

The War Measures Act: What is Total War?

During his speech to the House of Commons on the extent of Canada's war effort, Honourable J. L. Ralston, Minister of National Defence, asked a very important question that you will seek to answer.

No person can doubt that Canada is committed to total war. We are committed to it not only for the survival of freedom generally but for our own survival and for the survival of this nation, and for the security of our own homes and families. To wage total war is the stated policy of the government and I believe, indeed I am sure, that it is the determined purpose of the Canadian people. But what do we mean by total war? (*The Extent of Canada's War Effort*, pg. 4-5)

First Objective

Your task is to explore www.wartimecanada.ca and answer the following questions in detail, providing specific references to the documents that you find to support your conclusions. Your assignment is to be written in essay style, but divided by sub-headings based on the questions provided.

1. What is the War Measures Act and what sort of power does it provide to the government during a declaration of war or emergency situation? **Be specific and give examples.**
2. What does J. L. Ralston mean by total war? How does his understanding of total war become reality in Canada during the Second World War? Examine documents on the website for examples of total war and **include them in your explanation.**
3. One could argue that Ralston's understanding of total war is a gross infringement of our rights and freedoms. Do you agree? Why or why not? Support your answer with *reasoned* arguments.

Second Objective

You will also prepare a short, five minute presentation using any "medium" appropriate. You should highlight two examples you found for the class, explain them and how they are examples of total war as Ralston described it. It is recommended to limit your presentation "page" or "slides" to no more than five.