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Review of *For All We Have and Are: Regina and the Experience of the Great War* by James M. Pitsula

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For All We Have and Are: Regina and the Experience of the Great War. By James M. Pitsula. Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2008. 364 pp. Photographs, notes, bibliography, index. \$50.00 cloth, \$26.95 paper.

The Great War touched many places in Canada, but James M. Pitsula's book is the first to examine closely its impact on a distinctly agrarian and western community. Regina, Saskatchewan, was, like many towns in the Canadian prairies after the turn of the century, dependent on agriculture, ethnically diverse, and led by an Anglophile majority that viewed the war as an ideological clash between the democratic British Empire and the despotic German autocracy. That way of thinking made the city of 30,000 a veritable battleground between "Germantown," the "alien" immigrant district, and its English-speaking majority, who through assimilative social reform campaigns crusaded to make Regina a uniformly Anglicized city. The war changed the way Reginans identified with their countrymen, conceptualized their agrarian heritage, and set about improving their lives on the Canadian prairies.

Pitsula's book is both military and social history. It weaves a careful examination of Regina's social reform movement—which used temperance and educational reform to "purify" the city's intolerable Ukrainian, Swedish, German, and French-Canadian influences—into shorter discussions of life at the front. Pitsula successfully integrates these two worlds, demonstrating that there were two wars fought between 1914 and 1918; and, although dramatically different, each believed the end goal was a progressive, more democratic way of life. Members of Regina's 28th Battalion used bombs

and bayonets; home-front social reformers eviscerated the liquor traffic (supported primarily by members of "Germantown") and slashed foreign language instruction from local schools.

The book's primary strength is its discussion of "The Rural Myth," the construction of a distinctly rural, agrarian identity. Farmers in Regina and Saskatchewan felt they answered to a higher calling than other Canadians, responsible as they were for feeding the country's soldiers. At the same time, Regina received exactly zero munitions contracts from the federal government, inciting an intense mistrust of central Canada's "Big Interests."

Unfortunately, however, Pitsula's arguments as to Regina's distinctiveness are not fully explored and at times come across as afterthoughts. In addition, the book is poorly organized. The topic of social reform is unnecessarily split three ways while a subsection on home-front recruitment is dumped carelessly into a chapter on "News from the Front" instead of "The End of Voluntarism." Finally, Pitsula too often blurs the line between the experiences of those living in Regina and those spread across the rest of Saskatchewan.

Although the book's organization is scattered, its content is useful. The author's use of soldier letters helps bridge the gap between home front and battlefield, a feat rarely managed so well by Great War historians.

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