BOOK REVIEWS

Military Workfare: The Soldier and Social Citizenship in Canada

by Deborah Cowen

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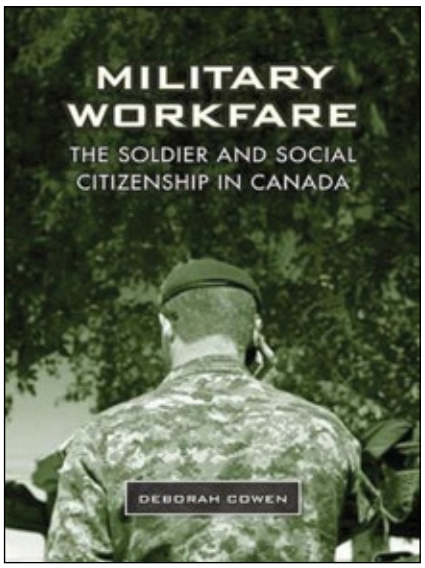
Parliament Hill served as the venue for a speech by Prime Minister Stephen Harper in the spring of 2006, in which he spoke of new plans to be implemented for veterans of the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF). 'War on Terror' – (WoT) induced pressures on Canada heightened controversy over the nation's mission in Afghanistan initiated back in October 2001. His address, like that of William Lyon Mackenzie King in 1942, focused upon emerging "blueprints" regarding soldiers as citizens, and upon bringing the concepts of warfare and welfare closer together. In *Military Workfare: The Soldier and Social Citizenship in Canada*, Deborah Cowen, an Assistant Professor in the Department of Geography at the University of Toronto, incisively examines the warfare-welfare-citizenship triad in the contemporary period, and raises important questions in a period substantially different from the one in which Canada found itself some 60 years ago.



The soldier assumes a paramount position in this investigation because the soldier serves as the basis for rethinking "social citizenship and social obligation in neoliberal times" (p. 7). Cowen considers the "continuities and transformations of both in the relationship between soldiers and the social," and the potential for learning outcomes in the context of making the geographies of citizenship, welfare, and warfare explicit rather than assumed" (p. 7). The book's framework emerges from these points, and the time frames of the Second World War and the WoT also emerge. She contends that during the course of global government funding of extensive confrontation in distant theatres of war (i.e., George W. Bush's Wilsonian idealism-inspired foreign policy in the post-2001 period), concern for the health and welfare of states' populations demands greater attention in which we "take the spatiality of politics and identity serious in both its fixity and its flux (p. 7)."

Cowen examines five decades of political struggle, economic change, cultural shifts, and geographic transformation with respect to many aspects of Canadian citizenship and labour. The idea of the nationalization of citizenship as a particularly 'loaded idea' figures strongly throughout the book. The notion helps to deliver the central argument of the soldier representing a core element in the puzzle of social citizenship. In doing do, Cowen

posits "war as a precedent, shadow, and foundational exception for civilians welfare and paradoxically for civilian *work*fare too" (p. 7). She follows on this line of argumentation by building a genealogy of military citizenship in Canada spanning decades. Concentrating upon a number of critical instances during the long and robust history of Canada's military practices in various locations around the world, Cowen traces shifts in the practice of government in what she claims is an unfortunately overlooked "form of national work and belonging" (p. 20). As a leader in liberal government, Canada, she contends, is a unique experiment of multiculturalism, bilingualism, and "diversity," which lends dimension to the nature of specific trends (p. 22).

One cannot overstate the quality of Cowen's work, given the vast terrain traversed. The central argument is reinforced through multiple layers of investigation. Cowen delves into archival material and navigates a large field of tectonic shifts that have taken place in Canadian history to convey a story of the soldier and the soldier's relationship with social forms of citizenship. She reminds readers that in order to understand military citizenship, the necessity of connecting the concept with the broader political and geographies of war is essential. She opines that war's pervasiveness has come into flower in the past several decades and now easily "escapes the categories that once worked to contain it" (p. 230). After President George W. Bush declared the war in that theatre, it continued to rage, not only from multiple sides, but on various layers, so as to include regular and asymmetric force. Cowen describes the 2003-2008-period as marking a watershed in war, and a watershed for the solder and the citizen. Spatial, temporal, and ontological categories that once were emblematic of modern warfare have run into one another, resulting in "definite although certainly complex and contingent implications for military forces" (p. 231).

Changing dynamics of politics beyond national borders have also greatly affected Canada's national security, the manner in which the country participates in military conflict, and the portrait of Canada's domestic militarism. Cowen points to the changing conceptions of security by extending her provocative study to envelop issues of economics and security, official discourse, the practices of the state, and the role that Canada is defining, not only for itself as a state, but also in relation to the United States (US) as its closest ally. Taking stock of these dimensions of Canada and the broad category of war facilitates a discussion of Canada's evolving role further afield. Cowen then turns another way to observe variations in Canadian policy on the provincial level, with special attention devoted to Alberta for its simultaneous role as a "storm trooper" of neoliberal politics and policies across Canada, and for voicing its support for ambitions of the Bush administration, for which she maintains the province earned a special place as a global minority in the so-called "Bush camp" (p. 244).

Cowen writes of "Neoliberal military citizenship," whereby the soldier should not be seen as a "figure" intimately linked with democratic principles or political rights, even though "it was through the mass sacrifice of the population through service to the nation during the Second World War that post-war citizenship was assembled" (p. 255). Shifts that have taken place, she opines, were not a result of neoliberal government/governance. Cowen's account of the history of the soldier, military, and their relationship with the state illustrates "work as a condition for welfare" as something deeply rooted in Canada's military history, which endured through the course of the "brief life of the welfare state" (p. 255). Her praiseworthy inclusion of critical theory with respect to warfare and politics, and international relations (IR) establish for readers valuable positions from where to consider the shaping of national belonging, together with belonging beyond political confines. Even as political trajectories of Canada and of other states continue to evolve and adapt according to both internal and external conditions, the soldier and the soldier's position should be seen as less peripheral in the 21st Century.

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