

# Conscription crisis and Quebec nationalism

## TEACHER GUIDE

Canadian Press reporter Giuseppe Valiante describes how the national conscription campaign to maintain the ranks of soldiers fighting in Europe during the First World War caused deep divisions in Canadian society. English Canada was largely in favour of sending troops to fight on the side of the Allies as the country was a dominion of the British Crown. Quebecers, however, were not loyal to the UK, didn't want to get involved in a European war, and saw themselves as sovereign Canadians.

A major legacy of conscription during the First World War was how it helped to spark the Quebec nationalist movement. Conscription's imposition on Quebecers led many to realize they would likely always be a minority within Canada, and therefore have limited influence in the country. The nationalist movement produced two referendums on Quebec sovereignty, in 1980 and 1995. Due in part to the events around conscription, military history is not prominently celebrated in Quebec.

### Additional discussion/research points:

- Why did Quebec leaders find it problematic to be a minority within Canada?
- What was Regulation 17 and what kind of impact did it have on the way Quebecers saw their place in Canada?
- Describe Quebec nationalism.
- Why were Quebecers less enthusiastic than English Canadians to fight for the British Crown during the First World War?
- What was the Francoeur motion and what did it represent?
- How are Quebec and Quebecers represented today in the rest of the country?
- Can you think of other examples of nationalist movements in Canada today?
- This article doesn't discuss the role of First Nations people during the events of the First World War. Are there any comparisons that can be made regarding Quebec's drive for nationhood and the Indigenous rights movement in Canada?



Portrait of Henri Bourassa in July 1917 as it appeared on a mortuary card in 1952. THE CANADIAN PRESS/Library and Archives



A recruitment poster from the First World War. THE CANADIAN PRESS/Library and Archives Canada