

Women - WWII - Industry - Primary Source

What can you learn about women in industry from propaganda posters, a photograph, and a political cartoon?



Women – WWII - Industry

Many men left their civilian jobs to fight for their country. These jobs needed to be filled and during the Second World War women quickly stepped forward to meet the surging demand for workers in a greatly expanding Canadian wartime economy.

At the beginning of the war approximately 570 000 women worked in Canadian industry, mostly at clerical jobs. Five years later almost one million women would be employed, with many working in traditionally male factory jobs.

Initially there was a reluctance to allow women into new fields of employment. As the war proceeded however, it became evident that if the country was to make the most of its resources women's contributions would be vital.

Many new factories were established to manufacture guns, ammunition, aircraft, ships and more, and women soon could be seen in almost every factory working alongside their male counterparts.

This shift in gender roles took some getting used to, but by the end of the war women had proven to themselves and to the country that they could do any job a man could do, and they could do it well.

How did women working in industry help the war effort?