

# “The Army Origin of the Royal Canadian Navy”: Canada’s Maritime Defences, 1855-1918<sup>1</sup>

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*En 1954, l’historien de l’armée George Stanley a affirmé que les initiatives navales entreprises du 18e siècle aux années 1870 par les armées française et britannique au Canada et par la milice terrestre locale étaient les véritables racines de la Marine royale canadienne. Par contre, il a aussi admis en privé qu’il avait été délibérément provocateur. Le présent article passe en revue les études ultérieures et propose de nouvelles recherches qui viennent renforcer les conclusions de Stanley et indiquent que l’armée canadienne a continué de promouvoir l’organisation des forces navales après les années 1870. De plus, l’armée a fait pression en faveur de la fondation de la Marine royale canadienne en 1910, puis elle a appuyé le nouveau service au cours de ses premières années tumultueuses.*

“Naval officers in Canada,” declared George F. G. Stanley in the first paragraph of his 1954 article proclaiming the army roots of the Canadian navy, “never like to be reminded that their service is a naval Eve created out of an army rib.” The navy “is usually said to owe its origin to the passing of the Naval Service Act through the Canadian Parliament in 1910.” However, “Canadian ships of war sailed the inland waters of North America as early as the eighteenth century and ... Canadian naval companies were always included in the defence arrangements of Canada during the nineteenth century. But these ships and these naval companies were, for the most part, carried on the establishment of the Army....”<sup>2</sup> The teasing tone was intentional. Stanley’s affiliations were thoroughly army. Significantly, the article appeared in the same year he published *Canada’s Soldiers: A Military*

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<sup>1</sup> The quote is from George F.G. Stanley, “The Army Origin of the Royal Canadian Navy,” *The Journal of the Society for Army Historical Research* 32 (Summer 1954): 64-73. The present paper began as a presentation at the CNRS annual meeting in New Westminster, BC in August 2016 to report on some findings of work mentored by Barry Gough. My deepest thanks to Barry who shares no responsibility for errors of fact or analysis.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 64.

*History of an Unmilitary People*, and came from the same body of research. He began the book project in 1939 while a professor at Mount Allison University in New Brunswick, and took it up again after wartime service in 1940-6 as an officer in the army. He went overseas in 1942 to serve as C.P. Stacey's deputy in the overseas army historical section. After Stacey was promoted full colonel and appointed director of history in 1945, Stanley, now a lieutenant colonel, assisted him in reorganizing the historical section at Army Headquarters in Ottawa. Stanley returned to teaching, first at the University of British Columbia, and then in 1948 moved to the Royal Military College of Canada where he became head of the college's new history department.

Gerald Graham, who had served with Stanley in the wartime army overseas historical section and was now Rhodes Professor of Imperial History at the University of London, asked for a copy of the article in November 1954. Graham had a serious interest. In 1950 he had published *Empire of the North Atlantic: The Maritime Struggle for North America*, the first academic naval history of Canada. Stanley's answer was self deprecating, even while delivering another poke at the navy: "I am sorry I do not have an offprint.... As a matter of fact, I am amazed at the reception which this silly thing received. It is not a work of scholarship – it is nothing more than a potboiler. The navy is so starved for publicity that Admiral Pullen<sup>3</sup> seized upon the article and recommended it to all kinds of people who immediately wrote in for offprints."<sup>4</sup>

Stanley had no need to be modest. None of the many subsequent works on Canadian defence have directly addressed his argument, but their findings have tended to confirm his findings.<sup>5</sup> The purpose of the present paper is to show that the case he made in 1954 has still greater weight than he claimed, specifically for

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<sup>3</sup> Rear Admiral Hugh Francis Pullen (1905-1983) at that time chief of naval personnel in Ottawa. He had a deep interest in maritime history, and after retirement in 1960 published widely on topics related to Nova Scotia. John M. MacFarlane, *Canada's Admirals and Commodores* (Maritime Museum of British Columbia Maritime Museum Notes, No. 8, August 1992), 38; <https://memoryns.ca/h-f-pullen-fonds>.

<sup>4</sup> Stanley to Graham, 16 November 1954, Queen's University Archives, Gerald S. Graham papers, box 7, file 1/26.

<sup>5</sup> Work on the early history of the navy, and this article in particular, owes much to two path-breaking theses: Thomas Richard Melville, "Canada and Sea Power: Canadian Naval Thought and Policy, 1860-1910" (Ph.D. thesis, Duke University, 1981) and Richard Howard Gimblett, "'Tin-Pots' or Dreadnoughts? The Evolution of the Naval Policy of the Laurier Administration, 1896-1911" (M.A. Thesis, Trent University, 1981). These were basic references for Michael L. Hadley and Roger Sarty, *Tin-Pots and Pirate Ships: Canadian Naval Forces and German Sea Raiders, 1880-1918* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1991). That book grew in part out of a background "narrative" I did for Dr. W.A.B. Douglas at the Directorate of History in the late 1980s when he launched work on the official history of the Royal Canadian Navy in the Second World War. Both the narrative and book became planning documents for the pre-1939 volume that the Department of National Defence later funded: William Johnston, Richard Gimblett, William G.P. Rawling, and John MacFarlane, *The Seabound Coast: The Official History of the Royal Canadian Navy, 1867-1939*, Vol. 1, (Toronto: Dundurn, 2010). Additional references for most of the topics discussed in the present paper will be found in *Seabound Coast*.

the period from 1855 to 1918. Stanley did not explore how the naval defences of the inland waters advocated by the British Army became a point of contention in the British-Canadian negotiations of the 1860s and early 1870s that established the transcontinental Dominion of Canada. Neither did he mention how similar questions arose over the naval protection of the Canadian Atlantic fisheries in these same years. These topics are treated in the first half of this paper. The second half shows that army advocacy of naval defence did not disappear after the 1870s, as Stanley's account suggests. Rather, the Canadian Militia, with the support of the British Army, persisted in urging the establishment of a naval force. In the early twentieth century the militia staff exerted considerable influence in the founding and early development of the Royal Canadian Navy, and especially so in the unexpected circumstances of the First World War.

Stanley's article began with a survey of the origins of forces on the upper St. Lawrence and Great Lakes during the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Armed transports, the main means of moving troops and supplies, operated under army administration first during the French regime and then under the British. These logistical arrangements acquired a more formal shape following the American Revolution with the creation of the Provincial Marine as part of the British Army command in British North America. During the War of 1812, the Royal Navy took over the Provincial Marine in 1813 to counter the growing strength of US Navy forces on the lakes, which threatened to cut the critical supply lines that sustained the British land forces defending Upper Canada against the stronger US land forces. Stanley recounts the great expansion of the naval effort on inland waters during the war, and then the subsequent run-down of the naval organization to the final closure of the dockyard at Kingston, the last remaining establishment, in 1853.

Although naval command of the inland waters was essential to the defence of Canada, it was a commitment the Royal Navy did not want. Facilities on the lakes were expensive because of their isolation from sea-going transportation. Stores and equipment had to be trans-shipped from Montreal in the smaller vessels that could pass through the canals built to circumvent rapids. Planning for war deployments raised large challenges because warships other than the smallest types would have to be built on the lakes, as was done with herculean effort during the War of 1812, or the still more costly alternative of enlarging the Canadian canals. It was the steep cost of the build up in 1812-14 that persuaded the British and US governments to conclude the Rush-Bagot agreement of 1817, which limited each power to a total of four small armed vessels on the lakes. The agreement did not, however, apply to shore establishments. Britain's complete naval evacuation of the lakes reflected both unwillingness to contemplate another war with the United States, and the opportunity to shed an expensive commitment.<sup>6</sup> This was why in 1866 a gunboat force to counter cross-border attacks by Irish-American Fenians

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<sup>6</sup> Kenneth Bourne, in *Britain and the Balance of Power in North America* (London: Longmans Green, 1967), chap. 1.

had to be organized from scratch, drawing on civilian shipping and port facilities.

Stanley highlighted the Canadian part in raising the gunboat force as the nation's pioneering venture into naval defence. The effort began under the provincial government of united Canada in response to the largest and most dangerous Fenian incursion in the spring of 1866. One of the effects of the Fenian threat was to expedite British North American confederation, and it was the new dominion's federal government that administered the Canadian contribution to the lakes gunboat force starting in the summer of 1867. Although Stanley showed the Canadian contribution was limited, he did not explore the context: Canada's determined efforts to avoid any naval commitment, on the lakes, the St. Lawrence River and Gulf, or the Atlantic.

### **The naval defence of the Great Lakes, 1855-1865**

Naval defence was in fact central to the Canadian-British negotiations in the making of confederation, a subject essential to understand Canadian actions – and inaction – both at that time and for decades later. Resolve against any initiative that might imply acceptance of responsibility for naval defence hardened in response to the British policy of withdrawing its army garrisons to compel the colonies to raise their own land forces. This commitment alone was excessive and unfair from the perspective of Canadian leaders. They never hesitated to point out that it was only Canada's membership in the empire – and Britain's foreign policy – that might arouse the hostility of the United States, the sole power that could invade the colonies. The military withdrawal was in fact a tectonic shift for the colonies where the army had been a central institution since 1763 when a garrison remained in Quebec to secure the newly conquered territory. Long term and substantial defences became imperative when the American Revolution created a hostile state on Canada's border. The British treasury paid for these defences, the Americans' revolt having been fomented in part by British taxation of the colonists to pay for the forces that protected them.<sup>7</sup>

British policy began to change in the mid nineteenth century in the face of two developments. The first was the growing cost of the defences on British North America's long continental frontier, beyond the direct reach of the Royal Navy, the main instrument of imperial security. The second was the demands of the colonists for self government, to which Britain acceded by the late 1840s, but with the conviction that the colonies should now share in the costs of their own defence.

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<sup>7</sup> The still authoritative account of British military policy towards Canada and the origins of Canadian military organization is C.P. Stacey, *Canada and the British Army 1846-1871: A Study in the Practice of Responsible Government*, 2nd ed. (1936; Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1963), whose first chapter gives the eighteenth century background. See also, in addition to Bourne, *Britain and the Balance of Power*; Richard A. Preston, *Canada and "Imperial Defense": A Study of the Origins of the British Commonwealth's Defense Organization, 1867-1919* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press and Duke University Press, 1967); J. Mackay Hitsman, *Safeguarding Canada, 1763-1871* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1968).

There was a promising, if very modest, beginning. Large reductions in the garrisons in 1852-55, to provide troops for the Crimean War, and a burst of patriotic enthusiasm in Canada had brought the province to establish a volunteer militia with the Militia Act of 1855. Men enrolled for a three-year term of service, were paid to train regularly, and were liable to call out for active service. A little noted provision in the act was for the establishment of seven "naval companies" at Great Lakes ports. This had been recommended by the provincial government commission established in 1854 to investigate reorganization of the militia whose report was the basis for the 1855 act: "In case of war," the commissioners observed, "the services of a Provincial Marine for the purpose of manning Gun Boats, of working Great Guns ... becomes of much importance to the defence of the Province."<sup>8</sup> Although the new volunteer land militia quickly took shape, the naval units remained a dead letter.

The descent of the United States into Civil War in 1861 transformed the Canadian defence question, although temporarily.<sup>9</sup> Britain's declaration of neutrality and the right to trade with the Confederacy caused deep tensions with the US government. In November 1861 the seizure of Confederate diplomats from the British steamer *Trent* by a US cruiser brought the Union and Britain to the brink of war. The danger of an American attack on the colonies, as had happened when the US declared war on Britain in 1812, resulted in a dramatic reversal of the draw down of the regular army garrison. Some 12,000 reinforcements, carried in fast steam transports, increased the garrison to a strength of 18,000 troops. The Canadian response was much less energetic. Party divisions in the legislature toppled the government when it tried to introduce increased militia spending. Citizens in several lakes ports, however, organized naval volunteer companies.<sup>10</sup>

Even before the *Trent* crisis, British military authorities were deeply concerned about the well recognized problems of projecting naval power west of Montreal.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Allan N. MacNab, E.P. Taché, T. Edmund Campbell, George Frederick de Rottenburg, "Report of the Commissioners appointed to investigate...the best means of re-organizing the Militia of Canada..." 19 February 1855, in *Military Establishments, North America. Return to and Address of the House of Lords, dated 27 May 1856* [London: Her Majesty's Stationary Office, 1856], 30, [https://www.canadiana.ca/view/oocihm.9\\_01366/2](https://www.canadiana.ca/view/oocihm.9_01366/2).

<sup>9</sup> On Canadian defence during the Civil War see, in addition to the books listed in note 7 above, Robin W. Winks, *Canada and the United States: The Civil War Years*, rev. ed. (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1960; Montreal: Harvest House, 1971); Brian Jenkins, *Britain and the War for the Union*, 2 vols. (Montreal: McGill Queen's University Press, 1974-1980).

<sup>10</sup> Melville, "Canada and Sea Power," 69-72. *The Active or Volunteer Militia Force List, 30<sup>th</sup> April 1863* (Quebec: George Desbarats, 1863), 37-8 shows seven "Volunteer Marine and Naval Companies," at Kingston (organized 31 January 1862), Garden Island (organized 16 January 1863), Oakville (organized 31 January 1862), Hamilton (organized 31 January 1862), Dunville (organized 31 January 1862), Port Stanley (organized 31 January 1862), Toronto (organized 3 July 1862). Note that *The Globe* (Toronto), 27 December 1862, 2, reports a banquet by the Toronto "Naval Brigade" celebrating the first anniversary of their formation, showing the unit was actually raised, though not officially recognized, at the time of the *Trent* crisis.

<sup>11</sup> Captain Richard Collinson, "Canada Lakes. Memorandum on the Assistance which can be rendered to the Province of Canada by His Majesty's Navy in the event of War with the United

This was one of the leading items in the terms of reference the War Office sent in February 1862 instructing members of the British Army staff in Canada who were investigating the defence measures needed to counter an invasion.<sup>12</sup> This “commission” was headed by Colonel Sir William Gordon, the commanding Royal Engineer in the Canadian garrison, a fortification expert who had given distinguished service in the siege operations during the Crimean War. Soon after the Admiralty dispatched from England another Crimean War hero, Captain John Bythesea, VC, RN, to serve as the naval member.<sup>13</sup> The commission’s report underscored what experience in the War of 1812 had demonstrated and every staff study since had reiterated: “success of the military operations undertaken for the defence of Canada must depend on the naval supremacy on the lakes.”<sup>14</sup> The development of American port facilities and shipping in Lake Michigan would allow them to dominate the upper lakes, but everything possible should be done, including widening and deepening the Canadian canals, to secure Lakes Erie and Ontario. Forces recommended included three iron clad “batteries” on each of these lakes, with sixteen smaller wooden gunboats on Ontario and twenty on Lake Erie. For the strategically crucial waters of the St. Lawrence between Quebec and Montreal the force recommended included two line of battle ships, two corvettes, three ironclad batteries and seventeen gunboats. These vessels would have a total of some 9000 crew, and carry a total of 550 guns. In addition, there would inevitably be a race to arm suitable commercial vessels on the lakes. To meet this and other contingencies, the commissioners recommended the enrolment of Canadian seamen on the lakes and St. Lawrence into an organization of “Naval Volunteers on the same principle as the Royal Naval Reserve in England; and that, for purposes of drill, a ship of war should, in time of peace, be stationed at Quebec, and also in each lakes, the one-gun vessels allowed by Treaty.”<sup>15</sup>

British Army fortifications expert Lieutenant Colonel W.F.D. Jervois reconnoitred the frontier in the fall of 1863, making a fresh assessment in light of the growing power and success of the Union Army and naval forces.<sup>16</sup> He warned that without the support of a greatly expanded and improved Canadian Militia the British garrisons could not hold Canada West, and would risk defeat in detail.

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States,” 8 September 1861, Library and Archives Canada (hereafter, LAC), reel B-2358, The National Archives, London (TNA), ADM 128/24, ff. 73-79

<sup>12</sup> J.F. Burgoyne, inspector general of fortifications, “Memorandum...on the Defence of Canada,” 15 February 1862, *ibid.*, f. 45.

<sup>13</sup> Newcastle to Monck, 28 February 1862, LAC, Governor General numbered files, Record Group (RG) 7-G21, reel T-826, box 174, file 165 pt.1; <http://www.vconline.org.uk/john-bythesea-vc/4586033619>.

<sup>14</sup> “Report of the Commissioners...Defences of Canada,” 1 September 1862, LAC, reel B-2358, TNA, ADM 128/24, f. 11.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, f. 37.

<sup>16</sup> Timothy Crick, *Ramparts of Empire: The Fortifications of Sir William Jervois, Royal Engineer, 1821-1897* (Exeter, UK: Exeter Press, 2012), chap. 6. Jervois also visited fortifications and naval establishments at Portland, ME, Boston, New York and Washington to gather intelligence on US developments in artillery and defences.

Despite Canadian protests, in the spring of 1864 the War Office authorized the withdrawal of troops from the western posts to Montreal and Quebec City, key strategic positions that could be reinforced from the sea.<sup>17</sup>

The Colonial Office dispatched Jervois's report to Canada in August 1864 as the opening salvo in an effort to extract specific commitments for military action by the province.<sup>18</sup> The government that received the report was different from the unstable administrations of 1862-63. John A. Macdonald, Conservative leader of Canada West, and George-Étienne Cartier, Conservative or *Bleu* leader of Canada East had joined with George Brown, the Reform leader in Canada West, in the "Great Coalition" that pressed for the federation of the British North American colonies. The ministers met with Jervois immediately after the inter-colonial conference at Quebec of October 1864 that laid out the details of the proposed union. They questioned him closely, especially about the prospect for holding territory north of Lake Ontario if, in addition to expansion of the Canadian militia, the main ports were fortified and a naval flotilla was committed on the lake (Jervois had advised in view of expanding US shipbuilding resources on the upper lakes it was wisest to concentrate all naval efforts on Lake Ontario).<sup>19</sup>

Jervois produced a new report, in November, based on the assumption that Canada would bear the major share of the costs for defending the western districts.

In a previous Report on the defence Canada, dated February last... the defensive measures proposed extended only as far westward as Montreal, whilst the present Report includes a scheme for the defence of the western districts.

It should, therefore, be observed that the circumstances under which the first Report were prepared differ from those which now exist.

Last year there appeared to be no probability that measures would be taken by which a Naval force could be placed on any of the lakes, and without such force it would be impossible to suggest any plan for the defence of Upper Canada [Canada West].

Now, however, it is understood that the Government of Canada contemplate making provision for a fortified Harbour and Naval Establishment at Kingston, with a view to the Naval force being placed on Lake Ontario for the protection of the western districts...<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Cardwell to Monck, 19 July 1864, enclosing correspondence confirming the withdrawal and Monck to Cardwell, 26 August 1864, enclosing "Report of a Committee of the [Canadian] Executive Council," 26 August 1864, TNA, CO 880/6, ff. 13-15.

<sup>18</sup> Cardwell to Monck, 6 August 1864, *ibid.*, f. 6.

<sup>19</sup> McDougall to Jervois, 18 October 1864, LAC, Sir John A. Macdonald fonds, Manuscript Group (MG) 26 A, vol. 100, pp. 39423-4. See also, Lucy Jervois to Sir Georges Cartier, 28 December 1872, *ibid.*, vol. 203, pp. 86012-24, an account of Jervois's missions to Canada provided by his wife in the hope Cartier would mention to Lord Kimberley, the colonial secretary, how helpful and energetic Jervois had been.

<sup>20</sup> Jervois to McDougall, 9 November 1864, *ibid.*, vol. 100, p. 39423.

The main body of the report, after explaining the impossibility of moving ironclad vessels of the type needed through the existing canals, urged the Canadian government to undertake construction of these warships.

To obtain ... command, it would be necessary to adopt some arrangement by which a few armour-plated gun-boats could readily be made available on the Lake. To this point therefore, it is submitted that the Canadian government should especially direct their attention. Probably about six such vessels might suffice at the commencement of a war. It must be observed that a great deal depends upon Canada taking the initiative in this matter. If armour-plated gun-boats could be brought into action on the Lake before the enemy had been able to launch any, his power of placing a naval force upon the Lake might be greatly diminished, if not destroyed.<sup>21</sup>

The Canadians immediately made a commitment to increase spending on the militia from the \$394,000 voted for 1865 to \$1 million without any conditions. They also agreed to cover the cost of the fortifications for Montreal (£443,000, approximately \$2,152,980.), the most urgent priority, and suggested they might be willing also to undertake the fortification of the lakes ports, Kingston, Toronto, and Hamilton (£511,000, approximately \$2,483,460.), a longer term project that depended upon the build up of a naval force. To finance this large fortification program the ministers asked that the British government provide a financial guarantee that would allow Canada to raise funds at a reasonable interest rate; the bad state of relations with the US had reduced the province's credit rating.

At the same time, the ministers ignored Jervois's recommendation that Canada provide the naval force for Lake Ontario, declaring that a British responsibility: "it is not doubted that Her Majesty's naval forces could be made available."<sup>22</sup> The Canadians drew a clear distinction between imperial – maritime – interests and capabilities, and Canada's primarily continental interests and challenges. Here the Canadians raised what would become a leitmotif in answering British complaints about inadequate contributions to the empire's military strength, the very large investment the new federation would make in railway development. Canadian railway construction would allow the empire to project its maritime-based strength across the continent.<sup>23</sup> There was, in 1864-65, no need to explain the argument; British Army reinforcements that arrived in the winter of 1861-62, after the freezing of the St. Lawrence, had to make a 500-kilometre overland trek by foot and in sleighs from Saint John, New Brunswick to the existing railhead at Rivière-du-Loup in Canada East.

The deliberations over Jervois's report took place in the midst of crisis in

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<sup>21</sup> Jervois, "Report on the Defence of Canada," 10 November 1864, *ibid.*, p. 39435.

<sup>22</sup> "Copy of a Report...Executive Council...16th day of November 1864," TNA, CO 880/6, ff. 8-9.

<sup>23</sup> Executive Council, "Report of the 3<sup>rd</sup> February 1865," LAC, State Minute Books of the Executive Council, RG1-E1, vol. 90, p. 76 and insertion at end of vol.



relations with the United States. On 19 September 1864, disguised Confederate agents who boarded the Detroit based passenger steamer *Philo Parsons* at Malden and Sandwich, Canada West, seized that vessel, and then a second American steamer *Island Queen* in Lake Erie off Middle Bass Island, Ohio. The Confederates scuttled both steamers. *Island Queen* drifted ashore and was recovered, and a crew member of *Philo Parsons* stopped the flooding of that vessel before she sank.<sup>24</sup> In reporting the incident to the Colonial Office, Lord Monck, the governor general, renewed an earlier appeal for the return of the Royal Navy to the lakes within the limits allowed by the Rush-Bagot agreement so that officers with clear legal authority would be on the lakes to enforce the empire's neutrality and thereby avoid confrontation with the United States.<sup>25</sup> Almost immediately there was a more serious breach of neutrality. On 19 October Confederate agents based in Canada East raided the town of St. Albans, Vermont, robbing three banks, killing one civilian and injuring another with gunfire. The Confederates escaped back across the border and were apprehended by Canadian authorities, but several were later released by a Montreal magistrate. The US government, denouncing weak British neutrality measures that effectively supported the Confederacy, gave notice of withdrawal from the Rush-Bagot agreement of 1817 for disarmament on the lakes, and from the 1854 agreement for reciprocal trade between the United States and British North America. At the same time the US government imposed a system of passports for crossing the international border. Canadian hopes for an early achievement of confederation, and with it a concerted common defence effort, were then dashed by the defeat of the New Brunswick government by anti-confederationists in that colony's election of 28 February to 18 March 1865.<sup>26</sup>

Looking disaster in the face, the Canadians dispatched a high-powered delegation comprising Cartier, and finance minister Alexander Tilloch Galt, who arrived in London late April 1865, and Macdonald and Brown who followed in early May. They sought British help in advancing the confederation cause in New Brunswick and the other colonies, immediate joint action to strengthen the defences, and support in persuading the Americans to reconsider their withdrawal from the reciprocal trade agreement. Galt, in preliminary meetings, horrified the colonial secretary, Sir Edward Cardwell, with proposals that included immediate expansion of the militia and the British garrisons to meet an early crisis, carrying out the Jervis plan for additional fortifications, and improvements to the Canadian infrastructure including completion of an inter-colonial railway from Halifax to Quebec City, and enlargement of the canals that gave access to Lake Ontario to

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<sup>24</sup> Seward to Adams, 24 October 1864, TNA, FO 414/27, f. 4. See also John Bell, *Rebels on the Great Lakes: Confederate Naval Commando Operations Launched from Canada, 1863-1864* (Toronto: Dundurn, 2011), chaps. 6-9.

<sup>25</sup> Monck to Cardwell, 26 September 1864, TNA, CO 880/5, f. 452.

<sup>26</sup> Macdonald, Cartier, Brown, and Galt to Monck, 12 July 1865, LAC, Macdonald fonds, vol. 52, pp. 20706-20712, the Canadian report on the negotiations in London in April-June 1865, includes a good account of the background. See also the British report on the negotiations: Cardwell to Monck, 17 June 1865, *ibid.*, pp. 20712-15.

allow the passage of larger gunboats. He estimated the cost, to be shared by the Canadian and British governments, at £8 million to £10 millions. He also urged the British immediately to deploy warships on the St. Lawrence and Lake Ontario, and strengthen the RN forces in the western Atlantic to counter the American ironclad fleet.<sup>27</sup>

The British were in favour of confederation, willing to support transfer of the Hudson's Bay Company lands, already urging the Americans to withdraw the notice terminating the reciprocity agreement, and willing to guarantee a loan to help the Canadians finance the fortifications. The sticking point was a naval force for Lake Ontario. The Admiralty thought Jervis had greatly understated the need. The six ironclad vessels he recommended were the least number that would be required, and they would have to be considerably larger vessels that would cost more than the £300,000 he estimated. Enlarging the canals to allow passage of the type of vessels needed would be a vast and long-term enterprise. The only practical solution was to build the ironclads on the lake, which would require the establishment of well-staffed shipyard at Kingston.<sup>28</sup>

The striking feature of the London talks was the great importance the Canadians attached to the flotilla for Lake Ontario, and their equally dogged insistence it was an imperial – not a Canadian – obligation.<sup>29</sup> Most remarkable was the willingness of the Canadians immediately to undertake the fortification of Montreal, Kingston, Toronto and Hamilton, a vast enterprise by Canadian standards, if the British made a firm commitment to provide the flotilla. The negotiations dragged into June 1865. Cardwell's final published report was frank about the difficulties. He made it clear that the British government was unwilling to take any naval action on Lake Ontario that might violate the Rush-Bagot agreement (he did not mention that the US government had just at this same time suggested it would not act on the notice of abrogation and let the agreement stand). In the event of war, Britain would "discharge its duty," but action would depend upon the "exigencies" of the specific situation. "This was," he concluded, "the only assurance the Canadian Ministers could expect, or we could give."<sup>30</sup> The Canadians had been willing to have the province alone shoulder the burden of the fortifications as a *quid pro quo* for a firm British commitment on naval action. In the absence of that commitment they

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<sup>27</sup> "Memorandum of Interview with Mr. Cardwell on 26<sup>th</sup> April, 1865," LAC, Macdonald fonds, vol. 161, pp. 65220-65230, and "Unofficial and Confidential Memorandum of an interview with Mr. Cardwell on the 27th April," *ibid.*, pp. 65232-65235.

<sup>28</sup> "Memorandum by the Defence Committee on the Report of Lieutenant-Colonel Jervis on the Defence of Canada," 17 May 1865, *ibid.*, vol. 100, pp. 39488-9.

<sup>29</sup> See, for example, unsigned, undated British draft refusing to commit to place gun boats on Lake Ontario, *ibid.*, vol. 161, pp. 65236-8; unsigned memorandum expressing disappointment in British refusal to make a commitment to place gun boats on Lake Ontario, 26 May 1865, *ibid.*, pp. 65240-4; Canadian draft stating that if there are not satisfactory assurances about the provision of gun boats on Lake Ontario, Canada cannot make an early start on the fortifications at Montreal and to the west, 2 June 1865, *ibid.*, pp. 65247-51; unsigned, undated memorandum regretting that British Cabinet has not agreed to the early provision of a flotilla on Lake Ontario, *ibid.*, 65266-71.

<sup>30</sup> Cardwell to Monck, 17 June 1865, *ibid.*, vol. 52, p. 20714.

announced their intention to delay the program until after confederation had been achieved so that the united colonies could share the financial obligation.<sup>31</sup>

### **Gunboats to meet the Fenian threat, 1866-1869**

Although the American forces quickly demobilized in the wake of the Civil War, a new threat emerged in the fall and winter of 1865. Good intelligence indicated that the Fenian Brotherhood, which included many battle-hardened veterans of the Civil War, was preparing to invade the northern colonies to force the liberation of Ireland from British rule. Fears that the Fenians, with the spring thaw, might seize US government revenue vessels, or arm civilian steamers, for attacks on the lakes and St. Lawrence brought the provincial government to call for British naval support early in April 1866. This demand for help laid out the provincial government's interpretation of the talks in London in 1865. The province's commitment was for land defence, and was fully being met with the expansion and improved readiness of the militia. Naval defence was entirely a British responsibility: the threat was wholly the result of the province's membership in the empire.<sup>32</sup> Nevertheless Macdonald advised Gilbert McMicken, the police magistrate in Windsor, Canada West, who had a special commission to gather intelligence on the Fenians, to identify suitable steamers that the province could charter on short notice "in case of any predatory attempts by water."<sup>33</sup>

Lieutenant-General Sir John Michel, commander in chief in British North America, had already in February and again in March made urgent appeals for the deployment of gunboats to cover the 290-kilometre frontier between Montreal and Kingston. Only with such a naval force could the vital river and adjacent rail and road communications west of Montreal be sufficiently secure that he could spare troops from his 9000 British regular and 10,000 Canadian militia to protect Canada West. Vice Admiral Sir James Hope, commander in chief of the North America and West Indies Station, made plans to deploy warships from Halifax to Quebec and Montreal whose crews would include personnel to operate civilian steamers fitted with armament. In addition the Admiralty dispatched four newly completed Britomart class wood-built steam gunboats from England to Admiral Hope.<sup>34</sup> Only 105 feet long at the keel, with a displacement of 270 tons, they would be able to transit the St Lawrence canals in the event they were needed for border protection. Each carried two heavy guns, and a crew of about forty officers and ratings.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Macdonald et al. to Monck, 12 July 1865, *ibid.*, p. 20709.

<sup>32</sup> Executive Council minute, 7 April 1866, LAC, RG1-E1, vol. 91, pp. 351-7.

<sup>33</sup> Macdonald to McMicken, 21 May 1866, LAC, Macdonald fonds, vol. 512, pp. 244-5.

<sup>34</sup> Michel to Monck, 14 March 1866, LAC, reel B-2358, TNA, ADM 128/24, ff 112- 117; same to same, 23 March 1866, *ibid.*, ff. 131-3; Romaine, Admiralty to Rogers, Colonial Office, 13 April 1866, *ibid.*, ff. 141-7.

<sup>35</sup> Of the three that later served in the lakes, *Britomart* had two 68-pounder smooth bores, *Heron* two 112-pounder Armstrong breech loaders, and *Cherub* two 68-pounder rifled muzzle-loaders. Cheryl MacDonald, *Gunboats on the Great Lakes, 1866-1868* (Toronto: James Lorimer, 2017), 96-7.

When the emergency came, there was not adequate warning to implement these measures, and it was the province's own naval companies that initially responded. On 1 June 1866 a Fenian force of 1500 men crossed from Buffalo, took the town of Fort Erie, and on 2 June defeated at nearby Ridgeway two militia battalions that had been hastily dispatched from Toronto and Hamilton. Lachlan McCallum, a shipbuilder and shipowner who had organized the naval company at Dunnville on Lake Erie, put out in his own steamer, *W.T. Robb*, crewed by the naval militia, and with a militia field artillery battery on board. The steamer reached Fort Erie on 2 June, and captured Fenian stragglers. Then, as a result of an error on the part of the militia commander, Lieutenant Colonel J.S. Dennis, many of the naval company and artilleryman went ashore in the face of a large part of the Fenian force who had just defeated the Toronto and Hamilton battalions. Out-numbered by as much as ten to one, the people from *Robb* did a fighting retreat. As the Canadians exhausted their ammunition, thirty-six of them, nearly half of the force, were captured. Still, the steamer was able to bring out the remainder and transport them, together with the fifty-nine Fenian prisoners still on board, to safety at Port Colborne.<sup>36</sup>

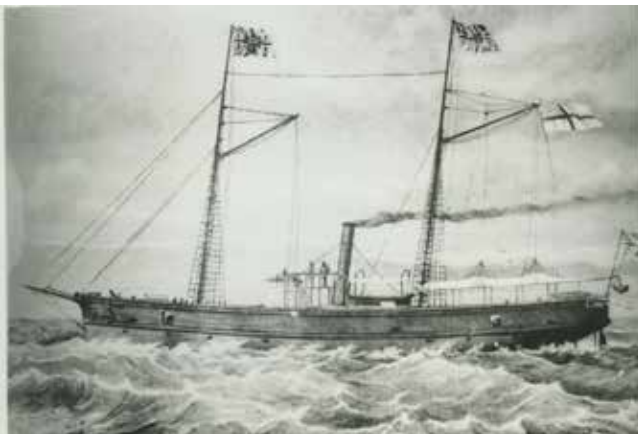
This short, intense operation marked not only the high point, but virtually the end of the story of the Canadian naval companies. The wooden steam frigate HMS *Aurora* rushed from Halifax to Quebec City, while the wooden steam corvette HMS *Pylades* went through to Montreal, and personnel from their crews took over four steamers chartered by the province for patrols on the St. Lawrence River and eastern Lake Ontario, working with local shipyards to fit improvised armour and light artillery pieces provided by the British Army. Royal Navy crews arrived by rail at Windsor on 7 June, and took charge of the steamer *Rescue* that had been outfitted by the Toronto naval militia company and sailed by them through the Welland Canal to Windsor in response to reports of Fenian concentrations in the Detroit area. The Royal Navy personnel also crewed the larger *Michigan*, which the provincial government chartered from its US owners in Detroit. The bitterly disappointed crew from the Toronto naval company returned home and were immediately demobilized. In late July and early August 1866 three Britomart class gunboats entered the lakes.<sup>37</sup>

The Royal Navy continued these arrangements in the navigation seasons of 1867 and 1868, but reluctantly. The St. Lawrence and Great Lakes patrols were a drain on the resources of the North America and West Indies Station, brought increased desertion of personnel to the United States (a chronic problem on the Royal Navy's North America and West Indies Station because of the high level of American wages), and appeared to be less necessary as the US government

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<sup>36</sup> Peter Vronsky, "Combat, Memory and Remembrance in Confederation Era Canada: The Hidden History of the Battle of Ridgeway, June 2, 1866" (Ph.D. thesis, University of Toronto, 2011), 44-6, 138-147, 235-266.

<sup>37</sup> de Horsey to Hope, letter of proceedings no. 43, 7 June 1866, LAC, reel B-479, TNA, CO 42/660, ff. 50-4; John A. Macdonald, *Troublous Times in Canada: A History of the Fenian Raids of 1866 and 1870* (Toronto: the author, 1910), 100-3; MacDonald, *Gunboats on the Great Lakes*, 101-5.



Provincial gunboat *Prince Alfred*, formerly the propeller *Michigan*. Chartered and then purchased by the Province of Canada, the vessel was crewed by the Royal Navy in 1866-68, and then operated by the Canadian Militia until 1874. (Great Lakes Maritime Collection, Alpena County George N. Fletcher Public Library)

exerted more effective border control, including patrols by its own revenue vessels which cooperated with the British ships. Perhaps most important was that the US government had never acted on its notice of 23 November 1864 for abrogation of Rush-Bagot agreement.<sup>38</sup> British policy was to reduce or withdraw the gunboat force as soon as possible to avoid giving the Americans any pretext for again renouncing the agreement, or for building up their naval establishments on the lakes. The idea was that the Canadians should themselves operate lightly armed craft, meeting the Rush-Bagot's provision for "revenue" vessels, that would be sufficient for "police" style operations against the reduced threat that the Fenians now seemed to pose.

In February 1867 Lieutenant General Michel urged the provincial government – as the 1862 defence commission had done – to establish "the nucleus of a small Canadian Navy" for operations along these lines on the inland waters.<sup>39</sup> The idea once again went nowhere. Although the Canadian government had purchased *Rescue* and *Michigan* in July 1866 (renaming the latter *Prince Alfred*), which had proved well suited for policing the lakes, this was strictly an economy measure, cheaper than continuing monthly charters of the vessels. When the owners of two of the steamers operating in the St. Lawrence and eastern Lake Ontario agreed to reduced charter rates, the government cancelled plans to purchase additional vessels. The Canadian steamers were administered on a per diem contract that in modern parlance "out-sourced" the responsibility to G.H. Wyatt, Toronto ship owner and shipping agent. Wyatt engaged civilian personnel on a monthly basis to navigate the vessels and operate their steam plants, and organized supplies and maintenance for the flotilla by private firms. He was truly a one-man department who kept the government at a safe remove from the administration of marine forces.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Henry Sherman Boutell, "Is the Rush-Bagot Convention Immortal?," *The North American Review*, 173 (September 1901): 340-1

<sup>39</sup> Michel to Hope, 13 February 1867, LAC, RG7-G21, vol. 27, file 107.

<sup>40</sup> Walter Lewis and Roger Sarty, "G.H. Wyatt: Agent, Shipowner, Entrepreneur, and One-Man

The confederation of the British North American colonies to create the Dominion of Canada in 1867 changed nothing, except that Wyatt managed the gunboats under the new federal Department of Militia and Defence. The federal militia act of 1868 extended the volunteer militia system of the pre-confederation province of Canada to the other colonies, and the western territories. Although the act echoed the earlier provincial legislation with a provision for “naval companies,” there was no action. By the time of confederation the last of the Canadian provincial companies had disbanded.<sup>41</sup>

Vice Admiral Rodney Mundy, Hope’s successor as commander in chief, North America and West Indies, withdrew the three Britomart class gunboats from the lakes in October 1868. In the previous two winters these vessels had remained on station, frozen in at their moorings, with their upper decks covered in substantial wooden housings, so that they would be immediately available on the opening of navigation. Mundy, however, worried that the immobile vessels were themselves vulnerable to attack, and noted Admiralty policy was to remove vessels from the northern climes in winter to Bermuda, where they could be better maintained; two warships were kept ready for quick deployment to the north in the event of need.<sup>42</sup>

Mundy did not think that the warships should return to the St. Lawrence and the lakes. The Canadians should “take upon themselves the charge of these inner waters.” He noted that the “attention of the Admiralty has frequently been called to the necessity of some permanent arrangement being made to provide for this service by the dominion government, but as long as they can get us to do the work for them, they will not undertake it themselves.”<sup>43</sup>

That was the attitude of the Liberal government of William E. Gladstone that came into office in December 1868. In April 1869, the new colonial secretary, the Earl of Granville, confident that the “annoyance arising from the organization of Fenianism in the United States is fast disappearing,” announced large scale withdrawals of British troops, and threw responsibility for the defence of the lakes onto the Canadian government, dismissing their claim that the dominion “has no power to commission vessels of war.” That power, he noted, had been provided in the Colonial Naval Defence Act of 1865, and he chided the Canadians for failing

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Navy Department” (forthcoming).

<sup>41</sup> In the early 1870s the only other unit, a volunteer “naval brigade” at Halifax in Nova Scotia, converted to garrison artillery in the new federal land forces, Melville, “Canada and Sea Power,” 92-4, 107-116.

<sup>42</sup> Mundy to secretary of the Admiralty, “Commander in Chief’s visit to Canada,” 30 September 1868, LAC, reel B-2366, TNA, ADM 128/63, ff. 153-157. Mundy also withdrew HMS *Constance*, which had been stationed at Quebec City since the spring to provide crews to the provincial gunboats and support the St. Lawrence and Great Lakes flotillas. No warship had been stationed at Montreal that year because of the demands of fisheries protection patrols in the Gulf of St. Lawrence. Mundy to Monck, 28 March 1868 and Monck to Mundy, 16 April 1868, *ibid.*, ff. 58-64.

<sup>43</sup> Mundy, “Memorandum on the North American and West Indian Station for the information of Rear-Admiral George Greville Wellesley, C.B.,” [June 1869], LAC, reel B-2479, ADM 128/114, f. 221.

to explain “in what respect [the act] is found to be imperfect.”<sup>44</sup>

The Colonial Naval Defence Act had been inspired by the desire of the Australian colony of Victoria to raise a naval force for coastal defence, but Canada took no notice of the legislation on this or any other occasion.<sup>45</sup> As C.P. Stacey concluded : “The Canadians were deeply vexed by the withdrawal policy... they were as determined as ever to keep their military expenditure with narrow limits, and (above all) to avoid any action which could possibly be regarded as implying acceptance of an enlargement of the Dominion’s defensive responsibilities.”<sup>46</sup> Granville allowed that the Royal Navy would be willing in the coming season to crew three gun boats (presumably to come within the terms of the Rush-Bagot agreement), but at Canadian expense. For all the Canadian ministers’ repeated warnings about the continuing Fenian menace, they did not take up this offer. Nor did the Canadian government do anything else until a new alarm in September, when it brought the two steamers purchased in 1866 briefly back into operation. Again Wyatt made the arrangements, hiring civilian operating personnel. Militia artillery provided the fighting crew for *Prince Alfred* the only gun boat that actually made patrols, between Goderich on Lake Huron and Windsor. The alarm had passed by the time *Rescue* at Kingston was ready to sail.<sup>47</sup>

### **Fisheries protection on the Atlantic, 1866-1871**

Stanley did not include in his work the British-Canadian controversies over naval protection for the east coast fisheries in 1868-1871. As in the case of the inland waters, Canada was willing to deploy armed ships when necessary, but not in any way that might imply the creation of naval forces as provided for in the Colonial Naval Defence Act. In the early 1850s the Maritime colonies had deployed lightly armed civilian vessels to enforce the Anglo-US agreement of 1818 that prohibited American fishing within British territorial waters. Under colonial pressure, the Royal Navy took over the fisheries patrols and this more effective action persuaded the US to negotiate the reciprocal trade agreement of 1854 with the colonies in exchange for access by American fishermen to the inshore fisheries and colonial ports.<sup>48</sup>

With the American renunciation of the agreement, which took effect in March 1866, the colonies intended again to close access to the inshore fisheries and ports to compel the Americans to revive reciprocal trade. The British, seeking to ease

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<sup>44</sup> Granville to Young 14 April 1869 in Canada, Parliament, *Sessional Papers, 1871*, vol. 5, paper no. 46, p. 13.

<sup>45</sup> B.A. Knox, “Colonial Influence on Imperial Policy, 1858-1866: Victoria and the Colonial Naval Defence Act, 1865,” *Australian Historical Studies* vol. 11, no. 41 (1963): 61-79.

<sup>46</sup> *Canada and the British Army*, 233.

<sup>47</sup> Lewis and Sarty, “Wyatt.”

<sup>48</sup> Ronald Duea Tallman, “Warships and Mackerel: The North Atlantic Fisheries in Canadian-American Relations, 1867-1877” (Ph.D. thesis, University of Maine, 1971), 31-6. A basic source on the fisheries dispute.

tensions with the US and resolve the outstanding issues from the Civil War, were relieved when the province of Canada persuaded the more belligerent Maritime colonies to accept a system of licences that the American fishing vessels could purchase as a stopgap to enforcement of exclusion. The charge for the licences would start at \$.50 per ton for the registered tonnage of the vessel, and double each year as a means of increasing pressure on the US government. The Admiralty undertook to patrol the fisheries, and passed on to Admiral Hope cautions from the Foreign Office and Colonial Office. Enforcement of the regulations was to be in a "most conciliatory spirit," under the orders "of some officer selected by you in whose temper and judgement you have full confidence." He was to urge the colonial governments to place any fisheries cruisers they might operate under Royal Navy command.<sup>49</sup>

One of the new departments of the federal government was marine and fisheries under Peter Mitchell, a supporter of confederation from New Brunswick, and ardent advocate of fisheries protection. During the 1868 fishing season, when the cost of licences went up to \$2.00 per ton, sales of licences plummeted, and he received reports that unlicensed US vessels were nevertheless freely using Canadian ports. The Cabinet backed him, and asked that the Royal Navy more strictly enforce the exclusion of unlicensed vessels, a message delivered in person by William McDougall and Cartier during their mission to London to negotiate transfer of the Hudsons Bay Company lands.<sup>50</sup> The Admiralty, which had deployed four to five vessels on patrol compared to one or two by Canada, and those only on a part time basis,<sup>51</sup> informed the Colonial Office that fisheries protection was a "purely local" matter. The Canadians should organize their own fisheries patrol service under the Colonial Naval Defence Act, and in future pay for any warships assigned by the Royal Navy. Alarmed at the possibility of letting loose armed Canadian vessels on the American fishing fleets without Royal Navy oversight, the Colonial Office responded that tensions with the US were even worse than they had been in 1866, so there were large imperial interests at stake.<sup>52</sup> The Admiralty relented, and assigned four warships to fisheries protection in the 1869 season, and Canada again assigned only two,<sup>53</sup> despite British advice that the dominion should acquire additional patrol vessels. The Canadian government also rejected a

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<sup>49</sup> Romaine to Hope, despatch no. 190, 13 April 1866, LAC, B-2359, ADM 128/26, ff. 561-569.

<sup>50</sup> Canadian Privy Council order 879/9 October 1868, LAC, Privy Council Office fonds, RG2-A1a, vol. 262.

<sup>51</sup> Mundy to Admiralty, "Protection of the Fisheries," 6 May 1869, LAC, RG7-G21, reel T-195, vol. 33, file 130, pt. 1, reviews the large efforts of his command since 1866 and the paltry Canadian commitment.

<sup>52</sup> Landford to Admiralty, 19 May 1869 and attachments, *ibid.*

<sup>53</sup> Wellesley to Admiralty, "Canadian Fisheries Report ... for 1869," 18 November 1869, *ibid.* (one of the four British ships had to be withdrawn early in the season for other duties); for the reports of the two Canadian ships that carried out fisheries patrol see Canada, Parliament, *Sessional Papers, 1870*, vol. 4, paper no. 11, "Annual Report of Marine and Fisheries for the Year Ending 30<sup>th</sup> June 1869," appendices 3 (*La Canadienne*) and 16 (*Druid*).



renewed appeal from the Colonial Office and Admiral Mundy to place its vessels under Royal Navy command, arguing that the ships filled other national roles, such as maintenance of aids to navigation, in addition to fisheries patrols.<sup>54</sup>

A further drop in license sales, and the manifest failure of the existing policy of only warning, not arresting, vessels caught fishing illegally enabled Mitchell to win the support of his colleagues for exclusion of American vessels, which the British government ultimately accepted. For the 1870 season Mitchell increased the Canadian effort by chartering six fishing schooners, and crewing them with armed “preventive” personnel. This was the obvious solution for more rigorous enforcement. In February 1868 a Colonial Office aide memoire noted that Royal Navy captains engaged on the patrols had advised that their steam vessels were useless if the goal was actually to arrest vessels, as “our steamers are seen too far off” and suggested “that schooners looking like fishermen would accomplish that purpose better.” It was not, at that time, “advisable to attempt to catch out the Americans like a Revenue Schooner catches a smuggler,” but this was now precisely what the Canadians were going to do.<sup>55</sup>

The Canadian government did not organize the expanded fisheries protection force under the Colonial Naval Defence Act as the British had long urged, but rather as “Marine Police,” a civilian authority. At the same time the government appointed Captain Peter Astley Scott, a retired Royal Navy officer who had long served on the North America and West Indies Station, as commander of the force, and two other former Royal Navy officers to schooner commands.<sup>56</sup> Under pressure from the Canadian government, Vice Admiral Sir George Wellesley, Mundy’s successor as commander in chief, North America and West Indies, allowed the Canadian fisheries vessels to fly a pendant, the mark of a commissioned warship. He did so as a courtesy to Scott’s status as a retired officer, but sought the advice of the Admiralty, who ordered the practice to cease. The Admiralty then also relented to Canadian protests.<sup>57</sup> Canada thus had it both ways, effectively claiming naval status for its fisheries vessels to enable them better to carry out enforcement, but avoiding action under the Colonial Naval Defence Act, and, with it, Royal Navy control of Canadian government ships.

During the 1870 season the Canadian schooners seized twelve American schooners, and British warships another three. Admiral Wellesley commended the effectiveness of the Canadian schooners in detecting illegal fishing.<sup>58</sup> The arrests

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<sup>54</sup> Granville to Young, 21 June 1869, LAC, RG7-G21, reel T-195, vol. 33, file 130, pt. 1; Mundy to Young, 1 June 1869, *ibid.*; Canadian Privy Council minute approved 24 June 1869, *ibid.* The latter notes that the Canadian government had never complied with the earlier request in the Colonial Office despatch dated 14 April 1866.

<sup>55</sup> “AD 539 Canada,” [first initials on aide memoire dated 24 February 1868], LAC, reel B-488, TNA, CO 42/672, f.6.

<sup>56</sup> Canadian Privy Council Order 1006/ 8 January 1870, LAC, RG2-A1a, vol. 273.

<sup>57</sup> Mitchell to Macdonald, 23 May 1870, LAC, RG7-G21, reel T-195, vol. 34, file 130, pt. 2b; Kimberley to Young, 18 July 1870, *ibid.*, vol. 33, file 130 pt. 2a.

<sup>58</sup> Canada, Parliament, *Sessional Papers, 1887*, vol. 15, paper no. 16a, “Special Report on the

had the good effect of bringing the fisheries issue onto the agenda of the conference held in Washington in 1871 to resolve outstanding British-US disputes. Sir John A. Macdonald, who sat as one of the British commissioners, hoped to use access to the fisheries as a lever to persuade the Americans to restore the reciprocal trade agreement of 1854. He did not succeed on the trade issue, but the US did agree to pay compensation for renewed access to the fisheries. Canada disbanded the Marine Police when this settlement came into force in 1873, but a precedent had been set for Canada's employment of armed forces at sea: civilian government vessels under national control, led by retired British naval officers in Canadian employment, and backed up by the Royal Navy.

The Treaty of Washington of 1871 was a turning point in Anglo-American, and therefore Canadian-American, relations. Certainly that was the intention of the British government, which withdrew the last of the army garrisons from the Canadian interior in November 1871, leaving only the garrison of about 2000 troops at Halifax. The British government classed Halifax as an "imperial" station because it was essential to the Royal Navy's dominance in the Atlantic; the incidental, but vital, security naval forces operating from Halifax gave to Canada became the primary protection provided by Britain.

With the easing of border tensions, the Canadian government scaled back its defence commitment to an annual expenditure of \$1 million on the militia, the level the province of Canada had established in the panic during the fall of 1864 that now became a benchmark for the land forces in the whole of the federation. The government had fulfilled its promise in the 1865 negotiations with Britain by passing legislation for the construction of fortifications at Montreal, Kingston, Toronto, and Hamilton through the new federal parliament in Ottawa, but never started that project, persuading Britain in 1873 to transfer its financial guarantee to construction of the intercolonial railway that would link Halifax and Quebec City. In 1873 as well, the militia department disposed of the gunboat *Rescue*, and then the *Prince Alfred* in the following year. Thus ended Canada's first navy, despite the favourable comments by senior British Army officers on Wyatt's efficiency and the effectiveness of the vessels, which, with their mobility served as force multiplier for land units assigned for border security.<sup>59</sup>

### **The challenge of coastal defence on the Atlantic and Pacific, 1878-1897**

Stanley provided a full account of the Canada's next venture into maritime forces, in 1878-1883, initiated by Lieutenant General Sir Edward Selby Smyth, the first of a series of British Army officers engaged by the Canadian government to command the land militia. Selby Smyth proposed the organization of a naval reserve force that could be trained in older warships provided by the Royal Navy; although

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Fisheries Protection Service of Canada, *During the Season of 1886*, xiv-xix; Wellesley to Young, 29 September 1870, LAC, RG7-G21, reel T-195, vol. 33, file 130, pt. 2a.

<sup>59</sup> Lewis and Sarty, "Wyatt."

no longer suitable for front-line service the vessels would still be effective for local defence. These efforts culminated in the ill-fated transfer to Canada of the steam corvette HMS *Charybdis* in 1880. She proved to be nearly worn out. The cost of bringing her into serviceable condition was far more than the Canadian government was willing to contemplate, and she was quietly returned to the Royal Navy in 1883.

Stanley does not mention that Selby Smyth initially proposed the training ship idea in response to the advice to Canada of the Admiralty during the war scare with Russia in 1877-78. In May of the latter year, the Canadian government received word that a steamer carrying Russian seamen and naval equipment had arrived at Ellsworth, Maine, evidently for the purpose of arming chartered vessels to prey on trade in Canadian waters in the event of war. The Canadian government appealed to the Admiralty for protection, and got the reply the British fleet would have to focus on the defeat of the main Russian fleet, and could not spare ships for local defence. Canada should avail herself of the Colonial Naval Defence Act to crew steamers in the large dominion merchant marine for trade defence; Britain would provide the armament for the vessels.<sup>60</sup>

Another important aspect of the story was that the Canadian government was no more keen to take the responsibility for naval defence than in the crises of the 1860s. It was Lord Lorne, who became governor general in 1879 and was alarmed at the weakening of military ties between Canada and Britain, who pushed through the transfer of *Charybdis*, but he quickly became aware of the government's resistance to naval organization. He won the very grudging acceptance of the Cabinet for the scheme only by promoting the vessel as a school for the general training of civilian seamen, a measure that he argued would strengthen the federal government's authority with respect to the provinces in the control of marine resources.<sup>61</sup>

In fact, the outcome in Canada of the Russian sea raider scare was a further commitment to land defence. One of the terms for British Columbia's entry into confederation in 1871 was the dominion government's promise to use its influence to ensure the Royal Navy continued to maintain the base for its Pacific station at Esquimalt, on the southern tip of Vancouver Island. The base was undefended, and the new risk of fast steam cruisers making a surprise raid brought the militia department to despatch artillerymen from the small permanent force to erect earthen shore batteries where they mounted heavy guns from the Royal Navy's stocks. The militia department then raised a volunteer militia artillery unit to provide a

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<sup>60</sup> Hicks Beach to Dufferin, 8 July 1878, enclosing Robert Hall, Admiralty to under-secretary of state for the colonies, 10 June 1878, LAC, Department of Militia and Defence archives, RG9-IIA1, vol. 493, docket 04630 in file "Defences of Atlantic Ports 1878-1887."

<sup>61</sup> Lorne to Smith, Admiralty, 17 August 1879, LAC, Sir John Douglas Sutherland Campbell, Marquess of Lorne and 9<sup>th</sup> Duke of Argyll collection, MG27-1B4, reel A-717, pp. 1094-8; Lorne to Macdonald, 6 October 1880, *ibid.*, pp. 1302-3; Lorne to Kimberley, 29 October 1880, *ibid.*, pp. 1311-14.

garrison. Following a further Anglo-Russian crisis and renewed cruiser scare in 1885, the department raised a permanent force artillery company for service at Esquimalt, and erected barracks at Work Point. When it proved impossible for the department properly to sustain such a small and distant outpost, the government entered into prolonged and tortuous negotiations with Britain to supply a garrison and modern fortifications on the basis of two governments sharing the costs. In 1893 a detachment of Royal Marine Artillery took over Work Point Barracks from the departing Canadian unit, and modern fortifications were completed in 1897.<sup>62</sup>

This was a small corner of a large British and colonial effort to defend the empire's naval bases and coaling stations in face of the steam revolution at sea. British naval mobility was now dependent upon coaling stations that had to have defences fully prepared for rapid mobilization in view of the danger of surprise attack by fast enemy steamships. At Halifax, the Royal Navy's well fortified station in Nova Scotia, Canada agreed to assign volunteer militia units in Nova Scotia to reinforce the British Army garrison of about 2000 troops in the event of war. Starting in 1888, local militia units began to participate in annual fortress mobilization exercises. Here again the Canadian government carefully confined its military effort to land forces, in this case for harbour defences that would facilitate operations by British warships, much as in its offer in the 1864-65 crisis to fortify the Lake Ontario ports in exchange for a Royal Navy commitment to the inland waters.

### **The soldiers promote a naval reserve – again, 1896-1902**

For the period from the *Charybdis* debacle until the events of 1909 that triggered the founding of the Royal Canadian Navy in 1910, Stanley highlighted the repeated rejection by Canadian governments of new initiatives for colonial payment of subsidies to support the Royal Navy. Those initiatives arose, as had the Colonial Naval Defence of Act of 1865, from the Australian colonies' worries at their isolation from the main strength of the Royal Navy, a situation dramatically different than Canada's location close by the heart of British naval power. Reservations about the usefulness of the Australian states' small local naval defence forces created in the 1860s gave rise to the agreement of 1887 whereby the Australian states and New Zealand paid a subsidy to the British government partly to defray the costs of a Royal Navy "auxiliary squadron" of five cruisers and two gunboats to augment the small British force on the Australia station.

More prosaic concerns – violations of territorial waters by American fishing vessels – confirmed the Canadian government's view that the country's needs were met by civil marine services. In 1885 the United States abrogated the 1871 settlement of the Atlantic fisheries issue, and in 1887 the Senate rejected new arrangements reached in prolonged Anglo-Canadian-American negotiations. In

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<sup>62</sup> Clarence Stewart Mackinnon, "The Imperial Fortresses in Canada: Halifax and Esquimalt, 1871-1906" (Ph.D. thesis, University of Toronto, 1965), 262-338, 378-87.

1885 the Canadian government had assigned its vessels to regulate the activities of American fishermen, and with the failure of a settlement the Fisheries Protection Service became permanently established. It was the Fisheries Protection Service that became the seed of the new navy founded in 1910, and it was army officers who played a prominent part in promoting the military potential of the civil marine services.

Army officers were keenly aware that fortifications and garrisons to protect the Royal Navy's bases at Halifax and Esquimalt fell far short of what was needed for the defence of Canada's coasts and inland waters. The refusal of the Royal Navy to undertake specific commitments for the St. Lawrence and Great Lakes in the event of war with the United States had never ceased to be a concern, and became pressing during the brief Anglo-American war scare during the winter of 1895-96 resulting from US intervention in the border dispute between Venezuela and British Guiana. In April 1896 Lieutenant Colonel Percy H.N. Lake, a British officer with a gift for planning who had been seconded to the militia department, was in London to consult with the Joint Naval and Military Committee on Defence, whose members included senior officers from both armed services. The main questions Lake put before the committee sought to clarify what the Royal Navy proposed to do to secure the lakes. He did not get any direct answers. Lake, for his part, recognized the military potential of the Fisheries Protection Service, which he reported consisted of five steamers, one on Lake Erie, and four others in the St. Lawrence and on the Atlantic coast that could move into the lakes in a crisis. The crews comprised a total of 300 personnel, and each steamer carried a nine-pounder rifled muzzle loading gun. These ships, together with suitable merchant steamers on the lakes, could be equipped with modern 12-pounder quick-fire breech-loading guns the government had ordered as a result of the recent crisis. The British committee urged improved training for the fisheries protection crews.<sup>63</sup>

Fuller proposals for naval development came from the special Committee on Canadian Defence which sat in 1897-98 to draft a defence plan for the country, something that had been almost entirely neglected since the British Army withdrawal in 1871. The committee, which was headed by Major-General Sir Edward Leach, VC, commanding Royal Engineer from the British garrison at Halifax, included the senior officers of the militia staff in Ottawa, a Royal Navy officer, Sir Frederick Borden, the militia minister, and Louis Davies, minister of marine and fisheries. The specific task was to detail the measures that Canada should take in the first thirty days of a war with the United States, the time estimated to be necessary for the arrival of British reinforcements.

Among the recommendations for the defence of the St. Lawrence River and the Great Lakes was the creation of a "Canadian Naval Militia" of 2000 personnel, "1500 of which to be trained gunners and seamen, and 500 to be firemen." Two

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<sup>63</sup> Lake, "Naval Action in the Defence of Canada on the Great Lakes, 28 March 1896, and "XXI. Joint Naval and Military Committee on Defence. Defence of Canada," 23 April 1896, TNA, WO/106/40/B1/5.

training ships should be established, one at Toronto, the other at Montreal, with reserves of guns and ammunition at both places for equipping civilian steamers as armed merchant cruisers. In addition the fisheries protection vessels should be fitted so they could immediately take on modern guns, and their crews should receive training to operate the armament.<sup>64</sup>

The 1898 committee's recommendation echoed the long-standing calls by British officers since at least the 1862 defence commission for raising a Canadian naval reserve force on the lakes, but acknowledged Canada's unique development by assigning the task to the Department of Marine and Fisheries. Other colonies followed the organization provided for in the moribund clauses of the Canadian Militia Acts whereby naval units were raised and administered on much the same basis as land units under a single defence department. The Admiralty agreed with the committee's report, thus giving further weight to the idea that marine and fisheries should be responsible for naval defence.<sup>65</sup> Realizing this principle in terms of legislation and organization, however, would be a prolonged process, one in which the senior officers of the militia played a leading part.

### **The militia and the difficult genesis of the Royal Canadian Navy, 1903-1918**

The political and strategic context of Canadian and British empire defence began to undergo a transformation as a result of the outbreak of war in South Africa in 1899. The Laurier government's decision, under intense pressure from English Canadians, to answer colonial secretary Joseph Chamberlain's call for contingents of troops from the self-governing colonies triggered rising opposition in French Canada against participation in imperial military endeavours. At the same time, the important colonial contributions to the belated and costly victory in South Africa in 1902 strengthened Chamberlain's appeal for permanent colonial contributions to imperial defence to address the increasing strain on the British power by the growing competition from potentially hostile nations. At the imperial conference of 1902, Laurier endeavoured to square the political circle by answering Chamberlain's proposals with the promise to develop more capable Canadian national armed forces and thus relieve Britain of its residual strategic responsibilities in North America. To counter Chamberlain's call for financial contributions to the Royal Navy, Laurier came armed with documents detailing the Admiralty's advice during the 1878 war scare that Canada should outfit her own fleet of armed merchant cruisers, and the support of British defence authorities in the planning undertaken in 1896 and 1898 for the development of national armed forces, including the development of the Fisheries Protection Service into a naval reserve.<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> "Defence Committee Canada Report No. II 1898," p. 32, LAC, RG 24, box 1856.

<sup>65</sup> Chamberlain to Minto, 13 July 1901, LAC, RG 24, reel C-5049, Militia headquarters confidential file (HQC) 152.

<sup>66</sup> [Papers on the Russian cruiser scare, 4 May to 8 July 1878], LAC, Sir Wilfrid Laurier fonds, MG26-G, reel C-1174, vol. 772, pp. 219313-8; [memoranda and correspondence with British defence authorities on plans for the defence of Canada, 1896-98], *ibid.*, pp. 219366-87, especially "No. 59

Stanley stated that the Laurier government did nothing to fulfill his promise at the 1902 conference to press on with a scheme for a naval militia. In fact, there was a start, under Raymond Préfontaine, whom Laurier appointed to the marine and fisheries portfolio in October 1902. Préfontaine, unusually for a prominent francophone from Quebec, was an advocate of military cooperation with Britain and, the few surviving records suggest, pressed naval development more forcefully than was Laurier's inclination. In 1903 the department ordered two new fisheries patrol vessels based on the design of naval gunboats, and when the larger vessel, CGS *Canada* entered service on the Atlantic coast in 1904, the department organized a naval training program in her for fisheries protection personnel. Préfontaine in 1904 drafted a Naval Militia Bill, under which the fisheries protection personnel would provide naval training for volunteers who, as in the land militia, would enlist for a term of three years.<sup>67</sup> (In 1915-18 *Canada* would become one of the principal Canadian anti-submarine patrol vessels on the east coast.)



*Canada*, at Sydney, Nova Scotia, in 1918 when serving as a convoy escort. The vessel, which was built to naval standards, had been acquired for fisheries protection in 1904 and was also used for naval training of civil government crews. She was taken up for naval service early in the First World War. Library and Archives Canada, RCN negative CN-3792. Courtesy of Karl Gagnon.

Another early step in the program to create more effective national forces was the assertion of fuller Canadian control over the land forces in the revised Militia Act of 1904. Imitating the British creation of an Army Council, which included the secretary of war as well as senior officers in order to exert civilian authority over the military, Canada created a Militia Council. The new Canadian Militia

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M. Canada Defence of Dominion. Memorandum by Colonial Defence Committee," 27 March 1896, pp. 219380-1. Laurier used the latter documents in his draft for the conference "Memorandum Concerning Defence," August 1902, *ibid.*, 219266-8.

<sup>67</sup> The pioneering modern work on Préfontaine and the naval militia is Gimblett, "'Tin-Pots' or Dreadnoughts?," chap. 3.

Council was a specific response to recurring difficulties with the British nominated general officers commanding the militia who on notable occasions had publicly defied the minister. In a further adoption of British reforms, Canada abolished the general officer commanding appointment, and created a general staff organization, in which the new appointment chief of the general staff was only the first among equals on the headquarters staff; major decisions were made in Militia Council under the minister's authority.

The new militia act opened all senior appointments to Canadian officers, but in the absence of a qualified Canadian officer for the chief of the general staff position, the government requested the services of Colonel Lake who in his previous appointment in Ottawa in 1891-98 had shown respect for Canadian authority. When in 1908-10 Canadian Major General W.D. Otter became chief of the general staff, the government asked Lake to remain in Canada in the appointment inspector-general and he continued to play a leading role on the Militia Council. In 1905 Lake brought from England Lieutenant Colonel W.G. Gwatkin, a gifted staff officer, to draft war mobilization plans. Gwatkin, like his mentor, won the trust of the government: his incisive minutes which survive in the hundreds (perhaps thousands) in the archived headquarters files show an acute intellect, unflappable calm, and gentle, self-deprecating humour. When in 1913 Major General Colin Mackenzie, the British officer who had succeed Otter, ran afoul of the new Conservative militia minister, Sir Sam Hughes, the latter appointed Gwatkin. The minister's erratic personality and work habits, which became even more pronounced during the war, exasperated even Gwatkin. His efforts to resign and rejoin his regiment for active service, however, met with pleas from prime minister Robert Borden that the general was indispensable. Gwatkin did his duty.

Plans for the modernization of the land militia and establishment of the naval militia were overtaken by an unheralded change in British policy. In December 1904 the Admiralty announced the closing of the naval dockyards at Halifax and Esquimalt, and the disbandment of the squadrons on the North America and West Indies and Pacific stations. These changes were part of efforts by Admiral Sir John Fisher, the new first sea lord, to concentrate the fleet in home waters to face challenges by the most likely – European – enemies in a future war, pay off older vessels on the distant stations, and use the savings to build fast modern vessels that could be rapidly deployed overseas from bases in the British Isles in the event of need. To ensure the global mobility of the fleet defended overseas bases were still essential, but the War Office, under pressure to trim its budget, asked Canada to relieve part of the regular army garrison at Halifax, then about 1,800 personnel. Laurier, the eternal naysayer in imperial defence matters like Macdonald before him, startled the British government by offering to replace the whole of the garrisons at both Halifax and Esquimalt with Canadian regular troops. The initiative, however surprising to the British, fit Laurier's program for more effective national forces. Here was a chance to relieve the British Army of a significant burden and support the global operations of the Royal Navy, measures popular among many English Canadians. At the same time the means for achieving these ends – expansion of



Canada's traditional land forces to replace the last British garrisons on Canadian soil – met with the approval of Quebec nationalists.<sup>68</sup>

The challenge faced by the militia department was a large one. In 1904 the entire strength of the permanent force was less than one thousand, and it had to be expanded to 3,000 by mid 1906 when the last imperial troops left Halifax and Esquimalt. The costs were substantial, largely accounting for the growth of the Department of Militia and Defence budget from \$4.2 million in 1904 to nearly \$7 million in 1907.<sup>69</sup> Ironically, in view of the fact that the new responsibilities were primarily for coastal defence, these increased costs and a drop in government revenue as a result of an international financial downturn, were the death knell for the naval militia. Préfontaine, the main advocate for the new service, had died suddenly of a heart attack in December 1905, and the Laurier government never brought the naval militia bill before Parliament. These developments left a void on the question of naval defence measures. In anticipation of the naval militia bill, the 1904 revision of the Militia Act removed the references to naval companies that had persisted since the original Militia Act of 1855.<sup>70</sup> The department was thus free of naval concerns, or so it seemed until planners addressed practical problems.

Canada accepted responsibility for the coastal stations at Halifax and Esquimalt at precisely the time when the Royal Navy's permanent presence on Canada's shores disappeared, and British doctrine emphasized more than ever the need for intimate cooperation between land and naval forces in the defence of ports. The immediate issue was Halifax, where Canada had promised to maintain the full defences to the standards laid down by British authorities. The new Canadian staff at Halifax inherited a printed 100-page war mobilization scheme that was subject to revision and review every year or two by the British Colonial Defence Committee. At that very time port defence doctrine was undergoing a fundamental change because of the abolition of the army's submarine-mining service, which in the case of Halifax had a large well-trained establishment ready to lay fields of shore-controlled mines in the approaches to the inner port. The change was mainly the result of naval concerns that the army mines would pose as great a threat to friendly as enemy vessels, but it also responded to the long range of the latest naval weapons, and the high speed of warships that might attack ports. The new doctrine was to move gun batteries and searchlights further out the harbour approaches to stop attackers before they were within gun and torpedo range of the port facilities,

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<sup>68</sup> Roger Sarty, "Canada and the Great Rapprochement, 1902-1914," in B.J.C. McKercher and Lawrence Aronson, eds., *The North Atlantic Triangle in a Changing World: Anglo-American-Canadian Relations, 1902-1956*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996), 18-30.

<sup>69</sup> Barry Gough and Roger Sarty, "Sailors and Soldiers: The Royal Navy, the Canadian Forces, and the Defence of Atlantic Canada, 1890-1918," in Michael L. Hadley, Rob Huebert, and Fred W. Crickard, eds., *A Nation's Navy: In Quest of a Canadian Naval Identity*, (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1996), 115-117.

<sup>70</sup> Chief of the general staff, "Naval Defence considered in connection with the constitution of the Naval Militia of Canada," 2 March 1909, LAC, RG 24, reel C-5052, HQC 365-11 is a detailed review to justify the general staff's view.



Halifax defences, 1906-1918. The Canadian Militia completed the searchlights as shown here early in the First World War, and Connaught Battery in 1916. The navy installed the inner anti-submarine net on either side of George's Island in 1915, and the outer net, between Ives Point and Point Pleasant, in 1917. Map by Mike Bechthold.

and to deploy flotillas of torpedo craft at important naval ports for patrols in the seaward approaches for early detection and strikes on hostile vessels. The very presence of torpedo craft might deter attackers from closing the coast.<sup>71</sup>

When in 1907 the Royal Navy's First Cruiser Squadron visited Halifax, the

<sup>71</sup> "Mining Defence at Halifax, Memorandum by the Colonial Defence Committee, No. 359 M," 22 January 1906, Directorate of History and Heritage, Ottawa, Army Kardex 340.003(D20).

militia staff asked for detailed advice on how to improve the port defences. Captain Sir R.K. Arbuthnot, commanding officer of HMS *Hampshire*, consulted closely with the fortress staff and made recommendations that were later endorsed by the inter-service Colonial Defence Committee in London. Arbuthnot's advice helped launch construction projects undertaken by the militia department to move guns and searchlights sited to cover the minefields further out the harbour, work that continued because of the difficulty of the terrain into the First World War. The Colonial Defence Committee had previously suggested that Canada might establish a "small local torpedo craft flotilla" to counter the heaviest scale of attack set out in the Halifax Defence Scheme, an American attempt to seize the port.<sup>72</sup> Arbuthnot advised substantial ocean going destroyers would in fact be needed for sustained patrols in the Halifax approaches: "the provision of a local defence of destroyers (nothing less) cannot but be good for Canada, and might be the beginning of a Canadian navy."<sup>73</sup>

By the time of Arbuthnot's report, the importance of modern torpedo craft to port and coastal defence had raised anew the question of distinct dominions naval forces within the empire. The impetus came from Australia, which was dissatisfied with arrangements under which that dominion subsidized Royal Navy cruisers that operated on the Australian station, but under Admiralty control and thus liable for deployment far from Australian shores. Torpedo craft, which were much more economical than major warships in both capital investment and manpower, raised the possibility of the dominion being able to organize its own naval service, specifically for port and coastal defence. On that basis the prime minister, Alfred Deakin, pressed for the creation of an Australian navy, under national control. In 1907 the Admiralty acceded to the scheme, acknowledging that such local forces of specialized torpedo craft would help the Royal Navy's main forces by freeing them from having to respond to raids by enemy cruisers.<sup>74</sup>

C.F. Hamilton, Ottawa correspondent for the *Toronto News* was the foremost Canadian advocate of Deakin's scheme. When Australia's proposals became public in the fall of 1906, Hamilton immediately drafted an editorial that his paper published arguing that torpedo craft were just what was needed for the development of a Canadian "naval militia."<sup>75</sup> In the coming three years he elaborated how torpedo craft flotillas could secure the major approach routes to Canada's coasts in articles and public addresses, and pressed the scheme on Conservative leader

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<sup>72</sup> Ibid.

<sup>73</sup> "Defence of Halifax against Torpedo Attack, Memorandum by the Colonial Defence Committee No. 399 M," 27 February 1908, enclosure 2, Arbuthnot to Rear-Admiral Neville, Commanding First Cruiser Squadron, 7 June 1907, LAC, RG7-G21, vol. 234, file 343 (8).

<sup>74</sup> J.A. La Nauze, *Alfred Deakin: A Biography*, 2 vols (London: Melbourne University Press, 1965), II: 515-530; Bob Nicholls, *Statesmen and Sailors: Australian Maritime Defence 1870-1920* (Balmain: Balmain, Australia, 1995), chaps 7-10.

<sup>75</sup> *Toronto News*, 3 November 1906, 6, main body printed in Sarty, "The Origins of the Royal Canadian Navy: The Australian Connection," in T.R. Frame, J.V.P. Goldrick, and P.D. Jones, eds., *Reflections on the Royal Australian Navy*, (Kenthurst, Australia: Kangaroo Press, 1991), 92.

Robert Borden, and on Préfontaine's successor as minister of marine and fisheries, Louis-Phillipe Brodeur. Hamilton was well positioned as an advocate. Aside from his contacts as a senior political reporter, he was a member of the Toronto branch of the British Navy League, which since its formation in 1895 had lobbied for the creation of a Canadian naval organization. He was also a lieutenant colonel in the militia's Corps of Guides, a precursor of the army's Canadian Intelligence Corps and had close connections with the general staff in Ottawa.<sup>76</sup>

Even as the general staff's efforts to interest marine and fisheries in the Halifax defences came to nought, growing American naval activities on the Great Lakes raised a more urgent problem. Early in 1907 the American press published Secretary of State Elihu Root's proposals for resolving fifteen outstanding issues between Canada and the United States, including the continued desire of the American government to revise the Rush-Bagot agreement so that Great Lakes shipbuilders could bid on contracts for the smaller classes of vessels of the US Navy, and to allow the entry for training ships for the naval militias of the Great Lakes states.<sup>77</sup> Colonel Hanbury-Williams, military secretary to the governor general, had passed a note based on confidential Foreign Office papers to a member of the general staff, Colonel Gwatkin, that showed that the agreement had very nearly been revised as the Americans wanted by the Anglo-Canadian-American joint high commission in 1898. The British commissioner, British military authorities, and the Canadian Defence Commission had all agreed that it was better to meet the American demands than to risk American abrogation of the agreement, and uncontrolled American naval expansion on the lakes. The concessions would not unduly favour the United States because the St. Lawrence and the Canadian canal system made it possible for Britain and Canada rapidly to build up naval forces on the lakes, as the Americans, who had access only to the shallow Erie barge canal, could not. The stumbling block, as the Foreign Office papers made clear, was the Canadian prime minister, who became increasingly reluctant in the face of a press campaign centred in Toronto decrying supplication to the United States that could result in the build up of a substantial naval force fleet close to Canada's heartland. The failure of the commission to agree on the leading issue of the Alaska Boundary dispute had then been its demise.<sup>78</sup>

Gwatkin showed the précis of the 1898 negotiations to Hamilton. He explained that the staff's position in favour of revisions of the treaty had not changed, and "suggested" Hamilton promote those ideas.<sup>79</sup> Hamilton seized on an appeal by

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<sup>76</sup> Hadley and Sarty, *Tin-Pots*, 24-5. Hamilton's obituaries, *The Ottawa Evening Journal*, 5 December 1933, 1-2, and *The Ottawa Citizen*, 5 December 1933, 2, both mention Gwatkin's high opinion of his work.

<sup>77</sup> *New York Post*, 23 March 1907 as reported in *The Globe* (Toronto), 25 March 1907, 8.

<sup>78</sup> Gwatkin to Hanbury-Williams, 2 November 1906, returning Pope, "Naval Vessels on the Lakes," June 1906, LAC, RG7-G21, reel T-833, vol. 96, file 192E, pt. 1.

<sup>79</sup> Hamilton to Willison, 4 July 1907, LAC, Sir John Stephen Willison fonds, MG30 D29, vol. 18, file 140, pp. 13786-80; see also Gwatkin, "A Note on the Agreement of 1817," 27 November 1907, LAC, Department of National Defence archives, RG 24, reel C-5052, HQC 624, pt. 1.

the Canadian Methodist Conference to peace societies in the United States to oppose their government's intention of revising the Rush-Bagot agreement, and thus maintain disarmament on the lakes. Hamilton's piece, which appeared as an unsigned editorial, wished the Methodists well, but explained that the question was not one of war and peace but of domestic politics in the Great Lakes States that the US government could not ignore. The editorial urged the wisdom of cooperation with the Americans, and proposed terms for the revision of Rush-Bagot that nearly reproduced those proposed in 1898.<sup>80</sup>

The Laurier government, with Britain's agreement, had in fact already been quietly cooperating with the US on one of the proposed revisions to the agreement, the entry on the lakes of naval training vessels. Between 1900 and 1905 the Americans asked permission for four training ships to enter through the St. Lawrence and the Canadian canals, and the Canadian government agreed each time. In 1907, however, the US asked that four additional training ships be allowed to enter. The Laurier government gave its approval, but the prime minister himself asked the militia minister to gather intelligence about the expanding naval activity. The staff reported that in 1906 US legislation brought the state naval militias more closely under federal control, and provided for increased support by the US Navy for the state forces. In 1909 when the the entry of the modern gunboat *Nashville* and its participation in manoeuvres off Alpena, Michigan, in Lake Huron, caused renewed controversy in the press, the militia staff again intervened. With Laurier's permission, Gwatkin had Hamilton, travelling incognito, observe the manoeuvres as he skulked along the shore. His official, classified, report made clear that the exercises, focused on basic seamanship training, hardly suggested impending aggression. He published a more dramatic report, however, that fed into protests in the press about American violations of the Rush-Bagot agreement. The media furore contributed to the quiet resolution of the problem with US President Taft's commitment not to increase the number of training ships on the lakes.

The militia staff, not happy with having to take the lead on naval questions, had already embarked on a campaign to bring home to marine and fisheries its defence responsibilities. In March 1908 General Otter won the support of militia minister Frederick Borden to invite marine and fisheries to join in the creation of an "inter-departmental committee," modelled on Britain's system for cooperation between the Admiralty and the War Office in defence planning. Its business would be to address the issues on the Great Lakes, and Canada's new responsibility for port defences on the sea coasts: "harbour lights, water transport, the regulation of traffic at defended ports, methods of communicating with British men-of-war, the defence of dock-gates, the obstruction of channels, the employment of booms, the examination of vessels entering port, the installation of wireless telegraph stations, censorship, &c." The militia department had a long wait for a response.

There was a hopeful sign when in May 1908 the government appointed Captain

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<sup>80</sup> "Warships on the Lakes," *The News* (Toronto), 5 July 1907, 6

Charles E. Kingsmill, a Canadian who had served in the Royal Navy for more than forty years, as commander of the Marine Service. The naming of such a senior officer – Kingsmill was promoted rear admiral on the retired list of the Royal Navy when he departed for Ottawa – was mainly an effort to quell rising criticism of inefficient and unqualified officials in the department. In announcing Kingsmill's appointment, the government indicated that he would be further developing the naval training of Fisheries Protection Service personnel started under Préfontaine.<sup>81</sup>

Nevertheless, marine minister Louis-Phillipe Brodeur flatly rejected the militia department's proposal for a defence committee when he finally responded in December 1908 after a nine-month delay: "no immediate steps are likely to be taken by this Department in connection with naval defence."<sup>82</sup> Soon after the Department of Justice disabused the militia staff of its conviction that their department was no longer responsible for naval defence. In the absence of new legislation specifically assigning naval roles to marine and fisheries, the clauses on naval militia units of previous versions of the Militia Act remained in force. This news only further encouraged the militia staff to press for action.<sup>83</sup>

Once again a senior member of the staff, probably Gwatkin, took C.F. Hamilton into his confidence, and Hamilton, in his capacity as a journalist, reported to his publisher the militia department's rejoinder to marine and fisheries' rebuff.

The Militia Dept proposed the scheme [for an inter-departmental committee] and almost forced it on the Marine, which was timid and suspicious and jealous. One detail is very funny. The suggestion was repelled at first by the Dept. Then Lake directed that the Marine Dept be pestered with questions relating to subjects common to both – which under the old way cd. be handled only in the most cumbrous manner. About one question a week was fired at them. This, and the Dreadnought agitation (which the Militia people used promptly) brought Brodeur and Co. to time. Is not Lake amusing? The idea of the Committee, I believe, is really Gwatkin's.<sup>84</sup>

As Hamilton reported, the militia department's campaign took advantage of heightened pressure on the government. A Conservative resolution in the House of Commons for Laurier to act along the lines of the Australian initiative coincided

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<sup>81</sup> "Canada to Have Naval Militia," *The Globe* (Toronto), 18 May 1908, 1; "Capt. Kingsmill Doubly Honored...He Will Gradually Develop a Naval Militia for Defence Purposes," *The Toronto Daily Star*, 18 May 1908, 2. I am grateful to Richard Gimblett for these references.

<sup>82</sup> Deputy minister marine and fisheries to deputy minister militia and defence, 10 December 1908, LAC, RG 24, reel C-5052, HQC 365-11.

<sup>83</sup> Deputy minister justice to deputy minister militia and defence, 16 March 1909, and deputy minister militia and defence to deputy minister marine and fisheries, 3 April 1909, *ibid.*

<sup>84</sup> Hamilton to Willison, 15 October 1909, LAC, Willison fonds, vol. 19, file 140, p. 14148. This letter accurately reports Lake's recommendation for bureaucratic harassment, Lake to Otter, 12 December 1908, LAC, RG 24, reel C-5052, HQC 365-11.

with an empire wide panic in March 1909 over reports that Germany was prepared to outbuild Britain in the revolutionary new “dreadnought” type battleship. The panic changed the political calculus for the Laurier government. With calls from New Zealand and Australia , and from members of both political parties in Canada to provide Britain with special subsidies to build additional dreadnoughts, the coastal defence force began to look like the middle ground. In a single day’s debate, on 29 March 1909, the two parties agreed on the development of such a force, subject to advice from the British Admiralty. On 19 April 1909 Admiral Kingsmill completed a proposal based on the agreement between the parties. He underscored the development of base facilities and port defences as the most essential requirement, whatever warships were procured, and supported the militia’s departments’s request for inter-departmental cooperation.

The first, and one of the principal things Canada should do for the defence of the Empire and for her own benefit, is the provision of proper Dock accommodation and the proper defence of her already fortified Ports. The necessity for this is so apparent that I do not enter into explanation.

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2. The proper defence of ...Naval Bases should be undertaken; I am not referring to the forts, now, but to the narrowing of the Navigable Channel by sinking obstructions in time of War, or by properly organized boom defence.

3. The Establishment of Examination Service [to detain and identify merchant ships entering defended ports in wartime]: this would come under the Military Authorities, but the Vessels used would belong to Naval Department. (I may point out here that this one matter shows how desirable it is that we should have Interdepartmental committees.)

In the section on warship procurement Kingsmill advised that Canada would need the full force being acquired by Australia, four “ocean going” destroyers of 500 to 900 tons, and twenty smaller coastal destroyers and torpedo boats. In addition Canada would require two small cruisers, the 3400-ton Sirius class, built in the early 1890s and now well into mid-life. These could serve on fisheries protection duties while carrying on an expanded version of the existing program of naval training.<sup>85</sup>

The question of dominions navies was transformed by a new Admiralty approach unveiled at the special imperial defence conference held in London in August 1909. British advice was that each of the dominions should build an ocean going squadron, including a dreadnought battle cruiser and the necessary complement of supporting cruisers and ocean-going destroyers. Coastal and port defence now took a distant second priority behind contributions to the international

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<sup>85</sup> The main body of the report is printed in Roger Sarty, “Admiral Kingsmill and the Early Years of the Royal Canadian Navy,” *Canadian Military History*, 19 (Winter 2010): 79-80.

strategic balance. The Admiralty termed the squadrons “fleet units,” as their role would be to combine with the Royal Navy’s fleets in the event of war for service wherever needed. Brodeur, with Kingsmill at hand as his advisor, and in constant contact with Laurier, rejected the dreadnought battle cruiser, but agreed to acquire the other elements of a fleet unit, four modern cruisers and six ocean-going destroyers.

This plan was the basis for the new Naval Service of Canada, established with the proclamation of the Naval Service Act on 4 May 1910. It was an ambitious undertaking, far beyond the “naval militia” scheme or Kingsmill’s proposals, featuring the creation of a professional navy to operate the fleet of modern ocean going warships. Still, the organization grew from Canadian traditions. The new Department of the Naval Service was twinned with the Department of Marine and Fisheries under a single minister, Brodeur. The branches of marine and fisheries that carried out essentially naval roles, such as the Fisheries Protection Service, and the recently built chain of coastal radio stations, were transferred to the new navy department. The government highlighted the national distinctiveness of the organization, and how well tailored it was to Canadian needs. The proposed fleet, very effective for coastal defence, would also protect shipping off shore. The modern warships could reinforce British squadrons, but, under the legislation could do so only if the Canadian government gave approval.

The naval scheme was a political disaster. Too ambitious for anti-empire opinion and too meagre for those who supported the empire, the new navy contributed to the defeat of the Laurier government in the general election of 1911. Robert Borden’s Conservative administration cut the budget to maintenance of a bare skeleton organization to clear the way for a new policy, but in the end never did make that policy. An appeal in the fall of 1912 by the new first lord of the Admiralty, Winston Churchill, for financial subsidies to build more battleships for the Royal Navy took priority. That initiative failed in May 1913 when the Liberal majority in the Senate rejected the Naval Aid Bill that would have funded the construction of three “super-dreadnoughts.”

Kingsmill, in October 1912, advised the government that the existing organization could in fact serve an essential role by training personnel for port and coastal defence duties, the fundamental requirement he had set forth in his study of April 1909.<sup>86</sup> That was what the navy was already doing, in close cooperation with the militia department. In the absence of any further clarification of government policy, the navy continued this work.

The focal point for cooperation was the new interdepartmental committee, which first met on 11 October 1909, and then fifteen other times before the outbreak of war.<sup>87</sup> Lieutenant Richard M. T. Stephens, one of three Royal Navy

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<sup>86</sup> Director of the naval service to minister of the naval service, 2 October 1912, LAC, Sir Robert Borden fonds, MG26-H, reel C-4349, pp. 67366-71.

<sup>87</sup> The most comprehensive record of meetings is LAC, RG 24, vol. 2497, Headquarters secret file (HQS) 1009.



officers seconded for service in Ottawa to assist Kingsmill in organizing the new navy, served as naval secretary, and Kingsmill delegated the navy's representation to him. Gwatkin, on his return to Ottawa in 1911 after two years back in England, took over as military secretary, and continued in that role after he was appointed chief of the general staff in 1913. He and Stephens remained as the key members of the inter-departmental committee through the whole of the First World War, and the focal point for cooperation between the two services. Both officers had an intellectual turn of mind, and had been seconded to staff jobs in Canada because of the talent they had demonstrated in the British services. Not surprisingly they seem to have established an easy, collegial relationship that continued until they both returned to Britain in the early 1920s.<sup>88</sup>

The most pressing requirement was to complete arrangements for the Halifax defences. The general staff sought naval advice on revisions in the artillery and searchlight installations, which were being pushed further out the harbour in line with the latest British doctrine, and on the development of an examination service. The navy for its part assigned three fisheries protection vessels during the summers of 1912 and 1913 to carry out exercises with the newly designated examination battery (Fort McNab, on the outer harbour whose mission was to open fire on any vessel that defied the orders of the examination steamer that operated in the channel below the fort), and for minesweeping exercises to guard against enemy warships or disguised merchant ship raiders dropping contact mines in the approaches to empire ports under the cover of darkness or thick weather.<sup>89</sup> These activities resulted from the new service taking over the naval parts of the Halifax Defence Scheme from marine and fisheries, starting in 1911.<sup>90</sup> The navy worked with the militia to produce an outline naval chapter for the 1912 revision of the defence scheme, and a fully developed chapter of 120 typescript pages for the revision completed in July 1914.<sup>91</sup> The naval part of the scheme assigned specific personnel for port defence and shipping control duties, designated six marine and fisheries vessels for the examination and minesweeping services, and two others to maintain "lookout" patrols in the approaches to provide early warning of the approach of possibly hostile vessels.<sup>92</sup> The interdepartmental committee also coordinated naval and military action for similar, but less elaborate measures to protect the river approach to Quebec City, where the militia department was installing modern long-range and quick-fire shore batteries, and Esquimalt on the

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<sup>88</sup> Prescott Stephens, *The Quiet Captain: The Story of Richard Markham Stephens R.N.* (London: Henry E. Walter Ltd., 1972); Hadley and Sarty, *Tin-Pots*, 71-4

<sup>89</sup> Canada, Parliament, *Sessional Papers, 1914*, vol. 27, paper no. 38, "Report of the Department of the Naval Service for the Fiscal Year Ending March 31, 1913," 7, 26-27, 29; *Sessional Papers, 1915*, vol. 26, paper no. 38, "Report...for the Fiscal Year Ending March 31, 1914," 26, 28, 30.

<sup>90</sup> Director of the naval service to deputy minister naval service, 29 September 1911, LAC, RG 24, vol. 6197, Naval Service Headquarters file (NS) 1001-13-1.

<sup>91</sup> LAC, RG 24, box 6196, NS 1001-1-7, pt 1.

<sup>92</sup> White to Stephens, 2 July 1914, forwarding revised "Appendix B: Government Vessels Detailed for Duty at Halifax," *ibid.*

west coast.

Work on the Halifax defences brought the committee to consider the question of a torpedo craft flotilla. The British services advised in 1911-12 that local torpedo forces would only be needed in the event of war with the United States, to deter or defend against a major joint services assault to put troops ashore. In a war with an overseas power, the scale of attack would be only a hit and run raid on shipping offshore by one or two cruisers, which would probably not risk closing the coast and certainly not a port protected with the heavy gun armament already installed at Halifax. The committee took a different view, as there were other vulnerable places on the coast, such as the coaling facilities at Sydney, the important commercial port facilities at Saint John, the transatlantic wireless station at Glace Bay, Cape Breton, and landing places and stations for undersea telegraph cables at Sydney and Canso. A modest torpedo force could deter attacks on all these places. The committee supported a paper by Stephens in which he argued that the trade routes passing close along Nova Scotia's coast had become still more strategically important because of the Admiralty's recent decision to build oil-fuelled warships, making Britain dependent on tankers that carried oil from fields in the southern United States and Mexico past Nova Scotia. Such a strategic resource, and relative closeness of the Canadian east coast to a potential enemy's home ports in Europe might attract concerted enemy cruiser operations, including attacks on coaling facilities ashore.<sup>93</sup> Gwatkin for his part noted the numerous times since 1906 that British authorities had advised that torpedo craft were essential to replace the harbour defence controlled mining facilities at Halifax that had been dismantled with the departure of the British garrison.<sup>94</sup>

Prime Minister Borden passed the memorandum to the Admiralty. The reply, in May 1914, was discouraging. The Royal Navy was not dependant on oil from the Americas as Stephens suggested, and there was little likelihood of enemy warships closing the Canadian coast within the operating range of torpedo craft. Rather the danger was to shipping well off shore, and the requirement was for substantial Chatham class cruisers, precisely the vessels that had made Laurier's naval project controversial among Borden's French Canadian supporters, and brought Borden to vow to develop the navy with smaller vessels along the lines that had been discussed in 1909 and earlier.

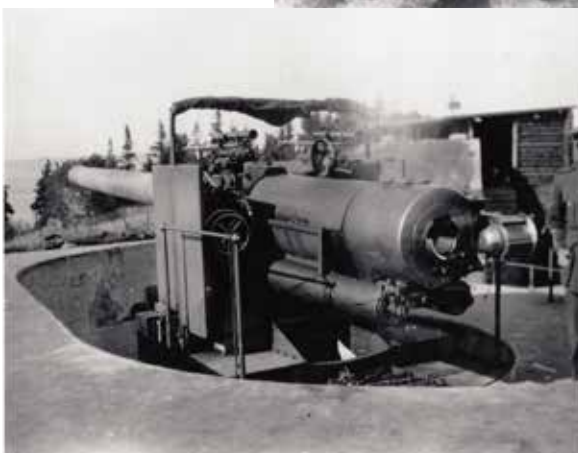
The government was still considering its options when war broke out in August 1914. Thanks to the planning coordinated by the interdepartmental committee, mobilization of the east coast defences was prompt and efficient. On receipt of the "precautionary stage" warning from Britain on 29 July, permanent force and militia units garrisoned the Halifax and Quebec City coastal batteries, while the navy

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<sup>93</sup> Stephens, "Memo: on Halifax Defences in view of 12<sup>th</sup> meeting of Interdepartmental Committee," 29 November 1913, LAC, RG 24, vol. 3824, NS 1014-3-2; Department of the Naval Service [Stephens], "The Increasing Importance of Halifax," 11 December 1913, *ibid.*, box 2509, HQC 1440.

<sup>94</sup> Gwatkin to minister of militia and defence, "Floating Defence at Halifax, N.S.," 23 February 1914, *ibid.*

Ives Point Battery in 1923. In the centre are two six-inch guns, with two 12-pounder quick-fire guns on the left. There were five searchlights on the shoreline. Library and Archives Canada, PA-131533.



Six-inch gun at Ives Point Battery, 1915. Library and Archives Canada, PA-112402.

9.2-inch gun at Fort McNab, circa 1917. This gun and two others at Sandwich Battery could fire 172-kilogram shells to a range of about fifteen kilometres seaward. Halifax Defence Complex archives, Parks Canada, 108-05-2-917-0318.



employed vessels from the Fisheries Protection Service for port defence duties, and for lookout and minesweeping patrols off Halifax. British cruisers quickly arrived off Nova Scotia in response to reports that German cruisers that had been in Mexican waters were headed north, and reinforcements from Britain built up a cruiser squadron based at Halifax for trade defence in the western Atlantic (the squadron soon included HMCS *Niobe* whose crew was brought up to strength by cadres of British personnel and Canadian and Newfoundland volunteers). Within

weeks the British squadron commander called for torpedo craft to augment the strong gun and searchlight defences at Halifax: the frequent, heavy fogs created ideal circumstances for a raiding attack on the port that could best be deterred by regular submarine or destroyer patrols in the distant approaches to the harbour. The Borden government strongly supported the recommendation, but the Admiralty was adamant that all available torpedo craft (including submarines being fabricated from US components at Montreal) were needed in European waters. The solution was to maintain the army's full gun defences at Halifax and Quebec even though these were heavier than needed against cruiser raids, and strengthen defences that had been improvised at the key ports of Sydney and Saint John, New Brunswick.

A more urgent need for destroyers emerged in 1915 when the Germans launched the first submarine campaign against British shipping, and in 1917 with a larger submarine campaign that reached into the central and western Atlantic. The submarines had their greatest success in coastal waters and close to ports; destroyers' speed and manoeuvrability and substantial armament made them the most effective anti-submarine type. Continuing advice from the Admiralty that no destroyers could be spared for the western Atlantic compelled Canada to build up an anti-submarine flotilla by arming Department of Marine and Fisheries vessels and vessels from other government departments, and taking up civilian ships for conversion. In 1917-18 the Admiralty and Canada cooperated in a program to build 130-ton anti-submarine trawlers and still smaller wooden drifters at Canadian yards. The largest and most capable vessels, however, were the steamers taken up from government's civil fleet. These led the patrol flotillas that screened convoys as they formed up in the harbour approaches, and kept watch along the coast. The crews of the government marine services, transferred to the navy, provided the cadre of officers and senior ratings, together with other merchant mariners who stiffened the raw recruits. None of the ships could stand in for destroyers in speed or firepower, urgently needed because the large German submarines designed for transatlantic operations could outrun the Canadian vessels on the surface, and had heavy deck guns. The army's artillery, including the new batteries installed at Saint John and Sydney under the supervision of the interdepartmental committee, was thus always the backbone of the east coast defences. Very large numbers of merchant ships and naval ocean escort warships sheltered behind the seaward batteries at Halifax and Sydney, and then Quebec City, when they became assembly ports for transatlantic convoys in 1917, and, in 1918, for coastal convoys between Canadian and US ports. The danger of breakouts from the North Sea by fast German cruisers, battle cruisers and fast battleships for transatlantic attacks in the last months of the war made the maintenance of strong, fully crewed shore batteries a priority right to the armistice in November 1918.<sup>95</sup>

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95 See, for example, T. Joseph Scanlon, *Catastrophe: Stories and Lessons from the Halifax Explosion* (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2020), 10-27 and Brian Tennyson and Roger Sarty, *Guardian of the Gulf: Sydney, Cape Breton, and the Atlantic Wars* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2000), chaps. 6-7.



Royal Canadian Navy anti-submarine vessels at Halifax, probably 1918. From right to left, *Cartier*, a government hydrographic survey ship taken up by the navy; *Givenchy*, a steel trawler; and two wooden drifters, the latter three built in 1917 to meet the U-boat offensive. Attributed to marine photographer W. R. MacAskill, copy at Directorate of History and Heritage, Ottawa, RCN negative CN-2902.

George Stanley was the first and, to the knowledge of the present writer, only scholar directly to inquire into the links between the British and Canadian land forces and the establishment of the Royal Canadian Navy. He detailed the initiatives the British Army and the early Canadian Militia took in naval defence down to the failed naval reserve scheme promoted by General Selby Smyth in 1878-79, and highlighted the reluctance of the Canadian government to act in the conviction that maritime security was a British responsibility. It was thus, he concluded, only the panic over German naval expansion in 1909 that finally moved the Canadian government to establish a naval service in 1910. That was the consensus of historical opinion at the time he wrote.

Subsequent research has painted a fuller picture of the Canadian government's policies, and in so doing shown the role of the land forces in maritime defence was more important than Stanley suggested. From the time of the pre-confederation defence negotiations of 1864-65 Canadian leaders were ready to make substantial efforts in the fortification and garrisoning of ports as the Canadian share in the maritime defence that they always insisted was the Royal Navy's obligation. Ultimately, when in 1904-5 Britain asked for help in the defence of the "imperial"

naval base at Halifax, the Canadian Militia undertook the full responsibility for that large garrison, as well as the smaller establishment that protected the Royal Navy base at Esquimalt, whose costs Canada already shared.

Canada also developed its own maritime services, but under civilian authority which kept them from Royal Navy control. The government's fundamental objective, to assert the new nations's sovereignty over economically valuable fisheries, an issue that was also vital to the political unity of the federation, was somewhat divergent from Britain's central concern to resolve tensions with the United States. Armed conflict with the republic was certainly Canadian leaders' worst nightmare. But they had no desire to weaken defences against Fenian incursions, or open the Atlantic fisheries to American fishermen in the face of bullying from Washington. Canadian leaders, moreover, saw only disadvantages in raising a naval force that would burden the new federation's strained finances, and operate under British rather than Canadian command while giving the Royal Navy an excuse to draw down its strength as the army had done.

The Canadian Militia staff consistently promoted development of the civil government marine services as a naval reserve that could mobilize with the militia's coastal defences in wartime. They continued to do so in detailed joint planning after the 1911 budget cuts crippled the new navy. Ultimately, in 1915-18, the secure operating facilities provided by the militia's defences at the East Coast ports enabled the navy to carry out emergency expansion, largely with civil government and civilian resources, to meet the entirely unforeseen German submarine offensives. Stanley's "Army Origins" captured the soldiers' advocacy of Canadian naval defences in the 1860s-70s, but it told only part of the story. The Canadian Militia not only continued to lobby for the creation of a navy, but provided vital support to the new service in its early troubled years, especially in meeting unanticipated challenges for coastal and trade defence in the First World War.