

☐ CPH, Series 3
Episode 11
For God, Queen &
Country
I am Canadian First
(1:15:40-1:27:51)

☐ Complete or discuss
Questions During
Viewing

☐ **Textbook** (optional)

*Canada, An Illustrated
History* pp. 177

THE BOER WAR

The discovery of gold and diamonds in the Dutch republics of South Africa ignited a bitter conflict, the Boer War of 1899. Britain, seeking to assert its dominance, called upon its colonies, including Canada, for military support. This request sparked a deep divide within Canada, exposing fundamental tensions about national identity and allegiance.

French Canadian nationalists vehemently opposed Canadian involvement. They saw the war as a British power grab and believed Canada should not participate in imperialistic ventures. In contrast, English-speaking imperialists felt it was Canada's duty to support the mother country, Britain, in its time of need, emphasizing the bonds of empire and shared heritage.

At the heart of this debate lay the contentious issue of conscription. Was Canada obligated to force its citizens to fight in a war that many felt was not their own? The Boer War, therefore, became more than just a faraway conflict. It became a crucible in which Canada wrestled with its identity, its relationship with Britain, and the very definition of its nationhood. The divisions exposed during this period would continue to shape Canadian politics and society for decades to come.

QUESTIONS DURING VIEWING

I AM CANADIAN FIRST

1. What decision did Laurier make that caused outrage both by the English and the French and what were the complaints of the two groups?

Britain requested warships. English Canadians felt Canada should provide them, but French Canadians wanted no involvement. Laurier decided Canada should build its own navy, which the British could use in emergencies. He hoped this would satisfy both sides, but the English felt it wasn't enough, and the French were angered, calling it a "Tin Pot Navy."