

## HOMEWORK HELPSHEET / REVISION FILE

THE HOME FRONT

KP4

### BACKGROUND

The First World War was unlike any previous war and required everyone to play his or her part if Germany was to be defeated. All the resources of the nation had to be mobilized for the war effort. To make sure this happened the government had to increase its powers and extend its control over many aspects of national life. In many respects, Britain was almost like a dictatorship during the war. This would have been unacceptable in peacetime but the public recognized that government control and regulation was necessary and there were few protests. Those who did oppose the government and its handling of the war had very little opportunity to make their voices heard due to the strict censorship laws which were introduced.

- The Defence of the Realm Act (DORA) was passed by Parliament in August 1914. The government could make new laws without asking parliament. The government could impose martial law if required and railways and docks came under military control. As the war progressed DORA allowed the government to introduce many other new laws.
- Special constables were recruited to assist the police and army. Air raid precautions and black out regulations were introduced. Vehicles had to be immobilised if there was a threat of a German invasion. The army could requisition horses and vehicles for military use.
- German citizens living in Britain were arrested and imprisoned without trial until the war ended.
- Censorship of newspapers was introduced and some anti war newspapers were closed down
- The government took over the running of mines and railways.
- A Ministry of Munitions was set up and the government built factories to produce weapons, shells etc.
- Workers could be told to work in factories making vital war supplies. Strikes became illegal in important war industries. The government reached agreement with trade unions on the dilution of labour to allow women to do skilled work.
- Compulsory Military Service for all men aged 18-41 was introduced in 1916. All men and women aged 18-65 had to register at labour exchanges for war work
- Licensing hours were introduced, beer was watered down, and people were not allowed to buy rounds of drinks.
- British Summer Time was introduced to allow a longer working day
- The Government took powers to control rents, prices and wages.
- Farmers were ordered to turn more land over to the production of grain crops.
- Rationing was introduced in 1917. Every household was given a ration card that they had to use to buy sugar, meat, tea, butter etc. There were heavy fines or even prison sentences for those who broke the regulations.
- Attitudes to the war changed. At first it was popular. After 1916 the slaughter of so many young men made many people question whether their deaths were worth it.