

It Was Supposed to Be Blue: Roads Not Taken with the Canadian Armed Forces Naval Jack, 1967-68

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The Canadian Armed Forces Naval Jack, which is today the Canadian Naval Ensign, went through a far more complicated gestation in 1967 than has heretofore been recognized. Using the minutes of two meetings of the Defence Council conducted in the middle of 1967 and other contemporary documents, this commentary examines the process by which today's design was created, discarded, and taken up again. These discussions also provide essential context to an otherwise puzzling passage in the memoirs of the chief of the defence staff at the time, General Jean V. Allard.

Le Pavillon de marine des Forces armées canadiennes, renommé le Pavillon naval canadien, a connu un développement beaucoup plus compliqué en 1967 que ce qu'on avait reconnu jusqu'ici. À l'aide des procès-verbaux de deux réunions du Conseil de la défense tenues au milieu de 1967 et d'autres documents contemporains, cet commentaire examine le processus selon lequel la conception que nous connaissons aujourd'hui a été créée, abandonnée puis reprise. Ces propos fournissent également un contexte essentiel à un extrait par ailleurs déroutant des mémoires du chef de l'état-major de la défense de l'époque, le général Jean V. Allard.



Canadian Armed Forces Naval Jack, 1968-2013. (Wikimedia Commons)

While carrying out research on an unrelated topic having to do with the early unification period of the Canadian Armed Forces, I stumbled across deliberations on the proposed Canadian Armed Forces Naval Jack held during two 1967 meetings of the Defence Council – the senior administrative body for the Department of National Defence, once described by former Defence Minister Paul Hellyer as “the cabinet of DND.”¹ What was discussed there about the intended appearance of the jack has not, to my knowledge, been recounted elsewhere, and provides essential context to an otherwise puzzling passage in the memoirs of the chief of the defence staff at the time, General Jean V. Allard.

Notes on the Naval Jack before 1965

The definitive account to date of Canadian naval ensigns, jacks, and pennants must surely be the article “The Restoration of a Canadian Naval Ensign” by Norman Jolin published in *The Northern Mariner/Le marin du nord* in 2013, and the reader is strongly encouraged to consult this impressively researched piece.² For those who may have less time, a quick, graphical representation in full colour of the evolution of our naval flags (by an uncredited compiler) can be found on the website of the Government of Canada.³ While this commentary will not repeat their excellent work here, a few major points need to be emphasized:

¹ Douglas Bland, *The Administration of Defence Policy in Canada* (Kingston: R.P. Frye, 1987), 42. Defence Council membership included the minister, associate minister, senior civilian officials and the senior military officers of the armed forces.

² Norman Jolin, “The Restoration of a Canadian Naval Ensign,” *The Northern Mariner/Le marin du nord* 23, no. 3 (July 2013): 267-286, https://www.cnrs-scrn.org/northern_mariner/vol23/tnm_23_267-286.pdf; see also, in brief, Canadian Armed Forces, “History of Canadian Naval Flags,” Government of Canada, last modified 20 March 2018, <https://www.canada.ca/en/navy/services/history/naval-flags-uniforms/history-canadian-naval-flags.html>.

³ Canadian Armed Forces, “Display of Naval Flags on Her Majesty’s Canadian Ships Over Time,” Government of Canada, last modified 24 October 2017, <https://www.canada.ca/en/navy/services/history/naval-flags-uniforms/display-naval-flags.html>.

- The jack is the flag, normally one size smaller than the ensign, that is flown from the jackstaff in the bows of a ship when alongside, moored, or at anchor.
- The character of the jack in Commonwealth practice has traditionally been national, not specifically naval. The Royal Navy, for example, uses the Union Flag as its jack (hence the more common name for it, Union Jack). An important implication of this is that there had not traditionally been a flag intended to be a naval jack and nothing else.
- In the Canadian context, before the adoption of the maple leaf flag in 1965, the de facto (but not strictly de jure) national flag, the Canadian Red Ensign, would not have been appropriate for a naval jack due to its use as an ensign by Canadian merchant ships.
- The Canadian Blue Ensign, on the other hand, flown by Royal Canadian Navy (RCN) auxiliaries and other government vessels, was deemed suitable as a national identifier for Canadian warships, and by this rationale was worn in them as a jack for most of the fifty-four years from 1911 to 1965.



Canadian Blue Ensign flying from the jackstaff of HMCS *Labrador*, Halifax, Nova Scotia, 1956. (Library and Archives Canada/Department of National Defence fonds/e010777388)

The Arrival of the Maple Leaf

Brought about, at least in part, as a response to separatism in Québec – which was by no means an unimportant consideration in the context of the times – the salient point about the maple leaf flag is perhaps, then, not so much the leaf per se, or in fact anything intrinsic to its actual design, as the fact that it does not contain the Union Jack.⁴ The introduction of the National Flag of Canada meant the retirement not only of the Canadian Red Ensign,

⁴ I personally believe this to be axiomatic, not at all requiring a specific source citation of it own; nevertheless, the reader interested in learning more could probably start with the quick overview in Andrew McIntosh, “The Great Flag Debate,” *The Canadian Encyclopedia*, 11 December 2019, <https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/flag-debate>; recent scholarly work includes Gregory A. Johnson, “The Last Gasp of Empire: The 1964 Flag Debate Revisited,” in *Canada and the End of Empire*, ed. Phillip Buckner (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2005), 232-250; and C. P. Champion, “A New Flag Please. We’re British,” in *The Strange Demise of British Canada: The Liberals and Canadian Nationalism, 1964-1968* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2010), 165-196.

but also of course the Blue, and – perhaps the one most in need of a change given its complete lack of any specifically Canadian symbolism – the navy’s White Ensign.⁵ Writing of that period, some naval historians have evoked the moment on 15 February 1965 when the White Ensign was lowered for the final time in Her Majesty’s Canadian Ships,⁶ but I have yet to encounter either text or photos capturing the simultaneous demise of the Canadian Blue Ensign.⁷ Perhaps the substitution of one Canadian symbol for another was not deemed to have the same impact, visual or otherwise, as the displacement of one that was entirely British.



Not a naval flag in sight: the maple leaf flag flying as both ensign and jack at the commissioning of HMCS *Ojibwa*, 23 September 1965. (MuseumShips)

With the maple leaf flag supplanting both the former ensign and the former jack, RCN warships were now in the highly anomalous position internationally of wearing the national flag in both the bow and the stern. Of the two locations, the situation at the ensign staff would no doubt have been the one more upsetting to naval traditionalists, because the accepted Commonwealth practice of flying a specifically naval flag from that position was dispensed with. Despite decades to gradually get used to it, this particular point of naval protocol – seemingly insignificant, perhaps, to outsiders – nevertheless remained a point sore enough that the National Flag of Canada was, in its turn, displaced by the “new” Canadian Naval Ensign in 2013.⁸

The situation at the bow, on the other hand, ought to have been met with much more equanimity, given that, as noted above, it consisted simply of the replacement of one national identifier by another, thereby remaining consistent

⁵ Jolin, “Restoration of a Canadian Naval Ensign,” 272-273, who provides (on 272) a block extract from the relevant CANAVGEN (“Canadian Naval General” message).

⁶ See, for example, A. Keith Cameron, “The Royal Canadian Navy and the Unification Crisis,” in *The RCN in Retrospect, 1910-1968*, ed. James A. Boutillier (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1982), 339; and Marc Milner, *Canada’s Navy: The First Century* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999), 249. Milner’s illustrations section includes a fine photo of the event in HMCS *Fraser*, which also (partly colourized) comprises the book’s front dust jacket.

⁷ On a ship at sea the jack is not flying, of course, but there will still have been numerous photo opportunities in harbour.

⁸ A full account of this initiative is given by Jolin, “Restoration of a Canadian Naval Ensign,” 280-282.

with the practice of other Commonwealth navies.⁹ But there was a peculiarly Canadian nuance to this. Other than on the jackstaff of RCN warships, the Canadian Blue Ensign was flown only by other government vessels, never on land.¹⁰ As a result, this particular national symbol had, if not an exclusively naval, then certainly a maritime character to it that the maple leaf flag did not. For a proper understanding of what follows, this point cannot be emphasized enough.

Documents Discussing the Jack: The 216th Meeting of the Defence Council, Ottawa, 1 May 1967

With the maple leaf flying at this time from both bow and stern, the suit of colours in RCN warships followed traditional Commonwealth practice at the bow while simultaneously following the practice of countries with no British connections, notably the United States, at the stern.¹¹ This must surely have been enough to cause stomach problems for naval traditionalists. In order to be consistent with either one or the other accepted international practice, the maple leaf flag was going to have to come down from one of those two locations and be replaced with something else. But that “something else” did not yet exist. Moreover, doing anything at that time that could be seen to impugn Canada’s new national flag was going to be tricky. It had been introduced, over a great deal of opposition, scarcely more than two years previously, and the “father” of the flag, Liberal Prime Minister Lester B. Pearson, was still in office. Also still in office was his controversial defence minister, Paul T. Hellyer.

If a person (of a certain age, at least) is able to provide the name of only one Canadian minister of national defence, it will almost certainly be that of the Honourable Paul T. Hellyer, architect of the unified Canadian Armed Forces. Some of our defence ministers have been former long-serving officers, while others have had no military experience whatsoever, but what Hellyer had – a very brief time in the military as a non-commissioned officer (NCO)

⁹ For Australia, see John Perryman, “The Origin of RAN Squadron and National Insignia,” History and Research, Royal Australian Navy, n.d., <https://www.navy.gov.au/history/tradition/origin-ran-squadron-and-national-insignia>; for New Zealand, “The White Ensign,” Customs and Traditions, National Museum of the Royal New Zealand Navy, n.d., <https://navymuseum.co.nz/explore/by-themes/customs-and-traditions/the-white-ensign/>; interestingly enough, the jack is a blue ensign in each case.

¹⁰ It was flown in these vessels and in RCN auxiliaries as both a jack and an ensign; see *The Queen’s Regulations and Orders for the Royal Canadian Navy*, vol. 1, *Administrative* (Ottawa: Queen’s Printer, 1952), art. 62.46 (1) (a), 62.47.

¹¹ The ship’s commissioning pennant, admittedly also a part of the suit of colours, is nevertheless beyond the scope of this paper.

– was arguably the worst possible preparation for a defence decision-maker.¹² Discharged from the air force as a surplus pilot awaiting training in 1944, he enrolled in the army, only to be exasperated to discover that he had to repeat lessons in parade square drill, gas drill, and even his inoculations.¹³ In his memoirs published in 1990, he offers a half-hearted defence against a charge that by that time, if not earlier, clearly seemed obvious even to him: “I can’t say that my service experience was a significant factor in the subsequent decision to unify the three forces, but it must have had an effect on the subconscious.... There was little effective cooperation between the services



The Honourable Paul T. Hellyer, Minister of National Defence, 1963-1967. (Library and Archives Canada/Department of National Defence fonds/e010745292)

when each concentrated almost exclusively on its own interests.”¹⁴ Despite his protestation to the contrary, here Hellyer is drawing a direct link between his time as a junior NCO and his time as minister of national defence, with all the fateful consequences for the Canadian military that were to follow. With a reforming zeal – and a desire to make a name for himself, with serious aspirations to the leadership of the Liberal party – that seemingly knew no limits, there can be little wonder that Hellyer succeeded in his oft-stated plans to abolish the Royal Canadian Navy, the Canadian Army, and the Royal Canadian Air Force (RCAF) and replace them with a single service, the Canadian Armed Forces, in 1968.¹⁵

The connection between unification and the maple leaf flag may not at first seem obvious,

¹² As General Jean V. Allard tactfully puts it, “Hellyer had a few basic notions regarding the forces. He had had a stint in the Air Force during the war at a level at which he was probably unable to grasp the full scope of the operations of his branch.” See Jean V. Allard (written in cooperation with Serge Bernier), *The Memoirs of General Jean V. Allard* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1988), 218, translation of Jean V. Allard (collaboration spéciale de Serge Bernier), *Mémoires du général Jean V. Allard* (Boucherville, QC: Éditions de Mortagne, 1985); unusually, no translator’s name is provided.

¹³ Paul Hellyer, *Damn the Torpedoes: My Fight to Unify Canada’s Armed Forces* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1990), 2-4. An essential counterpoint to many of Hellyer’s self-serving views can be found in Douglas Bland’s lengthy review of this book in *Canadian Defence Quarterly* 20, no. 2 (Autumn 1990): 37-38.

¹⁴ Hellyer, *Damn the Torpedoes*, 4.

¹⁵ Traumatic for the navy, the Hellyer years receive a chapter of their own in Canadian naval histories that cover that period; see, e.g., Cameron, “Unification Crisis,” in *RCN in Retrospect*; Tony German, “Integration and Unification,” in *The Sea Is at Our Gates: The History of the Canadian Navy* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1990); Milner, “Hard Lying, 1964-1968,” in *Canada’s Navy*.

but it must be kept in mind that not only did the new flag displace the White Ensign, but it also entailed the retirement of the RCAF Ensign. (The Canadian Army, for its part, did not use a service-specific flag.¹⁶) Although it was not at all brought about with this purpose in mind, the National Flag of Canada essentially “cleaned the slate” of single-service identities, among flags at least, which would no doubt have suited Mr. Hellyer’s purposes perfectly.

Perhaps indicative of the momentousness of this period in Canadian military history is the fact that Paul Hellyer was not the only person at the 1 May Defence Council meeting to have published a full-length memoir.

The other is General Jean V. Allard, chief of the defence staff (CDS) from 1966 to 1969. A highly decorated veteran of infantry battalion and brigade command in the Second World War, Allard was the first French Canadian to reach the rank of general.¹⁷ By this time, so many officers of flag, general, or air rank had either been fired by Hellyer or took early retirement due to their opposition to unification¹⁸ that it was unremarkable that Allard enthusiastically supported it.¹⁹ What was remarkable, at least to Hellyer, was the fact that Allard made his acceptance of the CDS position contingent upon a commitment by the government to set up a study group to enquire into the matter of francophones in the military, and that he would have the power to act on its recommendations before his retirement. After deliberations that Allard was given to believe would go as high as the prime minister, his conditions were accepted, and he took up the post in July 1966.²⁰



General Jean V. Allard, Chief of the Defence Staff, 1966-1969. (Department of National Defence, Directorate of History and Heritage, CFJIC REP68-758)

Beholden, as he was, to Hellyer for the ability to finally act on the concerns most dear to him, one might expect that Allard was a compliant collaborator in the unification project, and to a large extent this was perfectly true, particularly insofar as crossing Hellyer could risk ending up in the bad books of a future prime minister. But I would argue that more beholden still was Hellyer – and possibly even Pearson, too – to Allard, because of the potent symbolism his

¹⁶ Alistair B. Fraser, “The Flags of National Defence,” chap. 6 in *The Flags of Canada*, <http://fraser.cc/FlagsCan/Nation/NatDefence.html#n36>.

¹⁷ Recounted in chapters 3, 4, and 5 of Allard, *Memoirs*.

¹⁸ Cameron, “Unification Crisis,” 340-341.

¹⁹ Allard, “Unification: Prologue, 1963-1965,” chap. 11 in *Memoirs*.

²⁰ Allard, *Memoirs*, 247-248.

appointment represented in this time of troubles. Furthermore, Allard would retire after his stint as CDS, whereas for Hellyer, ten years younger, the stakes were very much higher. As Allard explains,

was I not becoming a sort of symbol just when the celebrations for the Centenary of Confederation were being announced? Moreover, Hellyer may possibly have thought that he could thus win over many Quebec Liberals once the way was open for Pearson's succession, to which he aspired.²¹

Under the circumstances, it would have been near on unthinkable for Hellyer to dismiss the first-ever French-Canadian Chief of the Defence Staff, and Allard must have instinctively recognized this, although he was far too diplomatic to say as much in his memoirs. This enviable state of affairs in fact gave him considerable leverage in standing up to Hellyer in what he believed to be the interests of the military – as long as the core tenet of unification itself was not questioned – including the minister's least-favourite service, the Navy.²²

There was only one person holding naval rank at the 1 May meeting, which was extraordinary, considering that nine officers present held army rank and eight were from the RCAF. But as Tony German points out, six senior admirals had left before their time in the two years prior to Allard's appointment.²³ Given that the Navy was, then as now, our smallest service, the disproportion in the number of admirals fired or retired early is indicative of the strength of their opposition to unification relative to the other services.²⁴ With a talent pool dwindled to this extent, it is perhaps less surprising, in hindsight, that Ralph L. Hennessy accepted an unprecedented double promotion from Hellyer to the rank of vice-admiral.²⁵ Rear-admirals in line for promotion there still were, but

²¹ Allard, *Memoirs*, 247.

²² No reader of Hellyer, *Damn the Torpedoes* can easily escape this conclusion – even the book's title may be (unintentionally?) saying the same thing. See also Robert H. Caldwell, "Rear-Admiral William M. Landymore: The Silent Service Speaks Out" in *The Admirals: Canada's Senior Naval Leadership in the Twentieth Century*, ed. Michael Whitby, Richard H. Gimblett, and Peter Haydon (Toronto: Dundurn, 2006), 289-290 and Milner, *Canada's Navy*, 237, 239-240, 261: "'getting the Navy' is one of the undeclared objectives of the integration program" (quoting columnist Charles Lynch from a 1964 piece in *Time* magazine).

²³ German, *Sea Is at Our Gates*, 288.

²⁴ See Hellyer's diary entry for 20 November 1964: "Army enthusiastic! Air Force mostly neutral give it a try. Navy sceptical to anti – particularly [Rear-Admiral William M.] Landymore" (*Damn the Torpedoes*, 117). At that early stage, the discussion was only about integration, not unification. See also German, *Sea Is at Our Gates*, 290-291.

²⁵ On Hennessy, see the brief biography, Canadian Armed Forces, "Vice-Admiral Ralph Lucien Hennessy, DSC, CD," Government of Canada, last modified 17 August 2018, <https://www.canada.ca/en/navy/services/history/leaders/commanders-list/ralph-lucien-hennessy.html>, or the obituary in the *Ottawa Citizen*: Andrew Duffy, "Obituary: Ralph Hennessy's Storied

Hellyer needed someone who, in his words, would “row in the same direction as the rest of the crew.”²⁶ This created quite a stir.²⁷

The creation in 1964 of the position of chief of the defence staff in Hellyer’s integrated Canadian Forces Headquarters (CFHQ) eliminated the post of chief of the naval staff (as well as those of chief of the general staff and chief of the air staff), with the result that Hennessy, although he was Canada’s senior sailor, could not speak officially for the Navy, but rather for such tri-service functions as accounting, finance, and manpower control in his role as comptroller general.²⁸ Nevertheless, in his secondary role as principal naval adviser, questions such as naval protocol, customs, and traditions – to the extent that they interested the Minister at all – would



Vice-Admiral Ralph L. Hennessy, comptroller general and principal naval adviser, 1966-1969, photographed in earlier days as a captain. (Department of National Defence)

certainly have been within his wheelhouse.²⁹ But on such matters he would have to steer very carefully between loyalty to the service to which he still belonged and loyalty to the man to whom he owed his phenomenal rise, the driving force behind the new, single service they all knew was coming. Combined with the resentment and jealousy engendered by that double promotion, his position must have been difficult indeed.³⁰

Life at Sea,” *Ottawa Citizen*, 20 June 2014, <https://ottawacitizen.com/news/local-news/canadas-oldest-living-vice-admiral-dead-at-95>; understandably, neither of these mention the controversial double promotion.

²⁶ Hellyer, *Damn the Torpedoes*, 163.

²⁷ Hellyer recalls that “Hennessey’s [*sic*] double-jump created a sea state ten in the upper echelons of the navy” (*Damn the Torpedoes*, 163), while Allard, ever the gentleman, observes merely that it “scandalized many people” (Allard, *Memoirs*, 254).

²⁸ This is based on German’s interpretation of Vice-Admiral Kenneth L. Dyer’s role vis-à-vis the Navy when he held the position at CFHQ of Chief of Personnel (*The Sea is at Our Gates*, 284); see also Caldwell, “Landymore,” in *The Admirals*, 279, who refers to Landymore in Halifax – even with a vice-admiral, Dyer, in Ottawa—as “the de facto head of the navy.”

²⁹ Referring to Dyer, Hennessy’s predecessor as principal naval adviser, Milner calls the title “senior naval officer, whatever that meant” (*Canada’s Navy*, 241); Michael Whitby calls it “Senior Naval Advisor” in his introduction to *The Admirals*, 16.

³⁰ Rear-Admiral Jeffrey V. Brock, summarily dismissed by Hellyer in 1964, paints a vivid picture of his last, bitter conversation with Hennessy in the second volume of his two-volume autobiography *With Many Voices*, vol. 2, *The Thunder and the Sunshine* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1983), 192-193. Milner, *Canada’s Navy*, 253, relates that Rear-Admiral William

The remaining speaker at the 1 May Defence Council meeting was the director general of administration, Air Commodore Ralph C. Weston, who, despite his air force background, played a leading role in the discussion on the Naval Jack. He retired before September 1969 as vice commander, Western NORAD Region, in the unification rank of brigadier-general.³¹

Overall, the composition of the Defence Council from August 1966 was most congenial to Hellyer. With the departure, one way or another, of all those at that level unwilling to work with him, “the atmosphere was like the advent of spring after a long and difficult winter.”³² With respect to his chairmanship of the Defence Council, the minister has been described by one naval writer as “authoritarian.”³³ Nevertheless, as the minutes below will show, Hellyer did not always have everything his way.

The minutes of the meeting will be reproduced here exactly as written, with explanatory commentary added to highlight, clarify, and examine key points as they pertain (mostly) to the proposed Canadian Armed Forces Naval Jack. For reasons of space, I have omitted the full list of attendees; paragraphs 8, 9, and 12, which deal with proposed senior officer pennants (on which nothing had been decided); paragraph 10, on the proposed ship’s commissioning pennant (which was deemed acceptable);³⁴ as well as the other two items on the agenda for that day, “Long Term Development Plan for RMC” and “Pilot shortage in the Canadian Forces.” The compiler was R. J. Sutherland, departmental secretary.³⁵

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DEFENCE COUNCIL – MINUTE OF THE 216TH MEETING – 1
MAY, 1967

M. Landymore, fired by Hellyer in 1966, “never spoke to him [Hennessy] again.”

³¹ John Blatherwick, comp., “General and Flag Officers – Canadian Armed Forces, 1964 to 1969,” General & Flag Officers 1964 to Current, Canadian Orders, Decorations, and Medals, updated 23 January 2022, <https://www.blatherwick.net/documents/General%20%26%20Flag%20Officers%201964%20to%20Current/1964%20to%201969%20General%20%26%20Flag%20Officers.pdf>.

³² Hellyer, *Damn the Torpedoes*, 171; this remark of his is roundly criticized by Bland in his review of *Damn the Torpedoes*, 38.

³³ Peter Haydon, “Vice-Admiral Herbert S. Rayner: The Last Chief of the Canadian Naval Staff,” in *The Admirals*, 261.

³⁴ This was the version based on the maple leaf flag, not ultimately adopted, on which see Jolin, “Restoration of a Canadian Naval Ensign,” 279.

³⁵ Defence Council – Minutes, 216th Meeting, held in the Minister’s Conference Room at 0930 hours on Monday, 1 May, 1967, fonds 73/1223, Robert Lewis Raymont fonds, series 3, file 1392, Directorate of History and Heritage, Department of National Defence (DHH).

1. The Defence Council received an Intelligence and a Current Operational Briefing.

I. Canadian Forces Ensign and Pennants

[Given that the proposed naval jack comprised a great deal of the discussion under this item, the title here, while not necessarily misleading, is certainly incomplete.

“Canadian Forces” or “Canadian Armed Forces”? The relevant line in the *National Defence Act* states: The Canadian Forces are the armed forces of Her Majesty raised by Canada and consist of one Service called the Canadian Armed Forces³⁶ from which fifty-four years (and counting) of ambiguity and confusion have ensued. Adding to the awkwardness, the single service is referred to by a plural noun.]

2. Defence Council had for consideration a memorandum from the Chief of the Defence Staff dated 13 March, 1967, entitled “Canadian Forces Ensign and Pennants”.

[This memorandum to the minister in fact dealt almost exclusively with the Jack. After noting that “the Canadian Blue Ensign, which was the Naval Jack, retired with scarcely a murmur,” Allard said that “today it is the flag most sorely missed” because it “was the only really unique symbol used by the RCN.”³⁷ For this, and other reasons, he went on to state that “I promised the Navy that they would one day have a Naval Jack. I think the time is now appropriate and am therefore making a strong recommendation for its approval.”³⁸]

3. A/C Weston, Director General Administration, briefed the Council, providing additional details and showing designs of the proposed ensign, Jack and pennants which the CDS had recommended for adoption by the Canadian Forces.

[The package of illustrations that accompanied the 13 March memo included, among other items, a white Canadian Armed Forces Ensign that differed in no particular from the one in use today, as well as a blue Naval Jack. Compared

³⁶ R.S.C., 1985, c. N-5, s. 14, [https://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/acts/n-5/page-2.html #h-374679](https://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/acts/n-5/page-2.html#h-374679).

³⁷ J. V. Allard to the Minister, Canadian Forces Flags, Ensigns and Pennants, 13 March 1967, para. 3, P 1810-11 (DGA), P 1145-4, DHH.

³⁸ Allard to the Minister, Flags, Ensigns and Pennants, 13 March 1967, para. 4.



Proposed Naval Jack discussed at the 216th meeting of the Defence Council, 1 May 1967. (Illustration accompanying J. V. Allard to the Minister, Canadian Forces Flags, Ensigns and Pennants, 13 March 1967, P 1810-11 [DGA], P 1145-4, Department of National Defence, Directorate of History and Heritage)

to the Canadian Blue Ensign, which had the shield from the Canadian coat of arms in the fly, the national identifier on this flag is entirely in the canton, in the form of the National Flag of Canada. Arguably, given that the former jack had no specifically naval symbols on it, with its maritime character expressed entirely by the blue colour, this jack, too, could have dispensed with the naval crown, fowl anchor, and eagle by the same reasoning and left the fly blank, on the analogy of the United Kingdom's Blue Ensign. Nevertheless, the decision was taken to include specifically naval symbolism on the Jack. With the exception of the naval crown, the design chosen, a fowl anchor in an isometric projection with an air force eagle superimposed, was that appearing in the pre-unification badges of Maritime Command Atlantic and Maritime Command Pacific, with no changes.³⁹ Finally, in a nod to the fairly complicated provisions governing the use of the Canadian Blue Ensign by owners of yachts belonging to certain classes of yacht clubs⁴⁰ – itself based on long-standing British practice⁴¹ – the CDS asked that “the Naval Jack be authorized for use by selected owners of private yachts. I have in mind providing the privilege by special warrant granted under the authority of the Department of National Defence, as a mark of recognition and honour to persons who have served or are serving in the Canadian Armed Forces.”⁴² This initiative,

which would probably have been cumbersome to administer and awkward to enforce, did not progress.⁴³

³⁹ Brittany Dunn, “Summary of the Evolution and Policy of the Badge of Maritime Command,” *Argonauta* 40, no. 1 (Winter 2023): 23-33.

⁴⁰ *Queen's Regulations and Orders for the RCN*, art. 62.85.

⁴¹ “Naval Flags and Ensigns, A Note by the Naval Staff Directorate, Version 1,” <http://www.luxe-motor-kei.co.uk/documents/NavalFlagsandEnsigns.pdf?i=1>.

⁴² Allard to the Minister, Flags, Ensigns and Pennants, 13 March 1967, para. 5.

⁴³ That this was going to be an issue requiring resolution was recognized as early as 1964, when the Defence Council first addressed the question of the new National Flag; see Defence Council – Minutes, 133rd Meeting, held in the Chief of Defence Staff Conference Room at 0930

4. During the discussion that followed the Minister recalled that when the question of a Canadian Forces ensign was last considered by Defence Council in 1964 he had expressed the view that there should be but one Canadian Forces ensign to serve all the requirements of the Canadian Armed Forces.

[An intensely competitive individual, Hellyer was so strongly committed to the unification project that he had threatened to resign rather than have Pearson let the unification bill die on the order table.⁴⁴ As the “arch-unificationist,” then, he truly believed in the establishment of a single armed service with as little recognition as possible of the importance of the traditional elements of sea, land, and air, in visual identity as in so much else. With very few exceptions, any concessions to single-service distinctiveness had to be extracted from him with considerable effort, and a great deal of the credit for this in many cases must go to Allard. The minutes below will show this process unfolding.]

He was still uncertain, he said, why there was a need for a Jack for ships in addition to a Forces ensign. Could not the Canadian Forces ensign be flown from the Jack Staff and the National flag from the Ensign Staff on board ship?

[It must be emphasized here that Hellyer is *not* re-opening the question of the proper flag to be flown from the stern; as Jolin perceptively puts it, “to pursue a distinctive naval ensign . . . would have likely been seen as yet another challenge by the Navy to integration and unification, which were of great personal interest to the minister.”⁴⁵ I would add to this the observation that the ensign, because it is also flown when a ship is at sea, is of greater symbolic importance than the jack, and therefore a far riskier thing for the Navy to be perceived to be wanting to tamper with. With the fighting over the new national flag only recently concluded and the Navy severely chastened at this time, no one could have been in any doubt that the question of the ensign was settled, seemingly for good.

Instead, what Hellyer is asking is why the Canadian Armed Forces Ensign

on Tuesday and Wednesday, 29 and 30 December, 1964, para. 40 (d), fonds 73/1223, Robert Lewis Raymont fonds, series 3, file 1381, DHH.

⁴⁴ Hellyer, *Damn the Torpedoes*, 217.

⁴⁵ Jolin, “Restoration of a Canadian Naval Ensign,” 276.

cannot stand in for a jack. The very fact that he is allowing this question to appear on the agenda shows that, possibly swayed by the arguments in Allard's memorandum, he has accepted the idea that a distinctive jack is not necessarily a bad thing. (Alternatively, it may simply have been, in his words, "because the time comes when one gets tired of arguing."⁴⁶) Nevertheless, as with so much else, he has to have things his way. Moreover, it is difficult to deny the logic of his question: *if* the Navy is soon to disappear as a legal entity, to be replaced by the unified Canadian Armed Forces, and *if* there will be only one flag for that unified service, *then* it follows necessarily that the naval jack cannot be other than the Canadian Armed Forces Ensign. (It even contains an anchor, in the tri-service emblem in the fly.) Nevertheless, there were those in the minister's conference room that morning who were willing to call this logic into question.]

In the same vein, he enquired if it was necessary for the Jack to be basically blue in colour. A/C Weston replied that while the Jack need not be any particular colour, the Canadian Forces had been influenced in the choice of blue by the former use of that colour by the Navy and to ensure that it differed from the Canadian Forces ensign, with a white background.

[Although we have been conditioned for more than a half-century (from April 1968) to a white naval flag, it must be remembered that at the time, the jack in use was simply the National Flag – which, in Allard's words, had "somehow . . . never really taken the place of the Jack"⁴⁷ – and only two years before that, the Blue Ensign. It is perfectly understandable, then, that the military decision-makers at the time would be thinking of blue, and blue only, for a re-established Canadian naval jack.

Weston's remark about ensuring that the Jack differed in colour from the Canadian Armed Forces Ensign may not have been the most prudent to utter in the Minister's presence. On the issue of the mere existence of the jack, Hellyer may indeed have been tired of arguing, but on the topic of its colour, we know how this eventually turned out.]

The Jack, he said, need not be distinctive. A survey

⁴⁶ Hellyer, *Damn the Torpedoes*, 89, in the context of a previous disagreement with senior officers in 1964.

⁴⁷ Allard to the Minister, Flags, Ensigns and Pennants, 13 March 1967, para. 4.

of 30 countries revealed that about 50% used a unique flag on the Jack Staff of their Naval vessels while the other 50% used the National flag.

5. The Comptroller General said that in discussions with the Commander Maritime Command the National flag was highly favoured for the Ensign Staff. However, to use the Canadian Forces ensign as a Jack would be a contradiction of heraldic terms.

[The latter statement, about the Jack, is patent nonsense, for the reasons I have given above, and Hennessy ought to have known it. Perhaps he did – Allard observed that Hellyer’s “lack of experience was not altogether a bad thing,”⁴⁸ but we do not know what Hennessy thought, and it is probably going too far to speculate that he hoped to bamboozle the Minister on this point.]

Furthermore, it was natural that personnel operating at sea would expect to have something by which they would be distinguished in the same way as the elements operating in the land and air environments. The proposed Jack was both distinctively Canadian and naval.

[We see here Hennessy, the senior naval officer, clearly standing up for his service – tempered, though, by the concern that the new identity be seen as “distinctively Canadian,” which was not only in accord with the views of Hellyer and the prime minister, but was also a major preoccupation of his immediate superior, Allard.⁴⁹]

The Minister said that he appreciated the argument but this was precisely the reason why he had felt that there should not be differing ensigns for the separate environments.

6. The Jack, the CDS said, would not be flown on shore stations. These would fly the Canadian Forces ensign. It was not therefore solely for purposes of identity but rather to maintain the universal tradition of

⁴⁸ Allard, *Memoirs*, 218.

⁴⁹ Allard, *Memoirs*, 250, 254, 261 (“my traditionalism had its limits”), 262.

flying a Jack aboard ship. In the same way as he considered the Roundel should be retained on aircraft and the regimental flags and pennants for units of the ground forces, he strongly recommended the retention of the Jack for ships at sea.

[Allard's statement that the Jack would not be flown ashore ought to remind us of the exclusively maritime character of the Canadian Blue Ensign.⁵⁰ Also, the idea of continuity implied by his use of the phrase "retention of the Jack" strongly favours the colour blue for the new Jack.]

7. There then followed a general discussion of the colours and designs of the proposed Canadian Forces ensign and the Jack, when certain additional information was requested by the Minister.

[There was no further discussion specifically of the Jack at the meeting. On the topic of the Jack, then, Hellyer must have already agreed, at least in principle, to the idea of a distinctive naval jack – that is, something other than the National Flag of Canada at the jackstaff – because nowhere here does he argue against one. Perhaps even he thought that having the maple leaf flag flying from both bow and stern of a ship looked a little odd. But at this juncture, before the design of his preferred choice for a jack, the Canadian Armed Forces Ensign, was even finalized, he had the chief of the defence staff, who was army, the senior sailor, and an airman all advocating a distinctive *naval* flag. This clear evidence of assertiveness on the part of his senior military advisors, who comprised what was, in his view, a compliant Defence Council, may have been an eye-opener. Then again, the Minister was aware, on the basis of Allard's memo of 13 March, that this subject was going to come up for discussion. For all we know, he may already have been swayed, at least in part, to the views expressed there, with his continued advocacy at the meeting of a hard unificationist line mere posturing, showing that the man in charge was not going to give ground easily. Either way, the Jack would turn out to be a win for Allard and the Navy. While we may have been conditioned by the many writers sympathetic to the admirals dismissed by Hellyer to see the minister as some sort of tyrant,⁵¹ the minutes of this meeting suggest instead a reasonable

⁵⁰ It would only be much later, in 1985, that the Canadian Armed Forces Naval Jack, in its white guise, would do what the Canadian Blue Ensign had never done, that is, fly on land, as the Maritime Command Flag (Jolin, "Restoration of a Canadian Naval Ensign," 278-279).

⁵¹ Brock's entire second volume, *The Thunder and the Sunshine*, is essentially one long screed

amount of give and take among participants who knew, far better than we can hope to reconstruct, their real place in the pecking order, who owed what to whom, what could prudently be said out loud, and what absolutely could not.]

11. After further discussion, the Minister deferred a decision on the proposals in the CDS memorandum of 13 March, 1967, and stated that the recommendations would eventually have to be submitted to the Cabinet and in preparation for this step asked for two copies of the proposed ensign to be made up, both in the official red of the National flag, and with the larger of the two proposed Canadian Forces Badges, which were displayed at the meeting, in the fly. One of the ensigns should employ as the background to the Forces Badge the blue colour displayed at the meeting and the other a somewhat darker shade.

[Although everything recorded here must have been clear to the compiler at the time, this paragraph requires very careful reading if unwarranted inferences are to be avoided.

The “official red of the National flag” refers precisely to that, the National Flag of Canada in the canton of the Canadian Armed Forces Ensign. That the latter was intended to have an overall white background is evident from the proposed design in the package of illustrations accompanying Allard’s memo of 13 March, and is clearly stated by Weston in paragraph 4, a comment that went unremarked at the meeting.

The “background to the Forces Badge” applies strictly to that, the badge per se. The compiler is very clear on the difference between the Ensign and the Jack; the Ensign was never supposed to be blue, while the Jack was never intended to carry the tri-forces badge. It is only the proposed ensign that is referred to here.

The detailed character of the instructions lavished upon the proposed ensign – down to the precise shade of blue to serve as backing to the CF emblem –

against Hellyer and unification; German’s chapter “Integration and Unification” is no more sympathetic, using as subject headings the terms “Twisting the Truth,” “Decapitation,” and “Evisceration.” Milner, “Hard Lying,” may be the least hostile to the Minister; of naval writers at any rate, he probably comes closest to having the measure of the man.

shows very clearly which flag was in fact the minister's choice. Nevertheless, the fact that he did not give similar instructions for the proposed jack may have suggested to some that, in his view, the design shown at the meeting, which was blue, was in fact acceptable. When Hellyer had asked earlier in the meeting why it had to be blue, he obviously had a preference for another colour, but nowhere is it stated in the minutes that the Jack was to be white.]

13. After there has been an opportunity to study this additional material the Minister said that he intended to include the item again on a forthcoming Defence Council agenda.

[The "additional material" was requested in paragraph 12 and relates to senior officer pennants. "Canadian Forces Ensign and Pennants" would appear again as an item on the agenda of the 220th meeting of the Defence Council. As an examination of the minutes of that meeting will show, the definitive appearance of the Jack was still far from settled.]

The Next Step for the Jack

Despite his misgivings, Hellyer accepted not only that there would be a jack that differed from the maple leaf flag, but one that, more importantly, differed from the Canadian Armed Forces Ensign, a significant concession on his part to single-service identity. On the other hand, it has to be remembered that Allard had promised the Navy a distinctive jack – and one that was not just the Canadian Armed Forces Ensign.⁵² A promise from an individual in his position is not something to be discarded lightly and I think what can be seen here is clear evidence of the strength of Allard's stance vis-à-vis the minister. Whatever the reason, it was an initiative that Hellyer had decided was not worth his while to oppose.

Having made up his mind, Hellyer moved very quickly. We learn from a 12 May 1967 memo to the CDS from the chief of personnel that some time subsequent to the 216th meeting of the Defence Council, Hellyer informed Commander of Maritime Command Rear-Admiral John C. O'Brien, that, perhaps not surprisingly, "the proposed blue jack would not be approved." However, "an alternate suggestion was made."

In consultation with DGA [Weston], a new design for a Jack was developed, based on the Canadian Armed Forces Ensign but replacing

⁵² "It has become evident that the Canadian Forces Ensign could not receive easy acceptance if used as a Jack." Allard to the Minister, Flags, Ensigns and Pennants, 13 March 1967, para. 4.

the Armed Forces Badge with the Maritime Command Badge superimposed with a Naval Crown on the fly. A drawing of this new proposal was shown to the Minister on 11 May, 1967 and . . . the Minister's reaction was favourable.⁵³

The phrase "based on the Canadian Armed Forces Ensign" indicates that the Jack would henceforth be white.

While it may be tempting to see this as unjustified meddling on the Minister's part, there were in fact two interrelated reasons for the colour change that made sense when looked at from Hellyer's viewpoint. The first concerned the colour white per se. Traditional military heraldry assigns the colour dark blue to the Navy, red to the Army, and light blue to the Air Force. Given that, in Hellyer's projected single service, these three entities would literally cease to exist as legal constructs, the three colours representing them must also cease to appear in contexts that would otherwise be seen as asserting a single-service identity. Dark blue, for example, is fine as a background colour to the tri-service Canadian Armed Forces emblem, but not to a jack: that would imply the existence of a separate Navy. In terms of flags, then, white was Hellyer's choice when looking for a colour that was none of the above.

The second reason had to do with what might be referred to today as "corporate identity." With respect to the senior officer flags and pennants for which he was seeking approval, the Minister conceived of an "entire family of flags and pennants . . . based on the Ensign."⁵⁴ Using the basic pattern of the Canadian Armed Forces Ensign as the "parent," if you will, all of the others were white with the National Flag of Canada in the canton. For reasons that are not clear, Hellyer explicitly wanted the Jack to be considered outside this "Ensign family,"⁵⁵ to follow an approval process parallel to, but separate from, that of the Ensign. Nevertheless, its basic arrangement and white background were consistent with the new, single-service look.

Documents Discussing the Jack: The 220th Meeting of the Defence Council, Ottawa, 5 June 1967

The description of the new, white jack given in the 12 May memo by the chief of personnel strongly suggests that the flag we know today is the one referred

⁵³ E. M. Reyno to CDS, Flags and Pennants – Ship's Jack, 12 May 1967, para. 3, P 1060-1 (DC), DHH. It is telling here that the Minister is not reported as having had this discussion with the person who was supposed to be his principal naval advisor, Hennessy.

⁵⁴ Paul T. Hellyer, Memorandum to the Cabinet, Distinctive Flags for the Canadian Armed Forces, 5 July 1967, para. 10, P 1810-11 TD 7163 (DC), DHH.

⁵⁵ See, for example, the handwritten note by Hellyer to this effect at the bottom of J.V. Allard to the Minister, Memorandum to Cabinet – Canadian Armed Forces Ensign, 15 June 1967, P 1810-11 TD 7163 (DC), DHH.

to there. It is simply the proposed blue jack with the colours reversed and would therefore have been quick and easy for the department's illustrators to prepare, requiring no further direction as to its details. Surprisingly, though, having satisfied himself as to the Jack's colour, Hellyer was now entertaining new ideas concerning the naval symbolism in the fly.

Taking place only five weeks after the 216th meeting, the cast of characters was largely the same. There were four naval officers present this time, although, curiously enough, Hennessy was not one of them. Weston, still an air commodore, was now director general personnel services. The meeting was introduced by Air Marshal Edwin M. Reyno, chief of personnel (CP). Described by Hellyer as a "war hero with a warm heart and a winning way,"⁵⁶ he retired in 1972 as deputy commander of NORAD, in the unification rank of lieutenant-general.⁵⁷

The minutes here will be treated in the same manner as were those of the 216th meeting. Omitted material deals with the flags to be flown at bases (paragraph 7). There were four other items on the agenda that day after this one, of which two were deferred. The compiler was once again R. J. Sutherland.⁵⁸

RESTRICTED

DEFENCE COUNCIL - MINUTE OF THE 220TH MEETING - 5
JUNE, 1967

1. Defence Council received an Intelligence Briefing and a current Operations Briefing.

I. Canadian Forces Ensign and Pennants

2. Defence Council had for consideration a memorandum from the CDS dated 1 June, 1967, reference P 1810-11 (DGPS) entitled "Canadian Armed Forces Ensign, Flags and Pennants".

⁵⁶ Hellyer, *Damn the Torpedoes*, 162.

⁵⁷ John Blatherwick, comp., "General and Flag Officers – Canadian Armed Forces, 1970 to 1979," General & Flag Officers 1964 to Current, Canadian Orders, Decorations, and Medals, updated 27 January 2022, <https://www.blatherwick.net/documents/General%20%26%20Flag%20Officers%201964%20to%20Current/1970%20to%201979%20General%20%26%20Flag%20Officers.pdf>.

⁵⁸ Defence Council – Minutes, 220th Meeting, held in the Minister's Conference Room at 0930 hours on Monday, 5 June, 1967, fonds 73/1223, Robert Lewis Raymont fonds, series 3, file 1392, DHH.

[With respect to the Jack, the description provided in this memo from Allard was virtually identical to that in Reyno's memo of 12 May: "based on the Ensign . . . this design uses, in the place of the Armed Forces badge, the Maritime badge surmounted by a Naval Crown." Entirely new, however, was a request for approval of "the design for distinctive flags to identify the functional Commands,"⁵⁹ one of which, of course, was Maritime Command.]

3. The CP introduced this item stating that the revised designs to be presented were developed in accordance with the directions of the Minister at and subsequent to the 216th meeting of Defence Council.

[In a memo from Weston to Reyno dated 2 June containing introductory remarks intended for this meeting, the jack is described in almost exactly the same terms as those used by Allard in his memo of the previous day.⁶⁰ Significantly, there is no hint in Weston's memo of command flags, suggesting that the initiative for them originated entirely from Allard's end.]

He then called on A/C Weston, Director General Personnel Services, who displayed the revised prototype of the Ensign, a white flag containing in its canton the National Flag of Canada and, centered on the fly, the badge of the Canadian Armed Forces. The Minister agreed in principle to this design.

[It will be recalled that two versions of the Canadian Armed Forces Ensign were requested by the Minister at the end of the 216th meeting, one of which had a darker shade of blue as the background to the tri-service emblem. The memos from Allard and Weston indicate that the one with the darker colour became the "revised prototype" displayed here.]

4. A drawing of a modified version of the Maritime Command Flag for use as the official "ship's jack" was displayed and this contained on the fly an anchor on a blue background surrounded by a garter and surmounted

⁵⁹ Memorandum to the Defence Council from the Chief of the Defence Staff, Canadian Armed Forces Ensign, Flags and Pennants, 1 June 1967, para. 7 (c), P 1810-11 (DGPS), DHH.

⁶⁰ R.C. Weston to CP, Introductory Remarks – Defence Council 5 JUN 67, Flags and Pennants, 2 June 1967, para. 2, P 1810-11 (DGPS), DHH.

by a crown.

[Amazingly, neither Allard nor Weston appears to have had any awareness of this new design for a jack when they prepared their respective memos just days before. The person who prepared the draft memorandum to cabinet that accompanied Allard's memo was aware of it, however, referring to the Jack there as "a modified version of the Maritime Command flag." The same draft memorandum also included a lengthy explanation of, and justification for, command flags, of which "the proposed design is the same as that of the Ensign, except that the Armed Forces Badge would be replaced with the badge of the particular Command." It is plausible that this same person noticed that the proposed Maritime Command flag would then be identical to the proposed "Ship's Jack," as it was now being called:

- We know from the 12 May memo from Reyno that the new, white version of the Jack had the Maritime Command badge in the fly.
- The proposed command flags, based, as they were, on the Ensign, would all have been white.
- The Maritime Command flag would of course display that command's badge by definition.

Moreover, "this same flag [the command flag] would be the personal flag of the Officer Commanding a Command,"⁶¹ resulting in *three* identical flags in the case of Maritime Command. Two of these had to carry the Maritime Command badge. The Ship's Jack did not. Depending on the type of anchor depicted and the type of crown – which is not specifically described as naval – the emblem described here may have looked a little like the then-current RCN badge without the wreath of maple leaves. The mention of a "garter," though, is highly unusual, being restricted, in naval contexts at any rate, to the Queen's Colour of the time. (Perhaps, at a stretch, an annulus or scroll of some kind is what is meant, but I am very reluctant to ascribe terminological inaccuracy to the departmental secretary.)⁶²

⁶¹ Minister of National Defence, Memorandum to the Cabinet, Distinctive Flags for the Canadian Armed Forces (draft), 1 June 1967, para. 6, accompanying Memorandum to the Defence Council, Ensign, Flags and Pennants, 1 June 1967.

⁶² An example from New Zealand from the same period suggests that any design based on a garter would not likely have been deemed appropriate. Working through various designs for an official badge for the Royal New Zealand Navy, one of which contained a garter, the New Zealand Naval Board was informed by a heraldic authority in the United Kingdom that use of the garter in such a context was "heraldically illiterate": see "Official Badge of RNZN," Customs and Traditions, National Museum of the Royal New Zealand Navy, accessed 20 September 2022, <https://navymuseum.co.nz/explore/by-themes/customs-and-traditions/official-badge-of-rnzn/>.

During discussion on the design of the jack the CDS expressed the opinion that a more distinctive flag would be obtained if the garter were removed and the anchor only, surmounted by the crown, appeared in the fly. The minister asked that two new designs be prepared as suggested, one depicting a blue anchor surmounted by a gold crown and the other depicting both the anchor and crown in gold.

[With the logic of his drive for command flags now compelling a change to the Jack, the CDS had noticed that the proposed design would be, from a distance, difficult to distinguish from the Canadian Armed Forces Ensign. With the garter and background removed, the crown and anchor now stand out alone against the white background, not unlike the version of the Jack of 12 May with the Maritime Command badge. The insistence here on the colour gold for the symbols in the fly suggests even more strongly that the proposed Maritime Command flag was to be simply the blue jack shown at the 216th meeting with the colours reversed, necessitating a Ship's Jack that was noticeably different. This would be helped by the fact that none of the three versions described at this meeting are said to contain an eagle. No further discussion of the Ship's Jack took place, with the remainder of the meeting devoted primarily to the proposed command flags. While technically beyond the scope of this paper, I have included what was said here about those flags because the outcome of that discussion would have an important influence on the final appearance of the Ship's Jack.]

5. Noting that the DGPS had said that the proposed jack was a modified version of the Maritime Command flag, the Minister enquired whether it was the intention of each command to have its own flag.

[Minutes of meetings are normally deadpan and neutral in tone, but that does not mean that the words were necessarily delivered that way. In light of what was to become of this particular initiative for command flags, I suspect that there may have been a certain sharpness to Hellyer's words here.]

Replying, the DGPS said that what was proposed was more in the nature of a Commander's pennant containing the Command's insignia, rather than a Command flag.

[Weston may have been caught off-guard here. Certainly, "more in the nature

of” is not unambiguously one or the other, and gives the impression that he is in fact uncertain, or even backing down. In any case, the draft memorandum to Cabinet of 1 June clearly contradicts him: “It is proposed . . . that each of the major Commands, plus the Air Division and the Canadian Forces Communications System, have a distinctive flag.”⁶³]

This would be flown at each base when the Commander was present, along with the Canadian Armed Forces Ensign. The requirement for distinctive Command insignia was based on tradition, he said, and it was the stated desire of all Commands to have their own distinctive identification.



Proposed senior officer pennants, Canadian Armed Forces, 1967. The command insignia shown is that of Mobile Command. (Illustration accompanying J. V. Allard to the Minister, Canadian Forces Flags, Ensigns and Pennants, 13 March 1967, P 1810-11 [DGA], P 1145-4, Department of National Defence, Directorate of History and Heritage)

6. The Minister said he was not opposed to the principle of identification of Commands but wondered to what limits it should be applied.

[Having, perhaps in his eyes, given in on the subject of the Jack the previous month, Hellyer does not appear enamoured of this latest initiative to create visual identities – many more than one, this time – distinct from his Canadian Armed Forces Ensign. However, when he says that he is not opposed to the principle of identification of commands, it should not be thought that he is trying to have his cake and eat it, too. The explanation for this can be found in the proposed senior officer pennants of that period.

The pre-unification senior officer pennants were very easy to distinguish as to service. RCN pennants, for example, were white with red markings, while RCAF pennants, based on light blue, had no white at all. The new pennants were

⁶³ Minister of National Defence, Memorandum to Cabinet, Distinctive Flags (draft), 1 June 1967, para. 6.

all going to be white, and so the only way to tell the difference between the personal flag of the commander of Mobile Command, for example, and that of the commander of Maritime Command was going to be by the command badge in the fly. Since the proposed command flags were, perhaps not helpfully, intended to be identical to the flag of the commander of a command anyway, Hellyer probably saw no point in creating an entirely new category of flags that was going to differ from what was already planned in nothing but name.]

The CDS pointed out that there was an operational requirement for the identification of Commands, particularly with respect to vehicles and combat dress of field units. There was, however, a need to exercise a measure of control in developing an identification policy and in this context there was a requirement to review the present situation as each of the Army regiments has its own pennant.

[“A need to exercise a measure of control” is hardly what one mentions when aggressively advocating a new program and it seems, then, that Allard, correctly sensing where the minister’s mind was on this topic, had quickly decided to get onside.]

8. Concluding the discussion, the Minister said he would like to resolve the matter as quickly as possible. With this in mind he said that he intended to clear the item secretarially within the next few days and have the submission to Cabinet go forward as soon as possible thereafter.

9. After further discussion, the Minister:

- a. agreed in principle to the Canadian Armed Forces Ensign as displayed at the meeting;
- b. requested that two versions of the Ship’s Jack be prepared both with the national flag in the canton and an anchor surmounted by a crown in the fly on a white background, one depicting a blue anchor surmounted by a gold crown and the other depicting both the anchor and crown in gold; and
- c. requested that the draft Memorandum to Cabinet attached to the CDS memorandum be revised to

seek approval only for the Canadian Armed Forces Ensign and Ship's Jack and agreement in principle only for distinguishing flags and ensigns for senior officers.

["Ensigns" in the last line is an obvious error for "pennants." Stricken from the draft memorandum was a request for authority to modify the Ensign "to provide for identification of the Major Commands and establishments within the Commands." The command flags were therefore finished for the time period examined in this paper. The version of the Ship's Jack of which a drawing was brought to the meeting, with an anchor on a blue background surrounded by a garter (if that is correct) and surmounted by a crown, went no further. Two simpler versions, however, both "on a white background" and differing only in the colour of the anchor, remained in play.]

"Resolving the Matter as Quickly as Possible"

The following day, 6 June, Sutherland informed Allard that, on the subject of the Ship's Jack, "it is the Minister's intention to resolve this matter through discussions with you . . . rather than return it to Defence Council."⁶⁴ This conversation must have taken place before 8 June, because a memo of that day informs Reyno that "the CDS has already discussed the action to be taken . . . with DGPS."⁶⁵ What that action was is not recorded, but after the meeting of the Defence Council on 5 June it must have been recognized very quickly that, with no Maritime Command flag on the horizon, there was no longer any need to proceed with a version of the Ship's Jack that did not have the Maritime Command badge in the fly. On 10 June, Hellyer directed that "a memorandum to Cabinet be prepared without delay."⁶⁶ Dated 5 July 1967, the signed memorandum has this to say about what is now called – significantly, in view of Hellyer's aversion to the continuance of single-service identities – a "Naval Jack": "The design selected . . . is a white flag, containing in its canton the National Flag of Canada and, centered on the fly in blue, a foul anchor, on the centre of the anchor, an eagle volant affronte [*sic*] head lowered and to the sinister, surmounted by a naval crown."⁶⁷

⁶⁴ R. J. Sutherland to Chief of the Defence Staff, Canadian Armed Forces Ensign and Pennants, 6 June 1967, para. 2, S 1151-4110/D1, DHH.

⁶⁵ R. L. Raymont to CP, Canadian Armed Forces Ensign and Pennants, 8 June 1967, para. 2, S 1151-4110/D1 TD. 7158, DHH.

⁶⁶ N. A. Buckingham to DSecDS (MM), Memorandum to Cabinet, Canadian Forces Ensign, 13 June 1967, para. 1, P 1810-11 TD 7163 (DC), DHH.

⁶⁷ Paul T. Hellyer, Memorandum to the Cabinet, Distinctive Flags for the Canadian Armed Forces, 5 July 1967, para. 9, P 1810-11 TD 7163 (DC), DHH.

This is very close to the language used in the notice in the *Canada Gazette* announcing the approval of the Canadian Armed Forces Naval Jack on 1 February 1968.⁶⁸ The version depicted there – still in use today, of course, as the Canadian Naval Ensign – was the “lone survivor,” if you will, of five possible contenders discussed at various stages during the deliberations on the subject in 1967.



Canadian Armed Forces Naval Jack as approved, 1 February 1968. (Department of National Defence, Directorate of History and Heritage)

Allard Remembers?

13 March 1968 was a warm, sunny day at sea off Puerto Rico. Taking part in that year’s Exercise Maple Spring, HMCS *Bonaventure* had laid on a firepower demonstration for a day visit by forty Canadian journalists and the chief of the defence staff.⁶⁹ A ceremonial event that day made enough of an impact on the CDS that he saw fit to record it in his memoirs published seventeen years later:

On the 13th, on the aircraft carrier *Bonaventure*, I had to officially present the new naval flag to the Navy. The ceremony promised to be most impressive, on a calm sea and under a blue sky. But an unexpected event was to spoil my pleasure. This flag was supposed to be dark blue with a white anchor in the middle. When, on the ship’s deck, I opened the box containing the flag, I found it—white with a blue anchor. The colours that had been chosen were supposed to preserve an old naval tradition. Who had decided on these changes? Paul Hellyer, without any consultation.⁷⁰

He added, “I’m not happy, as my face and clenched fists demonstrate,” in the caption to the photo of this event included in his book.⁷¹

⁶⁸ *Canada Gazette – Part I*, vol. 102, no. 15, 13 April 1968, 892, <https://recherche-collection-search.bac-lac.gc.ca/eng/Home/Search?DataSource=Library/CanGaz&DateBucket=1960-1969%7C1968&PublishedMonth=4&>.

⁶⁹ Robert T. Murray, *HMCS Bonaventure – CVL 22 and Her Aircraft, 1957-1970* (Ottawa: Canada Aviation and Space Museum, n.d.), <https://documents.techno-science.ca/documents/CASM-AircraftHistories-HMCSBonaventureCVL-22.pdf>.

⁷⁰ Allard, *Memoirs*, 267.

⁷¹ In my view, the photo shows a solemn occasion, with Allard facing into bright sunlight,

What are we to make of this extraordinary account? The only writer, to my knowledge, that has commented on this passage to date, Richard A. Preston, has it wrong on more than one level:

The RCN had lost neither its sentimental connection with the Royal Navy nor its naval distinctiveness. General Jean Allard, the second chief of the defence staff under unification, says that when Paul Hellyer arranged to substitute a new flag to replace the white ensign, instead of the white anchor on a blue background which Allard was expecting, the minister personally unwrapped an ensign with a blue anchor on a white background, like the RN's white ensign; he did so "*sans consultation*." One suspects that some senior naval officer had persuaded him to alter Allard's intention, a sign of MARCOM's independence of spirit and fondness for British tradition.⁷²

We can ignore the fact that it was Allard, not Hellyer, that opened the box containing the flag. Forgivable, too, is Preston's assumption that the flag must have been an ensign, for it is not referred to as a jack either in the French original, from which he was working (the correct technical term, in this country at any rate, is *pavillon de beaupré*), or in the English translation. Had he known that it was a jack, though, and understood what that meant, he may have been less inclined to see it as a replacement for the White Ensign, which of course it was not. Nor was its colour a sign of lingering British influence – if anything, it was the exact opposite, for, as we have seen, white was Hellyer's choice for all the new flags of the unified Canadian Armed Forces. The colour the Navy really wanted was blue – a fact which Preston takes no account of – and they had Allard's full backing in this. It was Hellyer, not Allard, that opposed the Navy's preference in the matter, and hence Preston's interpretation of what lay behind this episode is entirely incorrect.

Concerning the appearance of the Jack, our greater awareness of what went on behind the scenes months before Allard's appearance aboard *Bonaventure* leads, nevertheless, to the uncomfortable realization that what the retired CDS is saying here is simply not true. The blue jack he had so strongly advocated was not switched to white behind his back, without consultation. It was done by

with his fists as they should be for someone standing (at least approximately) at attention. The photo in Allard, *Mémoires*, 401 is slightly different, showing two chaplains blessing the Jack. The caption there reads "to my very great surprise and disappointment, it [the flag] is not the one that had been planned" (my translation). Unusually, there are no photo credits provided in either the French or the English version of the book, suggesting that they were all from Allard's collection; hence, I am unable to provide either of the images here.

⁷² Richard A. Preston, "MARCOM Education: Is It a Break with Tradition?" in *The RCN in Transition, 1910-1985*, ed. W.A.B. Douglas (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1988), 78-79; biographical details on Preston are given at 396.

Hellyer in consultation with both Rear-Admiral O'Brien and Air Commodore Weston, which was described in a memo addressed to the CDS. Moreover, that very same memo goes on to state, "as agreed by you [Allard] on 11 May, DGA [Weston] will make arrangements for Rear Admiral O'Brien to show you the new design and discuss its use during his visit to CFHQ on 17 May."⁷³ Another memo, from Weston to Reyno containing introductory remarks to be used at the meeting of the Defence Council on 5 June 1967, stated, in connection with the white version of the Ship's Jack, that "this new proposed design is acceptable to the Commander of Maritime Command and the CDS."⁷⁴ And at that meeting of the Defence Council, as we saw, Allard himself weighed in with suggestions concerning the symbols to be displayed in the fly of a flag that is specifically stated to be of a white background.

So, what is going on here? Faulty memory? If so, then everything in Allard's memoirs needs to be taken with a very big grain of salt, or even tossed out altogether – which, in my view, is hardly possible, given that Allard's collaborator, Serge Bernier, was a historian with the Directorate of History (now the Directorate of History and Heritage) at the Department of National Defence. I think a clue can be found in Allard's statement in his memoirs that "people still quite frequently attack 'my' unification, whereas 'my' French-language units seem to be well accepted."⁷⁵ Unification, in either theory or practice, has not proven to be the most warmly embraced concept in Canadian military circles, particularly the Navy. This must surely have been clear to Allard long before he set about to record his memoirs, in which he may have wanted to "set the record straight" with respect to his involvement in those things in which he believed Hellyer went too far. Concerning the Jack, he obviously wanted to distance himself from the decision to make it white, but rather than situating his advocacy of the blue version in its proper context – the meetings of mid-1967 – he transposed it to the deck of the *Bonaventure*, possibly for reasons of literary cohesion.

Whatever the explanation behind this passage – simultaneously perplexing, amusing, and maybe a little dispiriting – the fact that Allard included the episode in his memoirs at all shows that the struggle for a distinctive Canadian Armed Forces Naval Jack – one that was originally supposed to be blue – undoubtedly left a strong impression on Canada's second chief of the defence staff.

⁷³ Reyno to CDS, Ship's Jack, 12 May 1967, para. 3.

⁷⁴ Weston to CP, Introductory Remarks, Flags and Pennants, 2 June 1967, para. 2.

⁷⁵ Allard, *Memoirs*, 266.

Appendix

The Surprising Afterlife of the Blue Jack

The pattern for the proposed blue Naval Jack, “designed with the assistance and collaboration of senior naval staff officers,”⁷⁶ was not, in fact, destined to remain in the archives forever unrealized. In a partial restoration of the practice whereby auxiliary vessels flew the Canadian Blue Ensign as both ensign and jack, the Canadian Forces Auxiliary Vessels Jack, approved 15 February 1979, is a reprise of the original blue proposed for the Canadian Armed Forces Naval Jack, right down to the eagle.⁷⁷ Although not exactly put to the use originally intended, it is hoped that Allard and those officers who designed it were able to derive some satisfaction from the knowledge that a blue jack had, in fact,

returned to certain vessels in use by Canadian Forces Auxiliary Vessels Jack. (Public Register of Arms, Flags, and Badges of Canada)



the Canadian military.

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⁷⁶ Allard to the Minister, Flags, Ensigns and Pennants, 13 March 1967, para. 4.

⁷⁷ *Canada Gazette – Part I*, vol. 113, no. 23, 9 June 1979, 3721-3722, <https://recherche-collection-search.bac-lac.gc.ca/eng/home/record?app=CanGaz&IdNumber=12877>.