sword and Lance," and "Our Glorious Flag."<sup>81</sup> Singing, remarked the *Star-Phoenix*, was an excellent antidote to "war jitters."<sup>82</sup> During one musical gathering in August 1941, each member of the crowd held aloft two matches in the shape of a "V" and, at the signal of the master of ceremonies, lit them simultaneously, creating a "striking and beautiful effect."<sup>83</sup> In January 1942 the Saskatoon Symphony Orchestra brought civilians together by performing pieces from allied and occupied countries – needless to say, there was no Wagner.<sup>84</sup> The Saskatoon Patriotic Committee's comedy of "Woodhouse and Hawkins" at the Arena Rink in June 1941 also helped to lessen the strain of war. The

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<sup>78</sup> Viel, *Lethbridge on the Homefront*, 12.

<sup>79</sup> *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 28 August 1943; 29 April 1944; 14 April 1945.

<sup>80</sup> *The Sheaf*, 6 October 1939.

<sup>81</sup> *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 17 July 1941.

<sup>82</sup> *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 18 July 1941.

<sup>83</sup> *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 11 August 1941.

<sup>84</sup> *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 2 January 1942. Czechoslovakia was represented by Antonín Dvořák's *Slavonic Dance No. 1*; Poland by Moritz Moszkowski's *Serenata* and Frédéric Chopin's *Military Polonaise*; pre-Anschluss Austria by Franz Schubert's *Overture to Rosamunde*.

crowd of 5,000 roared with laughter as the country bumpkins impersonated such international figures as Lindbergh, Hitler, and Mussolini.<sup>85</sup>

No study of patriotism in action would be complete without a reference to the contribution of Saskatoon women.<sup>86</sup> As the innumerable references to women in the *Star-Phoenix* between 1939 and 1945 reveal, their role was both widespread and valuable. Indeed, the mere suggestion in 1939 by local politician Wilna Moore that Canadian women were too passive and needed to “wake up” drew a sharp rebuttal from one Saskatoon woman:

We are neither stunned nor in a daze. . . . Wilna Moore need not insult us by asking us to wake up. We are sick of that sort of talk and do not need her advice on how to run the country in time of war. I repeat that the women of Canada will stand behind the men who best serve the Empire and that political tripe does not mean a thing to us when the sacred honor of the whole British Commonwealth of Nations is at stake. If any man dare try to disrupt the unity of Canada during the war we women will tear him limb from limb. Would-be dictators take notice.<sup>87</sup>

Fortunately, such rage was never enacted on the streets of Saskatoon; rather, the women of the city directed their energies to serve the war effort both in the community and in the domestic realm.

When one thinks of women during the Second World War, the image of “Rosie the Riveter” toiling in the factory immediately comes to mind. Yet western Canada never experienced a large influx of women into jobs traditionally held by men. Instead, the concentration of munitions factories in central Canada led to an exodus of prairie women enticed by the national slogan “Roll Up Your Sleeves for Victory!”<sup>88</sup> Still, Saskatoon women entered the workforce to a limited degree during the war years. Taxicab owners and telegraph

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<sup>85</sup> *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 28 June 1941.

<sup>86</sup> Jean Bruce’s testament to the role of Canadian women in the Second World War argues that it was not until the 1980s that historians truly began to appreciate this long neglected area of social history. That combat was done by men and that prominent military, political, and industrial figures were male delayed recognition of women’s contributions. Jean Bruce, *Back the Attack! Canadian Women During the Second World War – at Home and Abroad* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1985), ix.

<sup>87</sup> *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 16 September 1939.

<sup>88</sup> Waiser, *Saskatchewan: A New History*, 331.

companies, for example, engaged girls to fill gaps in their staff.<sup>89</sup> From the north there were even reports of “Lumberjills” in the sawmill at Crooked River.<sup>90</sup> The novel sight of women as bank tellers led to an unexpected problem: the public began to frequent banks more often to converse with the new employees. “For speedier banking please do not go to the bank feeling that a social visit with the young ladies behind the counters is an essential part of the business to be transacted,” complained one letter to the *Star-Phoenix*.<sup>91</sup>

In the military domain, beginning in 1941 Saskatoon women could enlist in the army (Canadian Women’s Army Corps or CWAC) and air force (Women’s Division, RCAF). The next year the navy began accepting recruits (Women’s Royal Canadian Naval Service or Wrens). In October 1943 one hundred CWAC’s were stationed at Dundurn Military Camp in such capacities as jeep and truck drivers, clerks in record offices, storewomen, dental nurses, hospital helpers, laboratory technicians, radiologists, waitresses, cooks, and switchboard operators.<sup>92</sup> Yet, as Jean Bruce remarks, newspaper reports and government propaganda often downplayed the weariness and challenges inherent in such work.<sup>93</sup> The *Star-Phoenix*’s reference to the “infectious smiles” and “bubbling energy” of the young women enlisting in the air force was a case in point.<sup>94</sup>

Despite opportunities to do “men’s work,” most Saskatoon women contributed to the war effort in traditional ways. Because much of this work was done out of the public eye, however, prairie womanhood was sometimes accused of not doing enough. Girls overseas were either in uniform, in factories, or serving as airplane spotters and fire watchers, remarked

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<sup>89</sup> *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 31 October 1942.

<sup>90</sup> *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 26 October 1942.

<sup>91</sup> *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 21 July 1944.

<sup>92</sup> *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 5 April 1943.

<sup>93</sup> Bruce, *Back the Attack!*, viii.

<sup>94</sup> *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 5 January 1943.

one citizen recently returned from Britain; by contrast, the ladies of Saskatoon had apparently nothing better to do than roam the streets trying to pick up a date with anyone in uniform.<sup>95</sup> Such a charge ignored the laudable efforts of the thousands of women involved in volunteer and charitable organizations. For example, under the auspices of the Red Cross, all women's clubs in Saskatoon cut and assembled clothes and knitted socks for the war effort. In 1940 alone, 15,000 garments were produced along with 8,000 pairs of socks.<sup>96</sup> In the spirit of competition, the Saskatoon Red Cross challenged the claim that a Toronto woman was the fastest knitter in Canada: at 130 pairs of socks a year, it was rather Saskatoon's Kathleen O'Donovan who was the "knittingest" woman in the country.<sup>97</sup>

The Imperial Order Daughters of the Empire (I.O.D.E.) in the prairie city was especially active in "doing its bit" to keep "Canada and the Empire free and Christian."<sup>98</sup> Citizens were urged by the I.O.D.E. to donate books, magazines, and playing cards for the benefit of the Canadian Forces. Until the demands of the project became too great, the I.O.D.E. even coordinated the first sixteen months of the salvage campaign.<sup>99</sup> Aided by such diverse organizations as the Women's Auxiliary of the SLI, the Jewish Women's War Unit, and even the Girl Guides Association, the I.O.D.E. also shipped boxes of cigarettes to troops overseas. As many as 65,000 "fags" from the city reached "the boys" every month.<sup>100</sup> Not to be outdone, Saskatoon's Navy League packed ditty bags during the Christmas season for the country's sailors. Writing materials, soaps, washcloths, gum, hot chocolate powder, and other gifts

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<sup>95</sup> *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 29 August 1942.

<sup>96</sup> *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 24 January 1941.

<sup>97</sup> *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 7 August 1940.

<sup>98</sup> *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 18 January 1941. It is instructive to note the origin of the Imperial Order of the Daughters of Empire: the organization was founded in 1900 during the Boer War in patriotic support of the British Empire.

<sup>99</sup> *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 26 October 1942.

<sup>100</sup> *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 4 October 1941.



comprised the contents of the bulging bags.<sup>101</sup> To recover from their exhausting work, local women's groups followed the lead of Tory women and held "tealess teas," serving cocoa and fancy breads to comply with rationing regulations.<sup>102</sup>

As if such volunteer work were not enough, women were also told to be patriotic mothers and housewives. Buying home-grown and national foodstuffs, for example, represented "practical patriotism," as did reporting those who hoarded goods.<sup>103</sup> With nutrition crucial to a successful war effort, the kitchen became a "Laboratory for Victory." Mothers were warned that the "malnourished child is a liability to his parents, his city, and his country, while the well-nourished child is an asset."<sup>104</sup> Designed to be both healthy and to minimize the use of such rationed commodities as sugar and meat, "Wartime Recipes" were printed in the *Star-Phoenix*. Instructions on how to make "steamed whole wheat pudding," "steamed carrot pudding," and "fish loaf," for instance, were included in the 12 January 1944 edition of the newspaper.<sup>105</sup> Along with these "patriotic dishes," women were asked to accept the curtailing of delivery services from big retail stores in an effort to conserve gasoline.<sup>106</sup> The stemming of consumerism, declared one government speaker in May 1943, was also the purview of Saskatoon's women, since statistics showed that three-fifths of all savings accounts were registered in their names and that they spent eighty-five cents out of every dollar.<sup>107</sup> Because thrift had been a fact of life in Saskatchewan during the Depression, of course, the frugal management of money was not exactly a radically new practice. Finally, Saskatoon mothers were told of their role in promoting democracy and strong citizenship, invaluable assets in the

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<sup>101</sup> *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 3 November 1942.

<sup>102</sup> *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 26 October 1942.

<sup>103</sup> *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 14 September 1939.

<sup>104</sup> *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 15 October 1941.

<sup>105</sup> *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 12 January 1944.

<sup>106</sup> *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 25 August 1941.

<sup>107</sup> *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 18 May 1943.

war against Fascism. A good home, members of the city's Chatelaine Club heard in February 1941, provided security and banished fear, anxiety, and terror.<sup>108</sup> In June of the same year, farm women meeting at the University of Saskatchewan were exhorted to guard against household conversations which encouraged defeatism, such as dwelling upon the strength and ability of the enemy.<sup>109</sup>

The role of children in the war effort has received even less attention than that of women. War, both on the battlefield and at home, was deemed the preserve of adults.<sup>110</sup> But to read the *Star-Phoenix*, children were arguably the most energetic group on the home front. Saskatoon's Boy Scouts, for example, seemed everywhere at once. Whether it was pulling the forty power switches that bathed the city's downtown core in darkness during blackouts or whether it was meeting army trucks outside the city to guide them on their salvage routes, the Boy Scouts worked tirelessly.<sup>111</sup> During the perennial Victory Loans they distributed posters, helped to decorate Saskatoon homes with flags, and removed painted window signs when the campaign was over.<sup>112</sup> Boy Scouts also collected medicine bottles for flying schools in the area, volunteered as messengers for the air raid precautions scheme, and helped to locate the relatives of men on active service.<sup>113</sup> Saskatoon Police Chief George Donald was particularly impressed by the work of these young boys. If Canada had more Boy Scouts, Donald publicly declared, there would be less "skulking and hiding" and fewer conscientious objectors.<sup>114</sup> Girl Guides, despite garnering less publicity than Boy Scouts, also performed wartime duties. In

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<sup>108</sup> *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 11 February 1941.

<sup>109</sup> *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 18 June 1941.

<sup>110</sup> Historians are only now beginning to study the role of children during the Second World War. Jeffrey Keshen's entire chapter on youth in his 2004 study of Canada during the war, for example, reflects the growing interest in this area of social history.

<sup>111</sup> *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 18 September 1941; 10 October 1942.

<sup>112</sup> *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 9 October 1943.

<sup>113</sup> *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 3 March 1943.

<sup>114</sup> *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 26 March 1943.

March 1943, for example, the Girl Guides of Saskatoon underwent a day of war service training, tested in their abilities to conduct first aid, to cook with thrift, to garden, and to carry dispatches. To complete the emergency cooking challenge, a girl had to prepare a two-course meal for five people over an open fire.<sup>115</sup>

Nor was the patriotism of children restricted to the activities of Boy Scouts and Girl Guides. Both in school and on their own, Saskatoon youth sewed, worked refreshment booths, and put on patriotic shows to raise money for the war effort. One ten-year-old, Marion Konopka, even achieved local celebrity when her photo was published on page three of the *Star-Phoenix* (see Appendix A13). This “accomplished salesgirl” had raised funds for the Red Cross by selling lemonade and candy.<sup>116</sup> In May 1940 three other enterprising girls performed a play in their garage for the adults and youngsters of their neighbourhood. “O Canada” was sung in “piping voices” before the audience was treated to a production of “Tapping Toes.” The \$8.40 raised from admission was donated to charity.<sup>117</sup> One local five-year-old asked guests invited to her birthday party to eschew the usual gifts and to make a contribution to the Red Cross instead. As well, the *Star-Phoenix* reported that many children in the city were turning over their chore money to that society.<sup>118</sup> Scrap drives also captured the imagination of Saskatoon’s youth. Students came to school bearing everything from old copper and aluminum kettles to auto bearings and light fixtures. By ranking the top public schools in the city based on pounds of salvage collected, the *Star-Phoenix* helped to create a competitive atmosphere.<sup>119</sup> Yet excessive zeal could be a problem. Armed with an axe and sledgehammer, four youths visited the farm of Billy Silverwood in June 1942 and broke up farm machinery in “aid” of the

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<sup>115</sup> *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 8 March 1943.

<sup>116</sup> *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 2 July 1941.

<sup>117</sup> *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 13 My 1940.

<sup>118</sup> *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 29 June 1940.

<sup>119</sup> *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 5 May 1942.

scrap drive. “We’re not saying to Saskatoon people ‘go thou and do likewise,’” one journalist quipped, “but this salvage campaign does get in the blood.”<sup>120</sup>

Starting in 1942, children collected donations for Milk for Britain at Halloween instead of the customary apples and candies. With many disguised as commandos, Saskatoon’s youth thoroughly canvassed the city, amassing enough funds to buy 25,000 quarts of milk. “This is undoubtedly the most outstanding effort yet made in this city,” was the ecstatic judgment rendered by Albert Peters, chairman of the Milk for Britain Committee.<sup>121</sup> Natural exuberance explains to some extent the patriotism of these youngsters, but the government also helped to foster such sentiments. In September 1940 a new “citizenship course” was introduced in Saskatchewan schools. Designed to stress loyalty to King and country as well as the merits of the democratic system, pupils were required to begin every day by saluting the flag and by singing the national anthem.<sup>122</sup>

A remarkable unity of purpose characterized Saskatoon’s contribution to the war effort. Charities and volunteerism bound citizens into a cohesive force for patriotism in action. But there were also divisions in the name of patriotism. Such conflicts took two forms: either debates over social issues, or the complaints of those seeking to rectify a perceived inequality. The first involved such questions as the propriety of entertainment on Sunday and the values of temperance; the second included advocates of social justice, local farmers, and critics who accused Ottawa of alienating the west. Not only was action the byword of these voices of opposition, but their appeals consistently appropriated the rhetoric of patriotism.

A good example of such rhetoric was the debate on the opening of theatres on Sunday. Saskatoon in the 1940s was a highly conservative society. Local pastors were among the most

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<sup>120</sup> *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 13 June 1942.

<sup>121</sup> *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 2 November 1942.

<sup>122</sup> *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 12 October 1940.

cited authorities in the news, and every weekend the *Star-Phoenix* carried the titles of Sunday sermons. Vocal supporters of the war effort, city churches framed their spiritual agenda within the military context. In 1940, for example, the pastor of Sutherland and Cory United Church preached on “Moral Re-Armament.”<sup>123</sup> With V-E Day imminent in March 1945, parishioners of Third Avenue United Church heard a talk provocatively entitled “Promiscuity and the Peace: Can an Immoral Society Create a Lasting Peace?”<sup>124</sup> Yet controversy erupted when projects on the homefront appeared to undermine religious belief. The mere suggestion in June 1940 that the government and movie industry hold special “Sunday shows” to raise money for the war effort was a case in point. One clergyman charged that the measure was a devious ploy to “get in the thin edge of the wedge (clothed in patriotism)” and pave the way for the complete opening of theatres on Sunday. Others were more open to the idea. H. G. Harris of Saskatoon argued that Canada was at war against the powers of “hell and darkness” and that every day of the week must be dedicated to that fight. “A nice mess the nation would be in if it tried to appeal to Hitler and Mussolini to abstain from fighting on Sunday, just because it was in contravention of the Lord’s Day Act,” chided Harris.<sup>125</sup> Yet the god-fearing also presented their arguments in terms of the security of the country. H.V. Snider lamented the “gross darkness the people of this nation are getting into,” and called for legislation compelling every man, woman, and child to kneel down and to beg forgiveness for the country’s sins so that God might “give our nation the victory through our Lord-Jesus Christ.”<sup>126</sup> Clearly, even in the midst of disagreement, both sides supported the war effort.

The temperance debate proved even more acrimonious in Saskatoon than movies on the

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<sup>123</sup> *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 20 June 1940

<sup>124</sup> *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 24 March 1945.

<sup>125</sup> *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 29 June 1940.

<sup>126</sup> *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 13 July 1940.

Sabbath. Because the city was founded as a temperance colony in 1882, debates over alcohol restriction carried an emotional appeal.<sup>127</sup> With the coming of the Second World War, an already charged issue was made more volatile by patriotism. As early as October 1939, the Saskatchewan Temperance League called for the closing of all beer parlours. Such a “national service” would reduce waste, boost morale, and encourage physical fitness.<sup>128</sup> In December of the same year, W. H. Hallam, the Anglican bishop for Saskatoon, encouraged a total abstinence campaign, albeit on a voluntary basis.<sup>129</sup> Yet many people resented the efforts of the temperance faithful. One letter to the *Star-Phoenix* from a soldier chastised the province’s women, many of whom were active in church groups:

Why do these women want to bust in on us soldiers? We are going to fight for them so they can enjoy freedom. Yet they begrudge us an innocent glass of beer and in the last war they even wanted to do away with our cigarettes. It makes a lot of us feel like telling them to do their own fighting instead of sticking at home thinking up all sorts of schemes to make life miserable for us.<sup>130</sup>

The needs of soldiers was a favourite argument of temperance opponents, both servicemen and civilians. “I have four sons in the army and I want every soldier to be able to have all the beer he wants,” declared one hotel owner at a meeting of the Saskatchewan Hotel Association in Saskatoon in June 1942.<sup>131</sup> Such patriotism, however, was influenced by profit: drinking establishments were usually attached to hotels.<sup>132</sup> Hotel owners also raised the spectre of prohibition, criticizing temperance advocates for using the war as a “smoke screen” as they had done during the Great War when national prohibition became part of the War Measures Act.<sup>133</sup>

The response of the Saskatoon Temperance Committee to the hotel association was revealing. Dismissing prohibition as a “red herring,” it stressed the patriotic value of alcohol

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<sup>127</sup> Hanson and Kerr, *Saskatoon: The First Half-Century*, 1.

<sup>128</sup> *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 19 October 1939.

<sup>129</sup> *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 2 December 1939.

<sup>130</sup> *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 16 March 1940.

<sup>131</sup> *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 9 June 1942.

<sup>132</sup> Keshen, *Saints, Sinners, and Soldiers*, 112-113.

<sup>133</sup> *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 8 June 1942.

restriction. A successful war economy meant thrift and salvage in all consumer goods, especially liquor. Allied soldiers stood to benefit as well. Referring to the fall of Hong Kong in December 1941 and Singapore in February 1942, the Saskatoon Temperance Committee scathingly commented that Ottawa had taken “more care to fill the cellars at the outposts of Empire with liquor than with ammunition.”<sup>134</sup> At the end of 1942 the federal government finally announced measures to curtail both the manufacture and distribution of alcohol. Proceeding with his usual caution, Prime Minister William Lyon Mackenzie King aimed to reduce the purchase of spirits by thirty percent, wine by twenty percent, and beer by just ten percent. In a radio address on 16 December 1942 King appealed to the patriotism of Canadians: “If the military might of Germany and Japan are ultimately to be crushed [then] self-denial and self-discipline” were required of all.<sup>135</sup> Reaction to the new measures in Saskatoon was divided. One citizen praised the liquor restrictions, noting that when patriotic citizens had to do without such harmless items as butter and tea, surely alcohol, being injurious to the people’s health, needed to be curtailed.<sup>136</sup> Opponents of the liquor laws were no less patriotic. In February 1943 the Trades and Labour Council lamented that soldiers had been turned away from a beer parlor in the city at six o’clock one Saturday night on account of the liquor quota. Because bars were the main social centres for servicemen far from home, the morale of the army was at risk.<sup>137</sup> The Saskatoon branch of the Canadian Legion was even more vociferous in its opposition. The “same outfit” which was now trying to bring about prohibition, charged one veteran, had called for neutrality at the outbreak of war. Indeed, there

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<sup>134</sup> *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 11 June 1942. A temperance speaker from Toronto told a Saskatoon audience in November 1942, “The beer is being shipped right now, even while acres of vital machines of war gather rust on our wharves for lack of shipping space” (*Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 6 November 1942).

<sup>135</sup> Keshen, *Saints, Sinners, and Pigs*, 113-114.

<sup>136</sup> *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 13 March 1943.

<sup>137</sup> *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 25 February 1943.

was no difference between temperance supporters and Hitler's Nazis – each was a minority group enforcing its ideology on an entire nation.<sup>138</sup>

Whether it was Sunday theatres or temperance, groups on either side of the issue assumed a patriotic stance. But there were other voices which called out for social justice. With memories of the Depression still strong in Saskatoon, there was a degree of class tension during the first years of the war. Intriguingly, appeals for redress were often made within the dominant patriotic language. In October 1941, for instance, relief recipients meeting at King George Hotel called for a twenty-five percent increase in relief allowances. A munificent gesture towards the unemployed, argued the group's spokesman, would promote enlistment, since people would be more willing to fight abroad if they felt secure at home.<sup>139</sup> But other appeals for social justice redefined true patriotism by framing the war as something that needed to be waged at home. A case in point was a vitriolic letter to the *Star-Phoenix* in August 1940 attacking the \$10,000 salary of Jimmy Gardiner, long-time premier of Saskatchewan and the current federal agriculture minister. Such men, it was argued, should be given a uniform and forced to serve their country at \$1.30 per day, the standard wage of an infantryman. The world's radical ideologies would “disappear overnight. . . . Starve to death for the want of something to feed upon.”<sup>140</sup> Dorise Nielsen, the maverick Member of Parliament for North Battleford, was equally convinced that evil at home took precedence over threats from outside. Those who spoke of war in Europe, Nielsen stated in Saskatoon in May 1940, were blind to a more longstanding domestic conflict, “War which Poverty, the dictator, has waged on the Canadian people.”<sup>141</sup> Lloyd Foster, a member of the Saskatoon Youth Congress, put it

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<sup>138</sup> *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 20 March 1943.

<sup>139</sup> *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 10 October 1941.

<sup>140</sup> *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 3 August 1940.

<sup>141</sup> *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 2 May 1940.



succinctly five days after Canada declared war: “I say our fight against Fascism is at home,” he declared, adding that “Fascism springs from conditions at home, not from impositions abroad.”<sup>142</sup>

By 1941 such attacks against homegrown Fascism diminished as citizens gained a new appreciation for the gravity of the European crisis. The complaints of local farmers, on the other hand, lasted throughout the war. While claiming to be as patriotic as any group, farmers were never intimidated by the notion that the war effort must preclude a just remuneration. Price restrictions on agricultural produce, they hinted in September 1939, were the “most vicious form of sabotage.”<sup>143</sup> The farmers’ attitude was understandable, given that they had been the group hardest hit by the Depression. In fact, they greeted the outbreak of war with optimism, believing that the price of wheat would escalate as high as three dollars per bushel. Yet, despite sowing a record amount of wheat, Canadian farmers were deprived of their traditional export market by the Nazi occupation of western Europe. Ottawa responded by promoting diversification, urging prairie farmers to grow more feed crops and to increase their livestock production.<sup>144</sup>

Although the transition to new crops was ultimately beneficial, farmers found it difficult to show their patriotism in action. In May 1940, George Bickerton, the president of the Saskatchewan section of the United Farmers of Canada, remarked that it was not easy for the farmer to buy war bonds when he was “the man who has only one payday.”<sup>145</sup> The situation became even grimmer with the closing of European markets. “Yes sir, we farmers usually ‘face the facts,’” stated a letter to the *Star-Phoenix* in October 1942, “and the bald truth is that we

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<sup>142</sup> *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 16 September 1939.

<sup>143</sup> *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 16 September 1939.

<sup>144</sup> Waiser, *Saskatchewan: A New History*, 338.

<sup>145</sup> *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 17 May 1940.

have too many hundreds of millions of bushels of non-negotiable grain in farm bins to do what we would like to do in the Victory Loan effort.”<sup>146</sup> The notion of factory workers gainfully employed in the east with a “veritable avalanche” of war contracts was especially grating. The urban laborer and the farmer, declared one agriculturalist in April 1941, needed to be placed on a more equal footing, since neither was more committed to the country than the other.<sup>147</sup> As George Bickerton darkly predicted in March 1940, the farmers of western Canada would have to prove their patriotism the “sacrificial” way.<sup>148</sup>

The complaints of farmers gave substance to the old charge that Ottawa was alienating the West. Critics, for example, pointed to the government’s failure to support the Hudson Bay railway. Built in 1929, the railway was designed to reduce western shipping costs by eliminating the need to send goods destined for Europe via eastern Canada. The plan never succeeded, with westerners blaming the east-centric government and the railway companies. During the Second World War, however, the spirit of “On-to-the-Bay” campaigns past was revived as a sectional issue became a patriotic one. In August 1942 a letter to the *Star-Phoenix* attacked the Canadian Pacific Railway for “disloyalty” to “Mother England.” By shipping lumber from British Columbia to Montreal, rather than through Port Churchill on Hudson Bay, the CPR was overcharging the beleaguered country. Of course, as this poem from the letter made clear, patriotism was also a means to an end: “Not Hitler’s crimes in many lands / Need we to know the devil is here: / The scuttling of the Hudson Bay / Shows cloven hoof and horns quite clear / No hand but his would close the Bay, / So waste the Prairies’ needed cash.”<sup>149</sup>

The centralization of war industries in eastern Canada was also a sore point for many

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<sup>146</sup> *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 24 October 1942.

<sup>147</sup> *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 5 April 1941.

<sup>148</sup> *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 21 March 1940.

<sup>149</sup> *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 2 May 1942.

Saskatonians. Arguably the most outspoken critic of Ottawa's economic plan was A. H. Bence, Saskatoon's Conservative Member of Parliament. In a speech to the Lions Club in November 1942, Bence argued that the West's patriotism was being stifled by the concentration of wealth in only one section of the country. Surely something was wrong when Ottawa, a city of only 140,000 people, had a quota of \$32,500,000 in the Victory Loan, whereas all of Saskatchewan, home to around one million, was asked to give just \$23,000,000. "Saskatchewan has been sucked and squeezed, pulled and plundered and has always been a ready victim of the voracious," remarked Bence.<sup>150</sup> Speaking a week later, the politician painted an even darker picture of the situation. With advertisements calling daily on prairie men and women to go east to work in the factories, Saskatoon and other prairie towns would be "deserted villages after the war." Such war industries as synthetic rubber, industrial alcohol, and glue, if re-located out west, would benefit the region. Glue, in particular, presented a great opportunity, since it was made mostly from bones, of which there was an abundance on the prairies.<sup>151</sup> The *Star-Phoenix*, always a staunch supporter of the war effort, also attacked Ottawa for its treatment of the prairies. In March 1944 the newspaper devoted a whole editorial to the statement of C. D. Howe, minister of munitions and supply, that Saskatchewan had made the greatest proportional gain in terms of war industries. A flax-crushing plant and the expansion of some meat-packing establishments, the daily paper sarcastically noted, were the extent of Saskatoon's "war industry." "In the words of the Old West, Mr. Howe, 'You better smile when you say that!'" added the *Star-Phoenix*.<sup>152</sup>

Western Canada's sense of alienation was memorably evoked in a 1915 *Grain Grower's Guide* cartoon entitled "The Milch Cow." Prairie farmers were shown feeding a cow

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<sup>150</sup> *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 3 November 1942.

<sup>151</sup> *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 10 November 1942.

<sup>152</sup> *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*,

that was being milked at the same time by eastern businessmen. One may infer that that Saskatoon's sense of western alienation during the war years was an old story retold. To some extent this was true: like the farmers, many Saskatonians at this time wanted their fair share of milk from the economic cow. Yet it is simplistic to assume that this was the whole story. Besides the wish for economic parity with the east, there was a real desire in Saskatoon to have the full resources to put patriotism into action. At times the vociferous patriotism of the majority drowned out the voices of those who, for matters of religion or conscience, could not accept the imperatives of military service. At other times, patriotic zeal could be funnelled towards opposite sides of a fierce debate, such as that on temperance or on Sunday entertainment. That said, one must not forget the positive examples of self-sacrifice and the remarkable unity of purpose demonstrated by charity and volunteer work in the city, especially by women and children. In comparing itself to Toronto, Saskatoon could boast of more than just having a faster knitter.

### Chapter Three The Enemy Within: Patriotism and Fear

As often as the phrase “doing your bit” appeared in the *Star-Phoenix*, matching it in frequency was the term “fifth columnist.” This designation reflected the widespread fear that covert agents of the Axis powers were embedded in the very heart of Saskatoon, bent on destroying the city from within.<sup>1</sup> The term was so common that one encounters even humorous applications of it: the ever-present prairie scourge of mosquitoes was referred to as a “fifth column,” while an enterprising group of dentists declared that “bad teeth and unhealthy mouths” were equally insidious to the home front.<sup>2</sup> But by far the most frequent use of the term fifth column was directed against Canadians of German and Japanese ancestry. In a speech to the Kiwanis Club of Saskatoon in September 1942, John Diefenbaker, a promising novice parliamentarian for the Conservative party, argued passionately for an abolition of what he termed the “hyphenated Canadian.”<sup>3</sup> However, as the “hyphenated” German-Canadian and Japanese-Canadian discovered at first hand, the reality in Saskatoon during the war years was far different. Eloquent pleas for racial unity and a more encompassing “Canadianism” were largely drowned out as the negative side of patriotism’s imagination took hold. Fear, resulting from an irrational hatred of the enemy and culminating in an acute suspicion of even one’s fellow citizens, was a defining feature of life in wartime Saskatoon.

Prejudice towards ethnic minorities was nothing new in Saskatchewan. From the province’s earliest days, nativists had refused to believe that immigrants could maintain multiple loyalties; a separate language, culture, and religion all seemed to militate against the

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<sup>1</sup> The origin of the term “fifth columnist” dates back to the Spanish Civil War (1936-1939). As the nationalist forces advanced on Madrid, their generals claimed that a militant fifth column existed within the capital and that it was secretly working to destroy the Republican government from the inside.

<sup>2</sup> *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 16 January 1942.

<sup>3</sup> *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 16 September 1942.

development of a Canadian identity. With the coming of the Great War the list of “undesirable” groups (Indians, Blacks, and Asians) expanded to include a new menace to society: the enemy alien. Historian Bill Waiser argues that those who believed that groups like the Ukrainians would forever destroy the British character of the province saw in the war a justification to do something about them. As the *Swift Current Sun* put it, “This has been brewing for a long time, but the war has brought it to a head, and Anglo-Saxons to their senses.”<sup>4</sup> The charges of disloyalty leveled against ethnic minorities arguably carried greater urgency in 1939 than in 1914 because of the security fears during the Depression years. With the coming of war, the unemployed men of the Depression were no longer a threat to society; rather, thousands of potential fifth columnists were the new danger.

In a letter published in the *Star-Phoenix* of 15 March 1941, G. H. Bradbrooke, the officer commanding the Saskatoon battalion of the Saskatchewan Veterans Civil Security Corps, argued for the value of hatred in patriotism:

Patriotism only will win this war. Yes, and patriotism also means hate. Nothing can convince me that it is wrong to hate the fiends who can burn, pillage and loot, murder old men and women, rape and mutilate young girls, in fact, surpass in sheer demonical cruelty and beastiality any other nation that has ever existed. . . . We are struggling for the existence of the greatest Empire the world has ever known, for the dear soil that is our birthland. What can we do? The doctors have invented inoculations for most ills, can no genius invent a serum of love and hate, an anti-toxin for sloppy sentimentality, a poison for the deadly germ of spiritual-brotherhood slush?<sup>5</sup>

Although Bradbrooke was writing of the enemy overseas, Saskatoon engaged in this same brand of volatile hatred in its attacks against alleged fifth columnists. Particularly interesting here is the reference to the “greatest Empire the world has ever known, [the] dear soil that is our birthland.” By stressing the centrality of the British Empire to the conflict, Bradbrooke was in effect setting up a ladder of loyalty whereby the contributions of all those not of British stock – not to mention all those not born within the confines of the glorious Empire – were of

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<sup>4</sup> Waiser, *Saskatchewan: A New History*, 193-194.

<sup>5</sup> *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 15 March 1941.

secondary importance to what British Canadians were doing. Seen in this light, it is easier to understand why racial hatred towards those of German and Japanese origin found such fertile ground in wartime Saskatoon. As well, fears of Communism and Socialism were directed towards a different kind of fifth column: the left side of the political spectrum, in particular the Cooperative Commonwealth Federation. Although more ideological than racial, distrust of the left was not totally divorced from questions of nationality: self-designated guardians of the public interest repeated *ad nauseam* that radical and revolutionary doctrines were an alien outgrowth, both “un-British” and “un-Canadian.”

On 11 September 1939, just ten days after the *Wehrmacht* invaded Poland, the German cultural club of Saskatoon suspended all of its social activities. As reported in the *Star-Phoenix*, Dr. W. E. Schuman, president of the German-Canadian Club Concordia of Saskatoon, declared:

We, the assembled members of the executive of the German-Canadian Club Concordia of Saskatoon, unanimously declare that we profoundly lament the state of war which now exists between Canada and Germany, and we, on behalf of ourselves and all other members of the club, renew solemnly our declaration of loyalty to Canada and King George the Sixth. We ask all Canadian citizens of German descent to fulfill conscientiously their duty to Canada, their adopted country, and we are satisfied that they will do this to the utmost of their ability. We also appeal to all Canadian citizens of non-German descent to co-operate with us whole-heartedly during these grave times in our endeavor to present a united front for King and country. God Save The King!”<sup>6</sup>

The blessing called down upon the king was of course common in this period, especially among British loyalists, but in the light of the anti-German feeling to come, one wonders whether Schuman intended his words as a defensive measure. Even more interesting is his urging of German Canadians to participate in the war effort. The message may well have been directed towards those not of German ancestry who were inclined to believe that German Canadians would neglect to “do their bit,” if not actively work on the fatherland’s behalf. Schuman also thought it wise to clarify the Concordia Club’s relationship with the Saskatoon

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<sup>6</sup> *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 11 September 1939.

unit of the *Deutscher Bund Canada*, a pro-Nazi organization funded by Hitler and designed to convert German Canadians to the “truths” of National Socialism.<sup>7</sup> Deploring the *Bund*’s policy of “German[y] first and Canada second,” Schuman stressed the sharp differences in outlook between his club and the *Bund* which had led to a severing of ties more than one year earlier.<sup>8</sup> Yet Dr. Schuman’s efforts proved futile against the city’s growing xenophobia. As argued in the second chapter of this thesis, Saskatonians were convinced that Hitler coveted the Canadian prairies whose vast spaces offered ample *Lebensraum*. As a result, local citizens began to believe that the Nazi leader’s minions were everywhere present in their city. The local Canadian Corps, an association composed of soldiers who had seen active service in a theatre of war, set the tone when it declared that *thousands* [emphasis added] of pro-Nazis were in Saskatoon, disguising themselves as respectable citizens and biding their time for “*der Tag*.”<sup>9</sup>

Ironically, high-ranking officials from outside the city often contributed to the mass hysteria. In February 1944, for example, a member of the British admiralty told a Saskatoon audience that any loose talk, if overheard by a Nazi spy, could be relayed back to Germany in a matter of minutes.<sup>10</sup> Earlier in the war Bernard Newman, an official from the British Ministry of Information, issued a warning to the Canadian Club of Saskatoon that might have been mistaken for a passage from a John Buchan spy novel: “The ordinary man, so ordinary that you would not look at him twice, sitting in a lounge reading a newspaper, is the most dangerous type of spy.”<sup>11</sup> Although Newman’s knowledge of the intricacies of espionage was no doubt sound, his sharing of that information with an already paranoid citizenry did not help. After all,

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<sup>7</sup> For an analysis of the *Deutscher Bund Canada* see, Jonathan Wagner, “The Deutscher Bund Canada 1934-39,” *Canadian Historical Review* 58, no. 2 (June 1977): 176-200.

<sup>8</sup> *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 11 September 1939.

<sup>9</sup> *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 15 May 1940. The Saskatoon branch of the Canadian Corps estimated that as many as 160,000 Nazi sympathizers existed within Saskatchewan, with 100,000 of them north of the South Saskatchewan River.

<sup>10</sup> *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 10 February 1944.

<sup>11</sup> *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 27 July 1942.



if the best spies were known for their inconspicuousness, then surely no one – particularly any one of German background – was above suspicion. The *Star-Phoenix*, for its part, did more fear-mongering than investigative reporting during the war years. As early as 2 September 1939 the newspaper raised the specter of sabotage when it reported that water tanks at Port Churchill on the Hudson Bay had been drained. Despite conceding that this accident was almost certainly the result of carelessness, the rest of the editorial went on to stress the value of such a port to “enemy agents.”<sup>12</sup> Given the widespread reports of Nazi fifth-column activity in Europe and Germany’s successful spring 1940 offensive that ended in the fall of France, Saskatoon’s fears of enemy saboteurs is perhaps more understandable.<sup>13</sup> Nevertheless, these fears were disproportionate to the threat actually posed, proving that in wartime Saskatoon vivid imaginations trumped common sense.

The irrational nature of much of this anti-German feeling is well captured by a letter to the *Star-Phoenix* in September 1939 in which the author, flouting every rule of spelling and grammar, accused the newspaper of being in the pay of the Nazis:

To Whom it May Concern: Just let me say only a few words about your disappointing and disgusting paper. With all your German write ups German victories pictures on front page of happy Poles taken Prisoner by Germans a lot of nerve you people sure have it of course one of your biggest share holders I will admit is German and I presume the whole paper is gov. by a hitlerite from Dundurn. 5 of us quite your paper on Sat. 9<sup>th</sup> that wont matter you will have lots of New German sub scribers as you are sure setting the right kind of bate. Read your Regina Star and see if they are as Pro German as you people are I have lived here 5 years and have bought your paper evy day of the St. carrier boy and am sorry through your actions since This War has been declared I am forced to discontinue your paper. As I intend to remain a loyal British subject till I die.<sup>14</sup>

Although hysterical in tone – a feature the *Star-Phoenix* clearly decided to preserve by leaving

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<sup>12</sup> *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 2 September 1939.

<sup>13</sup> In his work *The German Fifth Column in the Second World War*, the distinguished Dutch Historian Louis De Jong argued that even in Europe the idea of a German fifth column was largely imaginary, more the product of fear than reality. Indeed, De Jong observes that the only two events where Hitler was able to manipulate mass movements in foreign parts were the Austrian *Anschluss* and the annexation of the Sudeten area of Czechoslovakia, both which occurred in 1938. Louis De Jong, *The German Fifth Column in the Second World War* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1956), 295.

<sup>14</sup> *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 16 September 1939.

the missive unedited – the letter contained certain ironic associations. The reference to a “hitlerite from Dundurn,” for instance, was interesting, since that town was founded in 1902 by German immigrants (albeit from Minnesota). Speculation about the ethnicity of the *Star-Phoenix*’s biggest shareholders also proved ironic, given that the newspaper was owned by the family of Sir Clifford Sifton.<sup>15</sup> As minister of the interior between 1896 and 1905 Sifton had changed the focus of immigration from “loyal British subject[s]” to the Slavs and Germans of central and eastern Europe.<sup>16</sup>

Because fact and truth were so readily distorted by paranoid Saskatonians during the Second World War to make the city’s Germans look more dangerous than they were, the onus often fell on the latter to convince an incredulous citizenry of their loyalty. With ominous reports of Nazi gains in Poland filling the front pages of the *Star-Phoenix* and anti-German sentiment rising apace in the city during the first month of the war, one media-savvy Saskatoon German took out a large advertisement in the newspaper to make a personal plea for tolerance: “Since the declaration of war certain rumors have been circulated in Saskatoon and its environs maligning my character and questioning my patriotism to Canada. . . . I have been a true and patriotic citizen of Canada, where I have lived for the past thirty-three years.” That this German also felt compelled to give a condensed history of his life by stressing that he had left Germany when he was sixteen years old, had spent four-and-a-half years in England, had happily moved to Canada to make his home, and had no plans of ever again returning to his native soil is indicative of the lengths to which Germans Canadians had to go to prove their

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<sup>15</sup> John Wesley Dafoe, *Clifford Sifton in Relation to His Times* (Freeport, New York: Books for Libraries Press, 1970), 534.

<sup>16</sup> Jonathan Wagner, *A History of Migration from Germany to Canada, 1850-1939* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2006), 11. Wagner notes that the bulk of Germans who immigrated to Canada under Sifton’s watch came from Russia and from the lands of the Hapsburg Empire, and not from the German Reich.

patriotism.<sup>17</sup> Ironically, fears of German fifth-column activity in Saskatoon were sometimes inadvertently stoked by Germans themselves. When C.B.C. radio chose to broadcast an address by Hitler, one outraged German Canadian contacted the *Star-Phoenix* and asked, “Has the C.B.C. gone crazy?” He went on to object that not censoring the original German broadcast allowed fifth columnists access to information that was damaging to the Allied cause: “The translator is only giving a little of it. Hitler is getting over a lot of propaganda to the Germans on this side.”<sup>18</sup> Because such a statement confirmed their initial prejudices, Saskatonians were especially receptive to rumours that Germans in their city were inherently – or at least potentially – disloyal, even when the most eloquent pledges of allegiance from German Canadians maintained the contrary.

As the following sample of rumours circulating in wartime Saskatoon demonstrates, there were few checks on the imagination of the prairie city. There was the case of a little girl apparently forced to stand on the chesterfield in her house and shout “*Heil Hitler!*” Even more alarming was news from Watrous that a Canadian soldier lay immobile in hospital with two broken legs – wounds evidently inflicted on him by a Nazi sympathizer.<sup>19</sup> Even the colour of barns in rural Saskatchewan became fodder for speculation. In a letter to the *Star-Phoenix*, one patriotic lady from Plato (a town to the south west of Saskatoon) reported that painters working at her house had spoken of the propensity of Germans to paint their barns pure white with green roofs. Was this a sign to the German *Luftwaffe* not to bomb or to Nazi invaders where to

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<sup>17</sup> *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 19 September 1939.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.* Fears about Hitler’s propaganda reaching Saskatoon might have been increased by a general ambivalence to the technological achievements embodied in the radio. Because radio had progressed from novelty item to mass medium in the interval between the two World Wars, it is possible that many Canadians found it an arresting experience to hear for the first time the enemy’s own voice infiltrate their living rooms. Ironically, one of the radios advertised in the *Star-Phoenix* during the war was called a “Dictator” radio (*Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 4 October 1939).

<sup>19</sup> *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 28 May 1940.

find safe haven, questioned the letter.<sup>20</sup> While many rumor mongers were no doubt well intentioned, convinced that their vigilance was a great service to Canada, they caused psychological anguish to those who were the targets of their slanders.

Suspicion could be instigated not just by ordinary citizens in Saskatoon, but also by those in authority. Under the intense scrutiny of G. W. Parker, the local relief officer, those on the “dole” who were not of British background ran the risk of being branded disloyal.<sup>21</sup> The problem stemmed from the fact that Parker, in addition to his relief duties, was also the Divisional Intelligence Officer in Saskatoon for the Saskatchewan Veterans Civil Security Corps (SVCSC), a civilian security agency formed in June 1940 by veterans of the Great War to guard against fifth columnists. Robert J. Macdonald, the authority on the SVCSC, has rightly called Parker “one of the most zealous nativists” in the Corps.<sup>22</sup> Even before that organization had formed, Parker had keenly monitored the activities of his foreign clients, accusing some of them in May 1940 of “drunken jubilation and arrogant insolence” when news of Nazi victories in Holland and Belgium arrived.<sup>23</sup> As Intelligence Officer, Parker became even bolder. When he reduced the relief quota of a client he suspected of receiving assistance from pro-Nazi quarters, one Saskatonian protested to Mayor Carl Niderost on behalf of the relief recipient. Sensing that he had perhaps come across a second Nazi sympathizer, Parker

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<sup>20</sup> *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 8 August 1940.

<sup>21</sup> Parker was not the only one to make this charge. In an article entitled “Heiling Hitler on Saskatchewan Relief,” *Ottawa Citizen* reporter Austin Cross, who was traveling through northeastern Saskatchewan, wrote that practically every Mennonite on relief in the area was “all for Hitler,” giving several examples of pro-Nazi comments by these people which had been related to him. Clearly shocked by what “loyal” locals were telling him, Cross wrote, “I hope Commissioner Woods [the chief of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police] reads this, because I know the Mounted Police are always anxious to get any tips about those who dote on dictators” (*Ottawa Citizen*, 27 November 1940). Cross’ “journalism” drew a sharp rebuke from one reader of the Ottawa newspaper who wrote, “I don’t know the author of the article, but I do know that today there are malicious busybodies styled as patriots quite ready to report a few carelessly spoken and harmlessly intentioned words that are enough to place peaceful people in a concentration camp with no means of defence or trial” (*Ottawa Citizen*, 30 November 1940).

<sup>22</sup> Robert J. Macdonald, “The Silent Column. Civil Security in Saskatchewan During World War II,” *Saskatchewan History* 39, no. 2 (1986): 51.

<sup>23</sup> *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 17 May 1940.

demanded to know the identity of the person who had criticized his work. When Niderost refused, stating that he had given his word not to divulge the man's identity, Parker sharply challenged the Mayor, asking, "If I demand that information as an intelligence officer of the Veterans' Security Corps are you still going to refuse?"<sup>24</sup> Not easily intimidated, Niderost stood his ground, but the episode illustrated a terrifying side to patriotism.

In the end, it was not the wide scope of G. W. Parker's authority that landed him in hot water, but rather his outspokenness. In December 1940 Parker accused relief recipients of Central European origin of sending back one-quarter of the assistance they received to friends and relatives back home. He proposed reforming the relief system: "There should be two scales of relief, one for Central Europeans and one for white people."<sup>25</sup> Parker's ill-advised remark drew national attention when it was attacked in the House of Commons by two Western Canadian parliamentarians.<sup>26</sup> Coming to Parker's defence, however, was the Saskatoon division of the Canadian Corps which stressed the relief officer's sterling military record during the First World War in which he won the Military Cross as well as the Victory Medal and the General Service Medal. Whatever impropriety had been committed was whitewashed by a distinguished martial career. Further, the Canadian Corps maintained that Parker's reference to "white people" was not a comment on a person's colour or nationality, but rather on their "heart or mind."<sup>27</sup> It is difficult to know which statement was more disturbing: Parker's initial proposal or the Canadian Corp's subsequent "clarification" of his words. That the Saskatoon relief office could be so Orwellian during the Second World War should come as no surprise. After all, this same institution during the Great Depression had introduced a

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<sup>24</sup> *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 3 December 1940.

<sup>25</sup> *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 11 December 1940.

<sup>26</sup> The members were Walter Tucker, Liberal M.P. Rosthern, Saskatchewan, and Anthony Hlynka, Social Credit M.P. for Vegreville, Alberta.

<sup>27</sup> *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 11 December 1940.

relief application form which granted officials the authority to enter homes at any time, day or night, to ensure that families were truly destitute and that they were not concealing luxury items.<sup>28</sup>

The *Star-Phoenix* itself must also bear some of the blame for the anti-German sentiment of the time. During the Second World War the newspaper sometimes tried to give the impression that it was above the mass hysteria which engulfed Saskatoon. When news circulated that an escaped Nazi was on the loose, for example, it ridiculed those who “pulled window blinds down . . . and sat home and nervously twiddled their thumbs.”<sup>29</sup> Yet such moments of good sense – not to mention wit in the face of absurd claims – were rare. By giving most rumours uncritical coverage, the *Star-Phoenix* fostered a culture of suspicion in the city. Equally egregious was the poor judgment of the daily’s editors in publishing inflammatory letters. One such unedited missive, printed in the spring of 1940 when anti-German sentiment was rampant, proposed draconian reforms to the justice system:

Instead of rounding up all known enemy aliens, let us maintain at least some sane vestige of our civilized heritage in decreeing that in each individual case as it arises that at least six respected known and loyal British subjects be called to testify as to the sympathies or activities of the suspect. If it can be generally deduced by those in authority that contact and association with him has convinced those six citizens of his guilt, then for the future safety and preservation of Canada as we know it, his place is the concentration camp. . . . Why wait for treachery to creep upon us at home in the still of night while we are fighting it overseas in broad daylight? The iron is hot. The hammer is raised. Why wait?<sup>30</sup>

While the general thrust of this letter – with its call for the abolition of the concept of innocent until proven guilty – is alarming enough, the proposed composition of the overhauled jury was even more so. That only “respected known and loyal British subjects” should be allowed to adjudicate cases of alleged fifth-column activity is a striking comment on the deep-seated ethnocentrism found in Saskatoon at this time. If there was indeed a ladder of loyalty in the

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<sup>28</sup> Waiser, *Saskatchewan: A New History*, 289.

<sup>29</sup> *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 8 August 1942.

<sup>30</sup> *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 1 June 1940.

city, one which placed those of British stock near the top, on some days it seemed to have only one rung.

Even more than the volatile nature of some the letters from citizens it printed, several stories carried by the *Star-Phoenix* in May 1940 provide the best illustration of the newspaper's poor judgment in determining what was credible. With Norway, Denmark, Belgium, and Luxembourg having fallen to the *Wehrmacht*, and the invasion of France just begun on 14 May, the *Star-Phoenix* thought it topical to resurrect old stories of pro-Nazi activity in Saskatoon. In this endeavour it was supported by the Canadian Legion, a group which urged the newspaper to delve into its archives in search of even the faintest trace of pro-German feeling. As a result, the 25 May 1940 edition of the *Star-Phoenix* reprinted a four-year-old story which described the 1936 German Day Celebration in the city in which the Nazi salute, the signing of the Horst Wessel Lied (the marching song of the Nazis), and an impassioned address by Bernhard Bott (a prominent leader of the *Deutscher Bund Canada*) were featured in the programme.<sup>31</sup> Similarly, subscribers to the *Star-Phoenix* experienced *déjà vu* when an article from 1938 detailing a speech by a Saskatoon woman of German descent praising Germany's *Anschluss* with Austria headlined the local "news" of the 27 May edition. Readers were reminded how Frau Spiller's "eyes shone [and] her face gleamed as she told of witnessing the fall of democracy in Austria."<sup>32</sup>

Although these instances of pro-Nazi activity in the city may indeed have occurred before the war, there was no reason for the newspaper to revive them in 1940. If anything, the

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<sup>31</sup> *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 25 May 1940.

<sup>32</sup> *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 27 May 1940. It is curious that the *Star-Phoenix* reporter who covered Frau Spiller's speech referred to this lady's first name – which was Greta – only at the start of the article, insisting on calling her "Frau" throughout the rest of the piece. Perhaps this wily journalist believed that repetition of the German word "Frau," rather than the English "Mrs.," would be more alarming to the newspaper's readership, especially given the content of her speech.

*Star-Phoenix*'s rummaging through its files was an act of desperation. Having failed to uncover even one instance of fifth-column activity in the city during the war, the daily attempted to save face by republishing what few examples of pro-Nazi sentiment it could recall in the years before 1939. Skeptical that Saskatoon's Germans could actually be loyal to Canada and to the Empire, the *Star-Phoenix* resorted to sarcasm when it did restrict itself to the present: "It is known the bund existed in Saskatoon and that it had at least a number of members. But questioning of Germans in Saskatoon who were asked if they were members or if they knew who were members, made it appear that the bund here was a ghost organization with no members."<sup>33</sup> Saskatoon's Germans were not being duplicitous with the *Star-Phoenix*. As historian Jonathan Wagner argues, the *Bund* was never able to capture the hearts of the majority of German Canadians, its *völkisch* creed being too nebulous and romanticized to meet specific needs.<sup>34</sup> It is perhaps for this reason that the *Star-Phoenix*'s pre-1939 coverage of Nazi activities in Saskatoon is decidedly vague on attendance at these events. The newspaper comfortably focused on the ominous message of individual figures – such as a Bernhard Bott or Frau Spiller – rather than on the size or on the receptiveness of their audience. The depth of pro-Nazi sentiment in Saskatoon, both before and during the Second World War, was grossly overestimated by the *Star-Phoenix*.

Because of the patriotic fear-mongering of newspapers like the *Star-Phoenix*, civilians might be forgiven for believing that the Nazi threat was real. Less excusable, however, were the actions of those citizens who, motivated by fear and hate, took the law into their own hands and attempted forcefully to give substance to baseless accusations. The most serious incident in this context actually occurred to the southeast of Saskatoon in the village of Drake but

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<sup>33</sup> *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 16 May 1940.

<sup>34</sup> Wagner, "The Deutscher Bund Canada," 199.



nevertheless provoked heated debate in the larger city. In February 1941 a group of men from the Bloomfield district (five to eight miles west of Drake) barged in on a local German-English Bible school and, believing it to be a den for Nazi propoganda, shut it down. On 19 February the *Star-Phoenix* carried the headline “Terminates Lectures in German: Group of Drake Men Said To Have Ousted Person Teaching Language.” The article related how tensions had been running high in Drake since the start of the war due to the large number of German-speaking Mennonites who had been living in the region for many years. Matters came to a head one evening when a group of local men paid a surprise visit to the German-English Bible school in the village while class there was in progress. The teacher, a man named Erhard Schroeder, invited the men in.<sup>35</sup> What occurred next is best related by the *Star-Phoenix*:

The visitors looked about and could see only German writing on the blackboards and in the exercise books. The textbooks were also in German, and of a half-dozen apparently different texts which were examined, none was a Bible. If there were Bibles in the room, the visitors said, they did not see them. Turning to the group of children present, the callers declared their belief that the English language was good enough for everyone in this country, and that they could learn it at the public school. The teacher was invited to take the next train back to Rosthern. He protested that he had no money to buy a railway ticket. The men bought him a ticket and saw him off. Gathered on the station platform, they sang ‘O Canada’ as the train pulled out.<sup>36</sup>

The patriotic singing of the Canadian national anthem in chorus as the train pulled off, the climax of the whole affair, was a powerful illustration of the degree to which an irrational fear of all things German was transformed into a noble patriotic crusade. That Drake’s Mennonite population hailed from the United States, Russia, and Poland, and not the German *Reich* was of little importance to these “loyal” Canadian citizens.<sup>37</sup> The Bible school was a center of German

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<sup>35</sup> Inexplicably, the *Star-Phoenix*’s coverage of the Drake incident never included the name of the teacher of the bible school. However, a search of the Internet web site [www.alternativeservice.ca](http://www.alternativeservice.ca), which is dedicated to promoting the story of conscientious objectors in Canada during the Second World War and which also includes a brief examination of what occurred at Drake, reveals that his name was Erhard Schroeder. While corresponding with Conrad Stoesz, the administrator of the web site, I learned that he had been able to ascertain the teacher’s name by surveying long-time residents of the Drake area. Furthermore, Stoesz had been able to speak to Erhard Schroeder’s daughter, who corroborated the outline of the story.

<sup>36</sup> *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 19 February 1941.

<sup>37</sup> *Drake Past and Present: Making Memories* (Drake: Drake History Book Committee, 1987), 25.

*Kultur* – that was enough.

After the *Star-Phoenix* broke the news on the Drake incident there was no other mention of the event for over two-and-a-half weeks. The silence was finally broken on 8 March 1941. The *Star-Phoenix*, in one of its few shrewd editorial decisions during the war, published a letter from Nelson Chappel, a resident of Saskatoon, entitled “Where Was Justice?” To Chappel, the events at Drake had confirmed “the introduction of mob rule into Canada in a form usually associated with the Nazi party,” adding that it was “an act akin to stabbing in the back those who are ready to risk all for our British traditions of justice and democracy today.” Nor was the *Star-Phoenix* immune to criticism. Chappel chided that newspaper’s reporter for referring to the actions of the vigilantes as an “investigation,” not to mention their bullying of Schroeder as an “invitation” to the Rosthern man to leave town.<sup>38</sup>

Chappel’s persuasive challenge to the anti-German orthodoxy of the period provoked a swift response from the one group arguably most responsible for fostering these sentiments: Saskatoon’s veterans. In the next weekly letter box of 15 March 1941 the Saskatoon Canadian Corps published a statement which stressed that there was no place for the teaching of the enemy language in Canada.<sup>39</sup> Noting that it had repeatedly petitioned the proper authorities to ban the German language, the Canadian Corps defended “the loyal citizens of Drake” who had had no choice “but to deal with a pernicious situation themselves.” Surely any action which prevented Canadian children from becoming Germanized was to be praised since the world today was getting a first-hand lesson of German *Kultur*. As for Chappel’s statement, it was

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<sup>38</sup> *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 8 March 1941.

<sup>39</sup> In 1940 H. T. Pizzey, the head of the local Canadian Legion, which was similar to but separate from the Canadian Corps, had toned down his anti-German rhetoric in the face of opposition from Professor Anstensen of the German Department at the University of Saskatchewan. Pizzey had conceded that the German language might still be taught so long as it was not used in Church services or public gatherings. The Canadian Corps’ suggestion in this letter, therefore, not only re-opened this heated debate but also expanded the scope of the restrictions suggested on the use of German.

dismissed as “akin to Communist propaganda.”<sup>40</sup>

On the same day that the Canadian Corps published its statement, another letter, this one written by a prominent veteran named Lorne O’Donnell, provided important insight into why Saskatoon’s ex-servicemen resented anyone who dared to protect those suspected of Nazi sympathies. The issue, for O’Donnell at least, centered on the mystical bond which all veterans felt to the soldiers currently fighting overseas. Making allusions to John McCrae’s “In Flanders Field,” the old soldier wrote:

Soldiering is an old story to us now. It cannot quite stir us with the swelling emotions that were with us a quarter of a century ago. The boys of today are taking up the torch that fell from that Unknown-Soldier’s hand and are facing with the same unquestioning gallantry, the same risks of filth and disease and mutilation and the death that came to him. To these boys and to those who love them, this war is a very personal issue. It is an issue that no single one of us has a right to make impersonal. It is our war, our suffering, our death. If we permit false doctrines of Fascism and Nazism and Sovietism to flourish within our gates, we break faith with those who are dying every day for us and we should be demeaning the cause for which unnumbered thousands must give their lives.<sup>41</sup>

Although an eloquent expression of the idea of “Once a soldier, always a soldier,” O’Donnell’s statement contained certain disturbing features. The reference to “*our* [emphasis added] war, *our* suffering, *our* death,” for example, suggested that in wartime Saskatoon there was a definite hierarchy of loyalty, one which ranked those who had made the ultimate sacrifice for their country above everyone else. Indeed, the last paragraph of O’Donnell’s letter gave the impression that many veterans conceived of the home front as its own battlefield, one on which they were again on active service: “Yes, Mr. Chappel, the Huns and Vandals are thundering at our gates and within our gates. They thrive and prosper because of a too-tolerant tolerance on our part. It shall be the watchword of the Canadians Corps Association to turn the spotlight of public disapproval on them long enough and strong enough which will scorch them into

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<sup>40</sup> *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 15 March 1941.

<sup>41</sup> *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 15 March 1941.

oblivion.”<sup>42</sup>

O'Donnell's inciting veterans to “scorch” fifth columnists “into oblivion” is alarming when one considers how little evidence these self-appointed guardians of the country needed to conduct such banishment. In the Drake case, for example, one sees how easily crucial facts were distorted or ignored. On 14 April 1941 Jacob Gerbrandt, Drake's local Mennonite pastor, issued a highly specific statement to the *Star-Phoenix* dissecting the spurious charges made by the Canadian Corps. In an effort to provide a more objective picture of the actions of the “loyal citizens” of Bloomfield (only one apparently came from Drake), Gerbrandt volunteered some previously unreported details regarding the event: that one of the mob actually picked up an English Bible only to throw it back down with the words, “And that is German too”; that the group had wanted to burn all the exiled teacher's books at the railway station (only the protests of one of their number stopped them); and that nobody connected with the Bible School in Drake had been warned of the nocturnal “raid” before it took place. Most damning of all, Gerbrandt charged that the authorities had declined to take action against the school because none of the mob had been willing to swear an oath to the “fictitious charges of propaganda.” Not one to mince his words, the Mennonite pastor concluded with a stern admonition to the Canadian Corps: “You cannot publicly insult people with immunity.... Although our appreciation of some people's conception of democracy (including yours) is at present at a low ebb, our faith in the true principles of democracy and British institutions still stands.”<sup>43</sup> Gerbrandt's statement almost ended any further discussion of the matter in Saskatoon. Not surprisingly, the *Star-Phoenix* gave the last word to the veterans' organization.

Although German Canadians were by far the primary target of racism in wartime

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<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>43</sup> *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 14 April 1941.

Saskatoon, those of Japanese ancestry were not overlooked, even though there were only eleven Japanese in Saskatoon in this period.<sup>44</sup> Yet the Japanese “problem” did not emerge from within the prairie city; rather, anti-Japanese sentiment exploded when in June 1942 two Japanese-Canadian families from British Columbia, totaling five people, petitioned City Council to reside in Saskatoon. Removed from coastal areas in British Columbia for security reasons, this group hoped to find in Saskatoon educational opportunities for their children. The Japanese Canadians also forwarded to City Council letters of recommendation attesting to their character and loyalty. What happened over the next month, however, constituted perhaps Saskatoon City Council’s most shameful action during the Second World War. In what appears to have been a deliberate attempt to delay action on the Japanese question for as long as possible, Saskatoon’s aldermen took until 27 July to reach their decision. Tired of waiting, one Japanese family simply abandoned hope of moving to Saskatchewan and relocated instead to London, Ontario, leaving only two brothers, Thomas Shigetsugu Tamaki and Henry Satoshi Tamaki, to wait for City Council’s verdict. In hindsight, it is unlikely that the outcome of Saskatoon’s decision was ever in doubt.

It is clear that the request of the Japanese Canadians to the Saskatoon City Council had provoked a visceral reaction in Saskatonians not unlike that felt by many residents of British Columbia. On 6 July 1942 the *Star-Phoenix* published the opinions of a handful of rank-and-file citizens on the matter. Although several Saskatonians appeared willing to accept the Japanese Canadians, the majority of the respondents displayed a profound distrust of the potential migrants.<sup>45</sup> That they were loyal British subjects mattered little to a local druggist,

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<sup>44</sup> *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 20 June 1942.

<sup>45</sup> Unlike those who were opposed to the Japanese migration, those in favour of letting the Asian group move to Saskatoon never expressed their support very staunchly, their comments being rather tepid: in the words of a local baker, for instance, “They’re not responsible for being born Japanese;” in the opinion of a Saskatoon

who suggested that the Japanese be kept out of the city and under close guard. Financial questions influenced the decision of a Saskatoon barber who remarked that everywhere they went Japanese could be counted upon to lower the wage standards. Their refusal to intermarry with Canadians only further doomed them in his eyes. The most inflammatory statement of all came from a café proprietor: “They should be put in concentration camps as the Canadian boys in Hong Kong are placed. We should treat the Japanese here the same way the Japanese treat their Canadian prisoners of war.”<sup>46</sup> The distinction between being Japanese in the Axis army and being Japanese in Canada was obviously lost on some Saskatonians. That the *Star-Phoenix* protected the anonymity of the above respondents by listing only their occupation no doubt encouraged such frankness.

Nor did angry citizens restrict their xenophobic reactions to letters published in the *Star-Phoenix*. City Council received a petition with 2,500 signatures opposing the relocation of the B.C. Japanese to Saskatoon. Organizations as diverse as the Daughters of England, the Fraternal and Protective Association, the War Veterans’ Wives Association and the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers voiced their disapproval to City Council as well.<sup>47</sup> Ironically, the only people who were generally open to the Japanese Canadians coming to Saskatoon were local farmers. Far from allowing the new residents a free hand in pursuing their own living, however, the agriculturalists’ hospitality depended on being able to use the Japanese Canadians to relieve the farm-labour shortage.<sup>48</sup>

When Saskatoon’s City Council rejected the request of the Japanese Canadians to move

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barrister, “They’ve got to go somewhere;” and in the words of a housewife in the city, “I haven’t thought about it very much, but it might be all right.” (*Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 6 July 1942).

<sup>46</sup> *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 6 July 1942.

<sup>47</sup> Not mentioned was the Canadian Legion, the Women’s Auxiliary of the Canadian Legion, the Women’s Auxiliary of the Canadian Corps, the Women’s Auxiliary of the Navy League, and A. J. Adams (*Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 28 July 1942).

<sup>48</sup> *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 16 July 1942.

to the city on 27 July 1942, its aldermen stressed that “intolerance, persecution, and inhumanity” had never influenced their views on the matter, but simply questions of security. Given the rabid anti-Japanese sentiment in the city, permitting an “Oriental influx” arguably endangered the physical well-being of the new Japanese. Although this argument was certainly logical, a closer examination of statements made by the City Council on the evening of 27 July shows that racism and revenge outweighed humanitarian concerns. For Alderman Caswell, for example, the Japanese were poor Canadian citizens who diluted the British character of the country. “We should keep it as British as possible,” the Anglophile remarked of the Dominion. Alderman Blain, for his part, blurred the distinction between soldier and civilian, arguing that acts committed by the Japanese military in Hong Kong proved the entire race to be bereft of honor and little better than animals.<sup>49</sup> Only Alderman Clarke mustered up the courage to defend the Japanese Canadians, noting that racial prejudice against them was a poor weapon when Canada was engaged in “fighting a war for liberation of oppressed humanity everywhere,” including Japanese civilians under Hideki Tojo. His eloquent objection failed to sway the other councillors, who passed a motion calling for the Japanese Canadians from British Columbia to be informed that “We have sufficient Japanese in Saskatoon for our purposes.”<sup>50</sup> If there were any lingering doubts as to the racism of Saskatoon’s City Council after this episode, they were dispelled in September 1942. Rejecting an application from Y. Takahashi, a British Columbia Japanese who wished to enroll in the College of Engineering at the university, one alderman pithily stated, “A Jap’s a Jap as long as the war is on.”<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> Along with Aldermen Caswell and Blain, Alderman Stewart also voiced his opposition to admitting the Japanese Canadians into Saskatoon. His argument stressed City Council’s role in carrying out the will of the people, noting that ninety-five percent of all Saskatonians were opposed to the Oriental influx. Although a classic example of a politician bowing to the will of the *demos*, Stewart conveniently sidestepped the issue of the obligations of public officials to overrule a population clearly in the grip of hate and racism.

<sup>50</sup> *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 28 July 1942.

<sup>51</sup> *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 15 September 1942.

It is difficult to find in the pages of the *Star-Phoenix* published during the Second World War much opposition to the racism directed against Japanese and German Canadians. This omission is all the more striking when one considers attempts by the Canadian government, especially in the early stages of the conflict, to downplay ethnic tensions. One 1941 pamphlet stressed, for example, that “We, even here in Canada, should be careful never to assume that our fellow-Canadians, of any origin, are *by nature* unworthy of our sympathy, respect and good will.”<sup>52</sup> A possible theory as to why the *Star-Phoenix* (or its readers) failed to oppose the racial bias of the period is that it saw nothing unnatural about such sentiments. An excerpt from the “Nazi edition” of the *Star-Phoenix* in October 1942, in which the Nazis occupying Saskatoon denounce the “stupid, democratic and monstrous way” the German minority in the city had been persecuted, offers evidence of this view.<sup>53</sup> The key reference to “democratic” to describe the treatment of the German Canadians was essentially an act of absolution – or was it self-denial? – on the part of the *Star-Phoenix* for the entire city. In addition, the idea that Nazis, no strangers to barbaric tactics, were criticizing the local population for committing “monstrosities” against Germans in the environs was a clever thrust. By equating juxtaposing “democratic” Canada with totalitarian Germany, Saskatoon’s daily newspaper advanced the dubious argument that whatever persecution the city’s ethnic minorities might have endured, it paled in comparison with the *true* suffering experienced by those under the Nazi heel – which, if *Deutsche Zeitung fuer Saskatoon* was to be believed, now included Saskatoon.

Not all Saskatonians supported the dominant xenophobia of this time. One letter to the *Star-Phoenix* from a citizen calling himself “Glory-Stricken” constituted an eloquent

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<sup>52</sup> Watson Kirkconnell, *Canadians All: A Primer of Canadian National Unity* (Ottawa: The Director of Public Information, 1941), 11.

<sup>53</sup> *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 19 October 1942.



challenge to the British ethnocentrism of the day and to its high priests, the Legionnaires:

These foreign-born people in our midst were invited to Canada by our Governments, right or wrong as that might be. Undoubtedly, a great majority of the foreign-born and their children are true and loyal Canadians. When ex-service men cast unnecessary aspersions upon that loyalty, they simply ask the New Canadian to forget the speeches of welcome we made to him when he first came to Canada, and also all the gestures of friendliness we ever made toward him. In other words, they place the alien, whether enemy alien or not, on the defensive. They create a minority problem in Canada. Mr. Hitler, if he reads the news of veterans' activities, must be snickering to himself. How better to dissipate Canada's effectiveness as an enemy than to stir up problems within her?... Whether the so-called 'fifth column' or the war veterans stir up that dissension does not interest Mr. Hitler. So long as we have a minority problem in Canada is all that matters to him. But perhaps I am wrong. Maybe my family should have taught me to distrust everyone whose ancestry was not English, Scottish, Welsh or Northern Irish. Perhaps they should have taught me to hate every foreign-born man, woman and child in Canada, as some of the war veterans would suggest, and base my estimation of British idealism upon that hate.<sup>54</sup>

"Glory-Stricken's" letter brilliantly turned on its head the argument for persecuting those of German and Japanese ancestry by suggesting that the "loyal" British subjects who were sowing seeds of discord within the country were the true "fifth column." It is remarkable that this letter was written in the dark days of June 1940, since racial fears at this time were at their height. George Wilfred Simpson, the Head of the History department at the University of Saskatchewan, also lent his voice to the anti-racist message when, in a tone of rebuke, he observed that "There is no use in generalizing about the brotherhood of man being the solution of world problems if we are not able to solve the problems in the comparatively small social workshop in which we live."<sup>55</sup>

That the tolerant perspective of "Glory-Stricken" and G. W. Simpson represented a minority viewpoint in Saskatoon is perhaps puzzling when one considers that, before the Second World War, the Great Depression had arguably weakened nativist sentiment. It was no coincidence, for example, that the Anderson Conservatives were swept from power in 1934. In the 1929 election they had appealed to the latent racial and religious prejudices of the Anglo

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<sup>54</sup> *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 8 June 1940.

<sup>55</sup> *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 1 September 1943.

-Saxon majority. By the mid-1930s, however, such emotional issues appeared utterly inconsequential when compared to the widespread suffering taking place.<sup>56</sup> One might also add that the Great Depression gave Saskatchewan a sense of oneness that it had never known. Drought and insect infestations had struck without regard to race or creed, and no one emerged from those “ten lost years” untouched. And yet the coming of war in 1939 reawakened Saskatchewan’s dormant nativism. Perhaps it was the intense emotional reaction that only war can evoke that brought these issues to the fore once again. In any event, the heavy xenophobia which characterized wartime Saskatoon gives the impression that the city had stepped back ten years into the past. That a letter writer to the *Star-Phoenix* in June 1940 resurrected an old ghost from that racist past in Bishop George Exton Lloyd should come as no surprise. Commenting on the cleric’s much publicized crusade in the 1920s for a British western Canada and his virulent opposition to immigration from Continental Europe, the missive’s author (“Observant”) noted, “Apparently the venerable bishop was not so far wrong, if you accept the principle . . . that who is not with us is against us.”<sup>57</sup>

Although fears of fifth-column activity in Saskatoon focused primarily on racial minorities, the charge of destroying the city from within was also made against another group: those to the left of the political spectrum. On account of their “revolutionary” doctrines regarding government and society, local Communists (or those suspected of being so) and members of the provincial Co-operative Commonwealth Federation became enemy agents in the eyes of many Saskatonians. Here, too, questions of race were never far off. In the words of one speaker in Saskatoon during wartime, the left advocated nothing more than a “Policy of defeatism and despair, a European product, a disease of the mind and the imagination alien to

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<sup>56</sup> Waiser, *Saskatchewan History*, 304.

<sup>57</sup> *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 1 June 1940.

every instinct of the true Britisher and Canadian.”<sup>58</sup>

It is clear that negative attitudes to Communism during the Great Depression conditioned the way that ideology was perceived by Saskatonians at the start of the war. Of central importance here was the anxiety on the part of both federal and provincial officials during the 1930s that a despondent population might be inclined to see in Communism a panacea. Citizens were repeatedly warned of the revolutionary nature of the ideology and of the threat that it posed to church, state, and family. Saskatoon was no stranger to this kind of thinking in the 1930s. After a relief camp riot at the city’s Exhibition Grounds in 1933, for instance, the premier labeled Saskatoon the headquarters of Communism in Saskatchewan and vowed to “drive those disciples of the Red Flag . . . out of the province.”<sup>59</sup> Although such a reactionary attitude was common by those in authority during the Great Depression – as the men on the On-To-Ottawa-Trek discovered for themselves in 1935 – it nevertheless drove home the idea that Communism was to be feared, not embraced.

By the beginning of the Second World War, Saskatonians had been well schooled against the evils of Communism, a predisposition confirmed on 23 August 1939 when the Soviet Union signed the Molotov-Ribbentrop non-aggression pact with Germany. The actions of Canada’s own Communists only furthered angered the general public. After having initially supported the war against Hitler in September 1939, the Communist Party of Canada, on orders from the Comintern, performed an about-face and condemned any participation in the “imperialist” conflict.<sup>60</sup> Yet anti-Communism could be so strong in Saskatoon that the Soviet Union, and not the Third *Reich*, sometimes seemed the real enemy. Peace might be reached

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<sup>58</sup> *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 9 December 1943.

<sup>59</sup> Waiser, *Saskatchewan History*, 310.

<sup>60</sup> Norman Penner, *Canadian Communism: The Stalin Years and Beyond* (Toronto: Methuen Publications, 1988), 161-166.

with Germany, stated a speaker in the city, but no agreement could ever be made with the “depraved beasts and bloodthirsty ruffians who have their headquarters in Moscow.” Stalin, it was said, was waiting “with Asiatic patience . . . for the civilized nations to destroy each other, so that he can substitute Communist slavery and Asiatic paganism for Christian civilization.”<sup>61</sup>

Given the antipathy felt towards the Soviet Union during the first months of the war, Red-baiting in Saskatoon was not unusual, the most egregious case occurring during a federal by-election in December 1939. In this contest, M. P. Hayes, the candidate for the Liberal party, repeatedly tried to link W. G. Brown, his opponent representing the United Reform party, to Communism. Mocking the United Reform Movement’s claim to be progressive, Hayes stated in a speech, “The murderous attack that the Reds are making . . . on that small but peaceful and civilized country, Finland, shows just how much right they have to call themselves progressive.”<sup>62</sup> On another occasion Hayes conceded that Brown might be an honest man, but went on to smear him as the “dupe of men-Reds who have led him astray, men who would use him as a tool, men who were calling upon Canada to stop this war and allow the bloody hand of Stalin and the bloody hand of Hitler to control this country.”<sup>63</sup> Early in the campaign, Hayes’ organizers thought that they had found the evidence of disloyalty they had been searching for when a Brown supporter entered their headquarters and, pointing to a picture of the royal couple hanging on the wall, sarcastically observed, “You suckers, what have they ever done for you.”<sup>64</sup> Yet the incident failed to gain momentum, probably because it could not be proven that the anti-monarchist was in any way connected to Brown’s campaign. In the end, all of Hayes’ charges rang hollow. That Brown was a well-known and well-liked Presbyterian

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<sup>61</sup> *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 9 December 1939.

<sup>62</sup> *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 12 December 1939.

<sup>63</sup> *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 9 December 1939.

<sup>64</sup> *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 6 December 1939.

clergyman in the city rendered absurd any claim that he was secretly in the pay of the godless Soviet Union. As one of Brown's supporters proclaimed in a letter, if Hayes were not a Roman Catholic, he would invite him to visit Mr. Brown's church to "sit beneath our flag, the glorious old Union Jack, not the hammer and sickle Mr. Hayes referred to in his speech."<sup>65</sup> Ultimately, the Saskatoon electorate was satisfied that the charges against Brown were false and decisively voted him into office. Nevertheless, that questions of Communism dominated the campaign to the extent they did is a striking comment on the prominence such issues commanded.

Although Communism could be a convenient scapegoat in Saskatchewan, not to mention an easy foil to the "British" character of the country, Hitler's invasion of the Soviet Union in June 1941 led to an interesting shift in attitudes. Communists in Saskatoon, for so long pariahs, could now point to Russia as a key member of the Allies fighting to overthrow Hitler. Granted a new lease on life, local Communists reinvented themselves as advocates of total war, consistently petitioning the government to open a second front in Europe and to lift the ban on their party as a "patriotic duty to speed the war effort."<sup>66</sup> A Saskatoon chapter of the Canadian-Soviet Friendship League was even founded in the city in October 1943 to combat malicious propaganda against Russia, a goal that would have been unimaginable during the Depression years.<sup>67</sup> Finally, Tim Buck, the leader of the Canadian Communist Party and a man once considered so dangerous by authorities that an attempt was made on his life at Kingston prison in 1932, visited Saskatoon on several occasions. For Saskatonians repeatedly told during the 1930s that Communists were divisive revolutionaries, it would have seemed almost surreal to hear Buck declare to his audience in Third Avenue United Church, "We must have complete national unity if we are going to put everything Canada has into the war and it will take

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<sup>65</sup> *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 9 December 1939.

<sup>66</sup> *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 27 June 1942.

<sup>67</sup> *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 4 October 1943

everything Canada has to defeat the Axis.”<sup>68</sup> Although Saskatoon’s leftists became outspoken proponents of the war effort, their statements, especially concerning the Soviet Union, were sometimes marked by naiveté. Local clergyman C. P. Bradley, for instance, declared that people were dupes to believe that Stalin was a “bad man” since there was no evidence to support this claim. He also preached on such topics as, “Is there more Democracy in Russia than in the British Empire?” and “Russia Lives by Peace. Old Capitalism Lives by War.”<sup>69</sup>

Despite the odd misguided remark praising the Soviet system, Saskatoon’s left was clearly behind the city’s war effort. Yet there was an uneasy tension in the city as some prominent Saskatonians refused to accept that local Communists had abandoned the sinister aims imputed to them during the Great Depression. In June 1942, for example, Alderman A. M. Eddy lashed out at the authors of a letter requesting that the ban be lifted on the Canadian Communist Party, noting that they were “the same people who sneered at those of us who bought War Savings Certificates or loaned money to the Government without interest, and stated that our boys who enlisted should have their heads examined.”<sup>70</sup> Similarly, City Council reacted with annoyance when the Communist Labor Total War Committee urged the aldermen to pressure the federal government to open a second front “without delay.” Mayor S. N. MacEachern, in particular, declared that it was the “sheerest nonsense” for such a small group to dictate policy when only those in the highest authority were informed as to the military advisability of such an action.<sup>71</sup> Agitation by local Communists for an Allied offensive in Europe also proved too much for Lorne O’Donnell. The prominent Great War veteran denounced “These arm chair generals prophets of Communism,” and warned that following

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<sup>68</sup> *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 9 December 1942.

<sup>69</sup> *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 4 October 1943, 17 April 1943, 15 May 1943.

<sup>70</sup> *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 11 June 1942.

<sup>71</sup> *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 4 August 1942.

them was akin to casting a vote for “voluntary enslavement.”<sup>72</sup> In another letter O’Donnell targeted Alderman Nelson Clarke, a man well-known for his Communist sympathies, for supporting the left’s motion on a second front. In an attempt to paint Clarke as disloyal, the Saskatoon veteran wrote, “Surely, Mr. Nelson Clarke knows that an invasion with force and to follow through requires many, many men, and more men, and that Canada today is calling men and more men. I wonder whether Mr. Nelson Clarke has heard that call? I am told he is but 27 years of age, married, but has no children.”<sup>73</sup>

The acrimonious debates between local Communists and those staunchly opposed to the movement give a distorted picture of how the Soviet Union and its ideology were perceived during this period in Saskatoon. It is possible that many citizens simply saw in Russia a new and important ally in the war against fascism and, in doing so, chose to set aside their fears of a “Red revolution” at home. Indeed, that one thousand Saskatonians crowded into Third Avenue United Church in October 1941 to hear the playing of *l’Internationale*, the Soviet national anthem, in addition to the American and British anthems, was not a sign of their faith in the Communist ideology, but rather a symbol of their acceptance of Russia as such an ally.<sup>74</sup> It is also interesting that when the Soviet Union’s role in the war was stressed in Saskatoon such statements often avoided mentioning its system of government. While promoting a Red Cross

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<sup>72</sup> *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 4 July 1942. That O’Donnell feared that Canada’s Communists were working behind the scenes to bring about their desired revolution in the country was clear at the end of his letter when he felt compelled to warn his readers that that if we “Retrace the steps of history far enough . . . you will find the drab banner of Communism planted on the ashes of burned-out empires, civilization that rushed out private initiative, that sought to level off on one drab standard the shiftless and the able. . . . These are the inroads that weaken the democratic structure and render victory in the battlefield barren. . . . We must see to it that those great freedoms – the basis of democracy – are practiced in the community in which we reside. The soldier, the sailor, the airman and others expect at least that much from us.”

<sup>73</sup> *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 22 August 1942.

<sup>74</sup> *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 7 October 1941. Similarly, when the Saskatoon Symphony Orchestra served notice in April 1944 that it would give the first performance in Western Canada of the new Hymn of the Soviet Union (which replaced *l’Internationale* on 1 January 1944), it was not doing so for sinister goals. Rather, Conductor Arthur Collingwood and his musical ensemble were simply paying tribute to Russia as an equal ally (*Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 12 April 1944).

drive to aid Russia, for example, Saskatoon M.L.A. R. M. Pinder focused exclusively on the fact that the Russian people were fighting to defend things that everyone held dear: their homes and their way of life.<sup>75</sup> Another citizen appealed to self-preservation when he noted that the Soviet Union's great sacrifice of manpower on the eastern front was sparing British and American soldiers.<sup>76</sup> Finally, for James Sutherland Thomson, president of the University of Saskatchewan, there was no disloyalty in supporting the Soviet Union at this time, Saskatchewan people had only to consider the similarities between that country and their province: "Our best method is to think of our own country, with its wide open spaces, under the all-encompassing chill of 30 below weather – but with this tremendous difference: that over the vast steppes and forests of Russia, in addition to the rigor of winter, there has come the grim and paralyzing mastery of war. Let us try to imagine the condition on our own Prairie lands if a great mechanized army had come sweeping across these plains and coulees, driving the population in front of it."<sup>77</sup> It is revealing that President Thomson avoided any reference to the political system of the Soviet Union; rather, the emphasis was on the horrors of war presented in terms that would make a Saskatoon audience sympathetic to Russia.

Although Saskatoon's Communists gradually shed their disloyal image as the war progressed, supporters of the provincial Co-operative Commonwealth Federation in Saskatoon were less fortunate. The chief culprit here was not Red-baiting citizens, but the Liberal-dominated press in the province. As Lewis H. Thomas argued, it elevated to an art fear-mongering about how the CCF would destroy the entire democratic system.<sup>78</sup> In this regard the *Star-Phoenix* was no exception. Beginning in 1943 and becoming more strident as the 1944

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<sup>75</sup> *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 22 January 1942.

<sup>76</sup> *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 16 May 1942.

<sup>77</sup> *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 19 January 1942.

<sup>78</sup> Lewis H. Thomas, "The CCF Victory in Saskatchewan," *Saskatchewan History* 34, no. 1 (Winter 1981): 10.



provincial election approached, the Saskatoon daily did its best to warn its readers that the CCF was a fifth-column force in its own right. Indeed, the politicians under provincial CCF leader Tommy Douglas were even bolder than the imagined German saboteur, since their attempt to seize power, far from being carried out in secrecy, was being made out in the open through the electoral system.

Although the CCF had been dogged by the charge that it was a revolutionary party bent on shattering Saskatchewan democracy since its inception as the Farmer-Labour party in 1932, the situation was arguably more dire during the Second World War since its opponents could now point to the ways in which increased government control and ultimately dictatorship had corrupted a country like Germany. In a letter published by the *Star-Phoenix*, Saskatoonian W. L. Ramsay set the tone when he argued that the question was between “Dictatorship or Democracy, the authority of force or the rule of reason, the will of the despot or the consent of the people.”<sup>79</sup> Indeed, for over a year and a half Saskatoon’s newspaper essentially made Ramsay an unofficial correspondent, regularly publishing his missives in its letter box. It was a rare Saturday that the *Star-Phoenix* failed to contain a letter from the loquacious Ramsay warning Saskatonians that “Something for nothing has always been the bait for fools,” that “Socialism is an abrogation of private rights, an arrogation of state control,” and that the whole ideology of the CCF was “a beautiful dream if you don’t wake up.”<sup>80</sup> War themes were almost always invoked in Ramsay’s diatribes. Total regimentation was the mantra of the CCF, at least according to the *Star-Phoenix*’s favourite letter contributor, making that party no better than the Fascist powers the Allies were fighting to overthrow. “It is the first time you have ever allowed your letter box to be used for a sustained effort of propaganda against any party,”

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<sup>79</sup> *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 14 August 1943.

<sup>80</sup> *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 29 May 1943, 29 January 1944, 19 February 1944.

declared one of the few letters attacking Ramsay the *Star-Phoenix* allowed to be published.<sup>81</sup>

Another idea that found expression in the pages of the *Star-Phoenix* during the months leading up to the June 1944 election was that Canadian soldiers abroad were deeply concerned about potential revolutionary changes occurring to Saskatchewan's political landscape in their absence. Inverting the usual cliché that the Allies were fighting for a better world politically, socially, and economically, ex-premier J. T. M. Anderson quoted a letter from a soldier overseas who noted, "We are not fighting for a new government, but to keep the one we have."<sup>82</sup> Citing from the letters of soldiers overseas was a clever move on the part of the CCF's opponents. Given the strong patriotic sentiment in wartime Saskatoon, citizens were more likely to heed the concerns of those who were risking their lives abroad. Perhaps the most strongly worded letter on the political "crisis" a CCF victory would unleash came from two soldiers overseas and was relayed to the *Star-Phoenix* by their father:

If you fellows at home vote for a Socialist Government you are putting Canada down to a third rate nation in the eyes of the world and especially our neighbor to the south. . . . We feel you have lost the battle on the home front, while we fight to keep our Canadian homes safe. We are fighting for the Canada we left, whether it be Bracken or Mackenzie King, but when we get back, we are going to make a few changes. . . . Today, we are proud of Canada and of Saskatchewan. . . . Don't be foolish enough to vote Canada into a category where we will be ashamed of it. . . . You hold the line till we get to Berlin then we can all straighten this thing out, without Socialism. We know you have dreamers who have made themselves believe they are ordained to lead you to an Utopia, but most of them just know about enough to lead you to Chaos. India has a dreamer, too, so has Germany.<sup>83</sup>

The above statement, with its doomsday scenario in the event of a CCF victory, constituted fear-mongering at its most effective. As well, the charge that Saskatchewan had "lost the battle" on its home soil would have stung a city obsessed with "doing its bit" to further the war effort. Yet the soldiers' letter also raises certain disturbing questions as to its authenticity. That the statement was published on 14 June 1944, the eve of the election, is suspicious enough.

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<sup>81</sup> *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 27 May 1944.

<sup>82</sup> *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 10 February 1943.

<sup>83</sup> *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 14 June 1944.

Add to this that the soldiers' father fails to identify himself in the letter beyond his moniker "Independent Voter," and it becomes impossible to validate the man's claim that his two sons were serving in the army, let alone their authorship of the letter in question. Finally, the use throughout the letter of arguments commonly advanced by the Liberal party in this period – the loss of international prestige resulting from the election of a Socialist government – makes them sound more like an election speech than the sincere lament of two Canadian soldiers overseas.

Not content merely to express the views of soldiers overseas – real or invented – some opponents of the CCF even more boldly attempted to link that party with the Fascist powers servicemen were fighting to defeat. As the indefatigable W. L. Ramsay complained in a letter to the *Star-Phoenix*, "The Grain Growers, the Progressives, the CCF, is the evolution of class government just as the same thread runs through Communism, Nazism, and Fascism."<sup>84</sup> Yet Ramsay's reference to Communism was rare in the attacks on the CCF in this period, at least in Saskatoon. With the Soviet Union a crucial ally in the war against Hitler, it was bad policy to slander that country. Not easily deterred, however, opponents of the CCF began drawing comparisons between Tommy Douglas' party and the Nazis. That the National Socialist German Workers' Party contained the word "Socialist" in its name was constantly reiterated by anti-CCF speakers.<sup>85</sup> For example, R. M. Pinder, the incumbent Liberal M.L.A. for one of

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<sup>84</sup> *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 28 August 1943.

<sup>85</sup> Focusing on the word "Socialist" in the National Socialist German Workers' Party was a deliberate red herring on the part of the CCF's opponents. As historian Alan Bullock showed in his definitive biography of Hitler, the German leader's inclusion of the word "Socialist" in the 1920 renaming of the party was a calculated attempt to achieve as widespread support as possible, in particular from "the German working class and the lower middle classes [who] were saturated in a radical anti-capitalism." Hitler's appeals to Socialism were simply a means to his ultimate end: power for himself and for his party. What *der Fuehrer* truly implied by Socialism was laid bare in a July 1922 speech: "Whoever is prepared to make the national cause his own to such an extent that he knows no higher ideal than the welfare of his nation; whoever has understood our great national anthem, *Deutschland, Deutschland über Alles*, to mean that nothing in the wide world surpasses in his eyes this Germany,

Saskatoon's two seats, warned that under a CCF government victory bonds would be seized, followed by all the earnings of the people, ushering in "regimentation and National Socialism in its true form."<sup>86</sup> J. W. Estey, Saskatchewan's attorney-general who was vying for Saskatoon's other seat in the provincial legislature, was equally forthright. Quoting from a statement that "the tragedy for Germany was that the German people were not politically matured enough to know what National Socialism meant," the future Supreme Court of Canada justice from 1944 to 1955 expressed his hope that the people of Canada would never likewise be ignorant of what socialism meant.<sup>87</sup> The day before the election the *Star-Phoenix*, ever eager to tarnish the CCF's image, published a letter urging the Saskatchewan electorate not to put its faith in a "council of planners" since "National socialism (Nazism), or State socialism (Fascism), or any other kind of socialism, means totalitarianism and bureaucracy and regimentation in the long run instead of that liberty for which our boys are fighting abroad." The last line of the letter, which urged readers to "make good use of the franchise while we yet have it," was a less-than-subtle hint that the CCF was indeed composed of enemy agents who sought to strip away all vestiges of Saskatchewan democracy.<sup>88</sup> Of course, unlike the irrational fears of fifth columnists and Nazi invasions, attempts to promote fear of the CCF had obvious political ends.

In the end, Saskatchewan voters refused to see in the CCF the sinister influence of Nazism that Liberal supporters claimed existed, giving Tommy Douglas' party one of the most lopsided electoral victories in the province's history. Although the *Star-Phoenix* was effective on the whole in nurturing the patriotic fervour of Saskatonians, it failed dismally in influencing

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people and land, land and people – that man is a Socialist." Alan Bullock, *Hitler: A Study in Tyranny* (New York: Konecky & Konecky, 1962), 75-76.

<sup>86</sup> *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 11 March 1944.

<sup>87</sup> *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 12 January 1944.

<sup>88</sup> *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 14 June 1944.

their electoral choice, even when the newspaper couched its political message in patriotic terms. Yet the publicity commanded by charges of disloyalty and ominous talk of radical hidden agendas in the 1944 campaign is a revealing comment on wartime Saskatoon in general. That everyone was united in a great crusade was a common refrain in the city between 1939 and 1945. “We must forget all our petty differences . . . and work and fight together as brothers and sisters in a great cause,” said a government official on the eve of 1942. “I think we are being cleansed with fire,” declared a local banker.<sup>89</sup> Such grandiloquent comments, however, cannot hide the fact that Second World War Saskatoon possessed nothing close to perfect unity. As those of German and Japanese ancestry could attest, loyalty was a highly selective matter, dependent more on race than on heart. Xenophobia, not “brotherhood in a great cause,” loomed large. Although hounded less, Saskatoon’s left could never completely quell suspicions that they were undermining Saskatchewan democracy. Statements claiming that the city was being “cleansed in fire” give the sense that Saskatoon was forging a new identity in the crucible of war. That the prairie city felt in control of its own destiny for the first time since the Great Depression, and that it was working towards a clearly defined goal in the defeat of Fascist aggression, were certainly components of this new identity. Yet age-old prejudices – both racial and political – still limited Saskatoon’s journey of self-discovery.

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<sup>89</sup> *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 31 December 1941.

## Conclusion

“Patriotism,” Dr. Johnson once famously declared, “is the last refuge of a scoundrel.” Ralph Waldo Emerson remarked that “When a whole nation is roaring Patriotism at the top of its voice I am fain to explore the cleanness of its hands and the purity of its heart.” But it was Goethe who delivered the most scathing attack: “Patriotism corrupts history.” Frequently cited out of context, such judgments have taken on a life of their own.<sup>1</sup> Today, patriotism has many opponents and few supporters. As globalization increases our connectedness to the rest of the world, the apparent parochialism at the heart of the patriotic ideal seems regressive. As well, the bellicose rhetoric emanating from the United States since 11 September 2001 has dimmed patriotism’s appeal, confirming the suspicions of some that love of country is not a noble but dangerous virtue. The philosopher Martha Nussbaum has called for patriotism to be replaced by a new cosmopolitanism, with Diogenes the Cynic’s celebrated assertion “I am a citizen of the world” serving as her rallying cry.<sup>2</sup>

Although patriotism is seen through a jaundiced eye today, it would be a mistake to view all of its historical manifestations with the same derision. Patriotism varies: some forms are more benign than others, and some even have beneficial effects. To those critics who generalize that patriotism is always destructive and that nothing worthwhile can be salvaged from its remains, the example of Saskatoon during the Second World War suggests that a more nuanced view is in order. To be sure, patriotic fervour in Saskatoon between 1939 and 1945 had its dark side: widespread xenophobia ensured that anyone of German or Japanese ancestry,

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<sup>1</sup> Dr. Johnson’s statement, probably the most well-known comment on patriotism, is evidence of how a famous quotation can often be taken out of context. As Boswell makes clear in his *Life of Samuel Johnson*, his friend’s attack on patriotism was much narrower than is acknowledged today: “But let it be considered, that he did not mean a real and generous love of our country, but that pretended patriotism which so many, in all ages and countries, have made a cloak of self-interest.” James Boswell, *Boswell’s Life of Johnson* (London: Oxford University Press, 1953), 615.

<sup>2</sup> Martha Nussbaum, “Patriotism and Cosmopolitanism,” in *For Love of Country: Debating the Limits of Patriotism*, ed. Joshua Cohen (Boston: Beacon Press, 1996), 6.

or on the left of the political spectrum, was a potential fifth columnist. As well, the hounding of these “disloyal” groups by local veterans’ associations in the name of “King and Country” was disturbing. There is a certain irony in the fact that the *Star-Phoenix* often contributed to such hysteria. The newspaper was bought in 1928 by Clifford Sifton, who is best remembered for his tenure as minister of the interior (1896-1905) when he aggressively advertised the Canadian prairies to farmers from Central and Eastern Europe. Yet as Cultural Studies professor David Coleman notes, the openness of the Canadian government to non-British immigration assumed “the assimilation or conversion to White, British norms.” “The demand of assimilation,” Coleman adds, “shows that it was unquestioningly ethnocentric and therefore culturally racist.”<sup>3</sup> It is perhaps not surprising then that when Great Britain came under enemy attack during the war years, the *Star-Phoenix* at times fed the suspicion that some Saskatonians, particularly those of German origin, were antagonistic to British values.

But fear was not patriotism’s only consequence in wartime Saskatoon. Love of country also fostered in citizens a resolve to “do their bit” by contributing to the war effort. The *Star-Phoenix* was influential in both describing and fostering this unprecedented show of community solidarity as countless Saskatonians, from the woman busily clicking her knitting needles to the child tirelessly scavenging the city for salvageable material, laboured to ensure the success of charitable and volunteer initiatives. The energy with which Saskatonians approached such war-related work was even more remarkable when one considers that the city had just emerged from the debilitating effects of the Great Depression. Although this energy cannot be quantified in the economic and demographic terms that noted historian Gerald Nash applied to the cities of the American West during the war, the result was similar in both cases:

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<sup>3</sup> Daniel Coleman, *White Civility: The Literary Project of English Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2006), 152.

“an exhilarating, bubbling, optimistic outlook.”<sup>4</sup> In short, Saskatoon was reborn.

Patriotism was most potent when it managed to capture Saskatoon’s collective imagination which had lain dormant throughout the “dirty thirties.” Often criticized for its parochialism, it was precisely patriotism’s ability to make a distant war more immediate to an isolated home front that ensured its success. Elaborate war games in which airplanes roared overhead and soldiers wearing swastikas and rising suns converged on the city vividly gave civilians a first-hand glimpse of what it was like to be in the thick of battle. But Saskatoon’s imagination could not feed on mock invasions alone, no matter how meticulously planned. The coming to the city of both the royal couple in June 1939 and the twenty-five guest children in August 1940 injected the city’s collective imagination with a dose of realism. The guest children, in particular, were outstanding propagandists for the patriotic cause, their mere presence testifying to the fact that Mother England was in grave peril. The patriotism of Saskatonians was further bolstered by the presence of soldiers training in their midst. Military bases and BCATP schools not only gave the city a distinctive wartime character, but also brought home the fact that the soldier “over here” would soon be “over there” defending Canada and the British Empire from the Axis.

Saskatoon’s patriotism during the Second World War never blinded its citizens to the fact that the war’s ultimate goal – the freedom of all humankind – transcended the geographical borders of Canada and the British Empire. As early as October 1939, University of Saskatchewan historian G. W. Simpson stressed that Canada was at war to protect democracy, to maintain the independence of small nation states, and to organize international order.<sup>5</sup> These lofty objectives were not lost on the average citizen. In one of the most elaborate parades in

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<sup>4</sup> Gerald D. Nash, *The American West Transformed: The Impact of the Second World War* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1985), 201.

<sup>5</sup> *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 7 October 1939.



Saskatoon during the war years, 3,000 Saskatonians converged on Kiwanis Park in May 1943 to witness a tableau representing the Four Freedoms. The audience was reminded of Roosevelt's stirring January 1941 address in which the American President had articulated the four fundamental liberties humans "everywhere in the world" had a right to enjoy: freedom of speech, freedom to worship, freedom from fear, and freedom from want.<sup>6</sup> University of Saskatchewan President James Sutherland Thomson put it best at the beginning of 1944. Patriotism, he argued, was an exalting virtue, but "the new vision arising out of this present world revolution was that loyalty to one's own country could only become real if supplemented by loyalty to all mankind."<sup>7</sup> Martha Nussbaum could not have said it better. When news of Japan's surrender reached Saskatoon at 5 p.m. on 14 August 1945, its citizens might be excused for reacting boisterously. An estimated 20,000 people flooded the city's streets, singing, dancing, and building bonfires well into the early hours of the morning. After six long years, the Second World War was over; humanity as a whole was the victor. Paradoxically, a powerful local force had galvanized the Saskatoon home front into action and contributed to this world victory: its essence was patriotism.

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<sup>6</sup> *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 10 May 1943. The tableau was designed to promote the Fourth Victory Loan in Saskatoon. It was so successful that the federal government bestowed on Saskatoon a framed award of merit for the best promotional job in the Fourth Victory Loan among cities with populations between 30,000 and 100,000. A photo of the Four Freedoms tableau can be found on page 76 of *Saskatoon: A History in Photographs*.

<sup>7</sup> *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 14 January 1944.

Appendix

A1



“The Drums of Drake are Calling . . .”  
*Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 17 October 1942

A2



Raymond Maddison  
*Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 13 June 1940.

A3



Guest children are welcomed to Saskatoon at the CNR station. Dean F. C. Cronkite, the chairman of the Saskatoon Voluntary Committee for Child Evacuees, is shown with five-year-old Gillian Layward on his arm, while Deputy Mayor S. N. MacEachern stands to the right.

*Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 24 August 1940.

A4



A guest child has his ears washed after days of riding on the train. Before being assigned to their respective host families, the guest children were held at School for the Deaf.

*Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 26 August 1940.

A5



Dr. Walter Murray, the first president of the University of Saskatchewan (1908-1937), has a tête-à-tête with two guest children at the School for the Deaf.

*Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 26 August 1940.

A6



Tea courtesy of the Iron Duke. The man in the forefront on the left is J. S. Woodward, editor of the *Star-Phoenix*.  
*Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 18 October 1941.

A7



Editorial cartoon  
*Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 18 November 1941.

A8



Editorial Cartoon  
*Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 11 November 1941.

A9

## The Saskatoon Spirit in England



*Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 20 November 1941.

A10



“A Bren gun crew, lying in tall grass, ready for action”  
*Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 30 June 1941.

A11



“Hitler Gets Cold Steel in the Vitals”  
*Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 30 June 1941.

A12



Saskatoon's Victory Loan Special  
*Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 4 May 1943.



A13

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## War Worker



**MARION KONOPKA**

of 426 Avenue D. south, is only 10 years of age, but she's doing her bit. Moreover, she's an accomplished salesgirl—or maybe it is her curls that bring the customers. She managed a lemonade and candy stand near her home the other day, and brought 70 cents to the Star-Phoenix office for the Red Cross Society.

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*Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 2 July 1941.

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