

Beyond the Workable Little Fleet: Post-war
Planning and Policy in the RCN 1945-1948

by


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ABSTRACT

After the Second World War, the Royal Canadian Navy (RCN) suffered serious organizational and operational problems that were attributable to a lack of communication and policy co-ordination between the political and naval leadership. The navy, in particular, experienced major setbacks as a result of misguided fleet planning and direction from the organization's senior officers. Their wartime ambitions to develop a balanced fleet, composed of major warships, exceeded the economic and political tolerance of post-war Canada. This thesis examines their planning and decision-making process and the external factors which influenced their eventual return to a smaller anti-submarine (A/S) escort fleet.

Through the use of archival documents released after 1988 and a close re-examination of previously available sources, an important historical gap in the development of RCN policy and fleet structure has been bridged. Personal and documented interviews with surviving senior RCN officers added a wealth of information and answered many questions that otherwise would have remained unanswered. Within the constraints of time and the information available, some conclusions have been drawn which eliminate myth and clarify the evolution of Canada's post-war navy.

The A/S-oriented fleet, which evolved to reach world-class standards during the Cold War, was not the result of a direct and natural progression from wartime escorts and the U-boat experience. Professional officers rejected this small-ship navy in favour of carriers, cruisers and destroyers - the so-called balanced fleet. This decision led to serious fiscal and manning problems, which also created deficiencies in fleet maintenance, training and overall readiness. Recognition of these failings led to the government's first official statement of naval policy and the development of a purpose-built A/S fleet that would remain a priority for the next four decades.



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DEDICATION

For Debbie, Byron and Hayley. Your support meant everything.

Introduction

In August 1945, senior officers of the Royal Canadian Navy (RCN) commanded the third largest Allied fleet in the world. At its peak, the RCN comprised 374 principal combat vessels, more than 500 auxiliary craft, and almost 100,000 sailors. It was a short-lived but impressive achievement that came after an arduous wartime struggle for modern ships, technical and professional competence, and recognition by national political leaders and close Allies.

Under conditions similar to those during the early stages of the First World War, mobilization in 1939 was an urgent yet temporary phenomenon for the RCN. On this occasion, rapid expansion of the fleet overwhelmed the navy's tiny pre-war infrastructure and headquarters staff. Coastal commands were quickly consumed by the administration of operations and training, and as the war progressed they were further challenged by Canada's acceptance of greater responsibility and commitment in the North West Atlantic. Overall, it was a massive undertaking complicated by inexperienced sailors and the harsh conditions of war. Life at sea in small ships like the *FLOWER*-class corvettes tested the mettle of ship's companies, because in many instances they had to learn and practice the skills of convoy escort and anti-submarine (A/S) warfare while they fought.

The majority of these sailors were members of the Royal Canadian Navy Volunteer Reserve (RCNVR) who made a good account of themselves despite having been poorly prepared, poorly equipped and poorly trained to fight "a highly technological war against the U-boat."¹ By 1944, however, victory was close at hand and a much more experienced, proficient and technically improved A/S force was emerging. The RCN's escort ships had come of age and could take pride in the fact that it was their "contribution to the close escort of the main transatlantic convoys between North America and Britain that formed the bedrock of the Allied victory generally, and the

¹ David Zimmerman, The Great Naval Battle of Ottawa, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1989), p. 22.

victory over the U-boats in 1943 and - perhaps - in 1945."² Ironically, their place in Canada's post-war navy was virtually non-existent as senior staff of the professional RCN had set their sights on much bigger goals.

In comparison to the dark years of neglect and government indifference which followed the First World War, the RCN appeared to be well positioned in 1945 to withstand the inevitable decline of post-war demobilization and retrenchment. Remarkably, however, disdain and a lack of interest by RCN professional officers for the small-ship escort fleet resulted in the wholesale disposal of nearly all A/S warfare vessels immediately after the war. Although many of these ships were considered obsolete and others were approaching obsolescence, it was a bold action in the face of Allied intelligence that warned of the deadly potential of numerous, modern and fast Soviet submarines as the future global maritime threat. In the final analysis, the singleness of purpose with which Canada's naval leaders pursued the development of a more costly big-ship fleet engaged the RCN in another momentous struggle for survival.

What follows is an examination of the tremendous internal conflict endured by the RCN between 1945 and 1948. It is a story of severe decline and miscalculation on the part of Canada's naval establishment in their quest to build a navy outside the financial and political realities of post-war Canada. Their plan for a balanced fleet of aircraft carriers, cruisers and destroyers, which had been carefully nurtured since 1943, was out of step with the demobilization of forces, the slashing of defence budgets, and as time progressed, Canada's economic climate and policy requirements for the Cold War. Only when forced by dire circumstances did the RCN relenquish physical and ideological aspects of the balanced fleet in order to make changes that were necessary for the health of the Service.

Energy, people and resources devoted to the balanced fleet were at the heart of every post-war issue and problem in the RCN until the outbreak of Korea's fratricidal conflict in 1950. In retrospect, problems which surfaced as a result of the

² Marc Milner, The U-Boat Hunters: The Royal Canadian Navy and the Offensive against Germany's Submarines, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1994), p. 264.

plan's implementation were a painful but necessary exorcism of what was wrong in the RCN. By necessity, efforts to improve conditions led to fundamental changes in naval policy and a turning point in Canada's naval history that would shape the identity of the RCN for the next four decades. These changes and the factors that influenced them form the major theme of this paper.

It might be assumed that the Canadian Navy's eventual disposition as a world-class anti-submarine warfare fleet occurred as a natural progression from its wartime U-boat experience. In actual fact, this was not the case. The genesis of state of the art *ST LAURENT*-class A/S escort destroyers and other notable Canadian A/S innovations came about after 1947 only because senior naval staff were forced to abandon their long-cherished balanced fleet of big ships for an A/S oriented navy. The decision to do this did not come easily and the price paid was a heavy one.

Directly associated with the development of the balanced fleet were conditions which caused the RCN to suffer from unsatisfactory levels of manning and training, a constant state of low readiness, and widespread discontent over conditions of service, especially at the lower rank levels. Given the enormity and duration of these problems there is cause to question the judgement of senior officers in their management and employment of naval resources and more so, their relationship with the fleet and its sailors. What motivated their desire for a balanced fleet? What pressed them to continue when adversity dictated change? What finally brought about change and what steps were taken to resolve internal problems? Appropriately, a review of their post-war performance provides answers to these questions and a clearer account of how Naval Service Headquarters (NSHQ) came to focus on solutions. Of these, a return to A/S warfare in the post-war era gave the RCN its *raison d'etre* and at the same time gave challenge and purpose to the development of uniquely Canadian ships and technology to deal with the Cold War's greatest maritime threat. From the perspective outlined above, one must also take into account that in 1945, only 35 years had passed since the creation of the RCN. Hence, most of the navy's senior leaders had grown up with this navy and ironically, were intent on not allowing it to repeat the difficulties which had befallen the

Service during their formative years.

Development of the theme, therefore, evolves from a brief overview of the creation of the RCN and its problematic early years, and then situates the effect of these events on the decisions made by officers who ran the organization from 1945 to 1948. Literature that draws together the pre-1939 RCN experience and its influence on Canada's post-war naval establishment is virtually non-existent. In terms of senior officer leadership, of the few works that comment on this relationship a heavy Imperial influence is evident as well as a sense of self-perpetuation and propriety in terms of naval ideas and tradition. In his article, "Conflict and Innovation in the Royal Canadian Navy, 1939-1945," W.A.B. Douglas clearly implies that Royal Navy officers who were on loan to the RCN and were situated in positions of authority at NSHQ put much of the pressure on Canada's naval staff "to not give up the ultimate objective of forming the kind of self-contained task group that the Admiralty had advocated in 1910, Lord Jellicoe had recommended in 1921 and the Admiralty would again endorse in 1944."³

In a 1966 article written for *Queen's Quarterly*, John D. Harbron criticized the post-war Admirals for their lack of "either the special intellectual capacity or the kind of entrepreneurial spirit" necessary "to get what the Navy most needed during these critical years [1945-1955]." He suggested that "they were responsible for the RCN's failure to find its firm place as a Canadian-oriented military unit or to substitute the newer continental and North American approach to the older and surer British one."⁴ Thirty years later, William Glover drew essentially the same conclusion, but provided the detail lacking in Harbron's account that formally links the post-war philosophy of the Royal Navy (RN) to the RCN. At NSHQ, the development and staff approval of the RN-based and most influential of the RCN post-war planning documents were crucial steps in

³ W.A.B. Douglas, "Canadian Naval Historiography," *Mariner's Mirror*, Vol. 70, No. 4, November 1984, p. 357 and W.A.B. Douglas, "Conflict and Innovation in the Royal Canadian Navy, 1939-1945," in Gerald Jordan, ed., *Naval Warfare in the Twentieth Century 1900-1945: Essays in Honour of Arthur Marder*, (London: Croom Helm, 1977), pp. 210-32.

⁴ John D. Harbron, "Royal Canadian Navy at Peace 1945-1955, The Uncertain Heritage," *Queen's Quarterly*, Vol. 73, No. 3, Autumn 1966.

substantiating requirements for a balanced fleet. Of particular importance in this study is the connection Glover makes between the British-born and educated Royal Canadian Navy Volunteer Reserve (RCNVR) officers, who researched and drafted the post-war plans, and the preponderance of Imperial bias in the development of a fleet formula for the RCN.⁵ Not surprisingly, their recommendations for a balanced fleet received enthusiastic endorsement from NSHQ's senior policy staff, all of whom undertook their formal training with the RN and were intimately familiar with traditional Imperial roles. As a result, the RCN committed to a Canadianized version of an optimistic post-war Imperial strategy that was ill-suited for Canada's defence needs.

The scarcity of scholarly study on this particular aspect of post-war naval policy is not reflective of a general trend in the current historiography of the Canadian Navy. Over the past two decades, interest in this period and Canadian naval history in general have experienced remarkable growth. From only a handful of official histories, memoirs and a collection of proceedings from the first ever naval historical conference in 1980, the publication of both popular and academic works has been prodigious. The "immaturity" of Canadian naval historiography as observed by W.A.B. Douglas in 1984, has since developed sufficiently in quantity and quality to earn a small but identifiable niche in the broad spectrum of military history taught at Canadian universities.⁶ Although this subordinate status is somewhat lamented by Marc Milner in his more recent and comprehensive version of the Douglas article, naval historians can take solace in realizing that this is a problem not uncommon in the field of military history.⁷ In calling for greater

⁵ William Glover, "The RCN: Royal Colonial or Royal Canadian Navy?" in *A Nation's Navy: In Quest of Canadian Naval Identity*, eds., Michael L. Hadley, Rob Huebert, and Fred W. Crickard, (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1996), pp. 85-90.

⁶ W.A.B. Douglas, "Canadian Naval Historiography," p. 359.

⁷ Marc Milner, "The Historiography of the Canadian Navy: The State of the Art," in *A Nation's Navy*, eds., Hadley, Huebert and Crickard, pp. 23-34. As indicated in the title, Milner provides an up-to-date review of the state of Canadian naval history. It is interesting to note that in the twelve years since W.A.B. Douglas' review of naval historiography, an impressive amount of research and publication has been achieved on the operational histories of the RCN while work is only now beginning on the Cold War era.

recognition of this subject as a university study, British historian Michael Howard noted, "the successive occupants of the chair of the history of war at Oxford have most convincingly pressed the claims of their subject to a greater degree of academic recognition, but with a very small measure of success."⁸ This was in an article written over forty years ago and in reference to a comparatively wealthy resource - British military history.

Most evident in recent work by Canadian historians has been consistent effort in taking advantage of methodological advances to revise, clarify or re-write earlier historical accounts of the RCN. Such revisionist interpretations were long overdue and necessary to improve the sometimes sterile or narrow perspectives of older official histories of the RCN.⁹ Not surprisingly, the period which benefitted the most during this process of re-examination was the Second World War and its wealth of operations involving Canadian naval forces. In the meantime, numerous research opportunities outside the Battle of the Atlantic and other wartime operations were not exploited with the same enthusiasm. The former head of Canada's Directorate of History, W.A.B. Douglas, drew attention to these gaps and noted with concern that "Canadian naval history between 1945 and 1982 has barely been touched."¹⁰ Part of the reason for the focus on combat operations is a common assumption that non-operational or peacetime histories of the armed services lack the impact or excitement generated by armed conflict. As a result, wartime politics, hardships, battles, victories and heroism get preferential

⁸ Michael Howard, "Military History as a University Study," *History*, Vol. 41, (Feb-Oct 1956), p. 184.

⁹ Gilbert Norman Tucker's two-volume work, *The Naval Service of Canada*, is typical of the older histories. The organization of the navy is covered in laborious detail and positive emphasis is given to spectacular achievements of the RCN, but for the remainder it is uneven in scope and lacking in critical analysis. As an administrative history of the RCN, however, it is a valuable resource tool for sources that are no longer in existence because of the inadvertent destruction of other documentation. Tucker's planned works on the operational history of the Second World War were cancelled in favour of Joseph Schull's popular account, *The Far Distant Ships*. Again, a lack of critical analysis against the glorified heroics of war highlighted only the positive, and as noted by David Zimmerman, "perpetuated most of the myths and legends of the wartime propaganda machine." David Zimmerman, "Northern Waves: Science, Technology and the Royal Canadian Navy, 1939-45" (Ph.D. diss., University of New Brunswick, 1987), p. 7.

¹⁰ Douglas, "Canadian Naval Historiography," p. 358.

treatment. Michael Howard once wrote mockingly, "no publisher, apparently, sleeps easily at night unless he has in prospect a new series on Great Battles, Great Captains, or Great Campaigns, or at least one new study of the First or Second World Wars."¹¹

This is no longer the case for Canadian naval history. As pointed out by Marc Milner, the 1980s "marked a major watershed in the historiography of the RCN" and aside from limited work in the area of biographical history the subject has received and continues to receive comprehensive coverage.¹² Another reason for the absence of non-operational histories has been the policy of governments to restrict access to documents and files considered sensitive until a pre-determined *safe* period of time has elapsed. In Canada, this was the case for most of the early post-war documents until their review and de-classification in 1988. Hence, the recent surge of interest in events during the Cold War era and an opportunity for the author to begin filling in some of the critical gaps that remain in Canada's naval history.

This study provides the first in-depth analysis of RCN policy and planning during the critical period of post-war demobilization and re-organization of the armed services in Canada. Aside from the early work by Harbron and Douglas and a collection of articles (including Glover's) in the recently published *A Nation's Navy: In Quest of Canadian Naval Identity*, this important phase of rebuilding and policy development has only been given cursory treatment.¹³ Tony German's concise popular history, *The Sea is*

¹¹ Michael Howard, "The Demand for Military History," *The Times Literary Supplement*, No. 3,533, 13 November 1969, p. 1293.

¹² Milner, "The Historiography of the Canadian Navy," p. 32. Gaps left behind by Gilbert Norman Tucker's official history of the pre-1939 RCN continue to be filled. *Tin Pots and Pirate Ships: Canadian Naval Forces and German Sea Raiders 1880-1918* by Michael Hadley and Roger Sarty set the pace with a solid analysis and comprehensive treatment of the evolution and early hardships of Canada's Naval Service. Much ground has also been covered by Michael J. Whitby's "In Defence of Home Waters: Doctrine and Training in the Canadian Navy during the 1930's," and extensive work by Sarty with "Hard Luck Flotilla" in *RCN in Transition 1910-1985*, and the recent publication of a collection of notable essays in *The Maritime Defence of Canada*. Sarty's personal input and directorship of volume 1 of the new official history of the pre-Second World War RCN is much anticipated.

¹³ Michael L. Hadley, Rob Huebert and Fred W. Crickard, *A Nation's Navy: In Quest of Canadian Naval Identity*, (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1996). In addition to Glover, see also Jan Drent's, "A Good Workable Little Fleet: Canadian Naval Policy, 1945-1950," and Peter T. Haydon's, "Sailors, Admirals, and Politicians: The Search for Identity after the War."

at Our Gates: The History of the Canadian Navy, identifies the early post-war era as a sickly season, but discusses only briefly what caused its many problems and general discontent.¹⁴ It brings the personnel and equipment problems that plagued the post-war RCN to light, but does not examine in detail the navy's senior leadership and the root causes for crises in manning, training and readiness associated with the balanced fleet.

Of particular assistance in the writing of this paper was the comprehensive and detailed analysis of British post-war naval policy provided by British historian Eric Grove in Vanguard to Trident.¹⁵ On a scale considerably larger than the RCN, Grove relates how the Royal Navy persevered in the development of plans for a post-war fleet far beyond the capability of a bankrupt and somewhat broken nation. As a result, the Admiralty encountered problems similar to those faced by NSHQ in their pursuit of a peacetime British fleet greater in size and responsibility than that considered politically acceptable by Whitehall. A reluctance to change and a stubbornness seen in Canada's senior naval staff were remarkably consistent with the personalities who made post-war decisions for the Royal Navy.

In sum, it was the far greater problem related to naval identity and social divisions within the RCN that distinguishes the Canadian post-war naval crisis from that of the British. Contrary to the *can do* attitude for which the Canadian Navy was renowned for during the war, a theme of desperation prevailed as naval leaders struggled continuously to come to terms with their peacetime environment. This thesis will examine their plight and bring to light a critical turning point in the *Canadianization* and evolution of the post-war RCN.

¹⁴ Tony German, The Sea is at Our Gates: The History of the Canadian Navy, (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1990).

¹⁵ Eric J. Grove, Vanguard to Trident: British Naval Policy Since World War II, (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1987).

Chapter One

Evolution of the Balanced Fleet

Amidst the turmoil of returning naval forces and demobilization in the summer of 1945, a post-war plan was already in place to modernize and convert the Royal Canadian Navy from a small-ship escort fleet into a balanced force of carriers, cruisers and destroyers. In order to understand why the navy made policy decisions concerning ship acquisition and manning during this period, it is necessary to know something of the character and collective professional experience of the RCN's senior officers. As a group, they were both fixated on the need for big ships and the requirement to create a large balanced fleet because of shared experiences in the early development and evolution of Canada's navy.

Since its inception, a recurring theme within the RCN was a desire to achieve a larger role in maritime affairs. In what began quite innocently in 1909 as a quiet debate over the creation of a Canadian Naval Service, evolved rapidly into a situation that assumed a political momentum of its own. Public revelations that Germany's accelerated construction of *DREADNOUGHT*-class battleships threatened Great Britain's numerical supremacy and pre-eminence on the high seas created a stir throughout the Empire. "New Zealand's spontaneous offer to pay for an additional dreadnought," and possibly a second, aroused imperialist sentiment in all of the Dominions.¹ Members of both Canadian political parties demanded that Prime Minister Laurier follow suit and that Canada provide a "special *emergency gift* of money to the Admiralty."² Laurier, who had been assured since the Colonial Conference of 1907 that "the Fisheries Protection Service...was all the navy Canada needed," moved to support a

¹ Roger Sarty, "Canadian Maritime Defence 1892-1914," in The Maritime Defence of Canada, a collection of essays by Roger Sarty, (The Canadian Institute of Strategic Studies, 1996), p. 15.

² 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), p. 26.

middle ground resolution.³ The Prime Minister ruled out the offer of an emergency contribution, but "agreed to press ahead with expansion of the fisheries service" and, in consultation with the Admiralty, "to create a torpedo flotilla like the one Australia was building."⁴

Encouraged by the response in the Dominions, Great Britain hosted a special Imperial Conference on Defence in London in August 1909. The delegates, expecting discussion on the development of national naval programmes involving the torpedo flotillas, were instead presented with a British proposal to dispose of the torpedo craft concept and to replace it with a navy consisting of major ship fleet units. Specifically, the Admiralty wanted each Dominion to man and develop its own fleet "around a dreadnought battlecruiser;...a less heavily armoured, but swifter variant of the dreadnought battleship."⁵ In the larger Dominions of Australia and Canada, the concept of autonomous naval forces had been gaining in popularity and was a particularly attractive option to relieve Great Britain of her overseas commitments and to satisfy nationalist sentiment. The dreadnought battlecruiser, however, was a significant step up from the coastal torpedo craft, and in particular represented an imperial symbol of distant wars and obligations that Canada was not willing to support. This led to a compromise with the British in which the Canadian delegation agreed in principle to "procure as many of the remaining, smaller ships of a fleet unit as might be afforded."⁶

Regardless of the outcome of the conference, the naval service issue created controversy in Canada. With pressure from imperialist forces to do more and from anti-imperialist Quebec to do less, Laurier attempted to appease both with the introduction of the Naval Service Bill on 12 January 1910. The Liberal compromise

³ "Minutes of the proceedings of the Colonial Conference, 1907," as quoted in Hadley and Sarty, Tin Pots and Pirate Ships, p. 17.

⁴ Ibid. p. 26.

⁵ Ibid. p. 27.

⁶ Sarty, "Canadian Maritime Defence," p. 19.

called for the development of a national navy through a six-year programme of ship construction in Canada. With assistance from the Admiralty, a total of eleven ships were planned for the RCN - four *BRISTOL*-class cruisers, a *BOADICEA*-class cruiser, and six *RIVER*-class destroyers.⁷ Also included were provisions for the formation of a naval college, similar to the Royal Naval College in England, "to train the lads who would later on become officers in the proposed Canadian ships', in the expectation that the college would eventually supply enough Canadian officers to obviate the need for British personnel."⁸ Here, future leaders of the RCN's Second World War expansion and post-war planning organizations would cut their teeth on an academically and physically challenging programme imbued with the curriculum and traditions of the mother service.⁹ As young naval cadets and later as junior officers, they would witness first hand the struggles endured by Canada's Naval Service in its early and most vulnerable years of development.

After numerous sessions of fierce debate, the Naval Service Bill was finally passed and the Naval Service Act was assented to on 4 May 1910. Even then, Canada's navy was a reality only on paper until the new fleet unit ships were constructed and delivered. In the interim, the Royal Navy offered two obsolescent cruisers, *NIOBE* and *RAINBOW*, so that the important training of Canadian recruits could commence as soon as possible. In October and November Halifax and Esquimalt welcomed Canada's first naval ships with a pageantry and ceremony befitting the occasion. Unfortunately for the navy, the celebration and customary political rhetoric which placed hope in these ships as the "the necessary forerunner of larger vessels" would only hold its value until

⁷ Gilbert Norman Tucker, *The Naval Service of Canada*, Vol. I, (Ottawa: King's Printer, 1952), pp. 119-20, 132 and 164.

⁸ G. William Hines, "The Royal Naval College of Canada, 1911-22," in *Swords and Covenants*, eds., Adrian Preston and Peter Dennis, (London: Croom Helm, 1976), p. 164.

⁹ Officially proclaimed the Royal Naval College of Canada, the institution first opened its doors at the old naval hospital in Halifax on 7 January 1911 with a mandate to impart "a complete education in all branches of naval science, tactics and strategy." See Tucker, Vol. I., Appendix 5, Section 32, subsections 1 and 2 of the Naval Service Act of 1910, p. 382.

the next election.¹⁰ Despite Laurier's best efforts to secure a Canadian fleet fit to serve the needs of both country and Empire, his much derided *tin-pot navy* would never sail. A year later in a surprise general election over the issue of American reciprocity, the Liberals were defeated and the Laurier era ended abruptly. With it went the early hopes of a fledgling naval service.

Incoming Prime Minister, Sir Robert Borden, was in no position to proceed with the planned ship construction because he had publicly denounced the Liberal programme while in opposition. His alternate solution was a Naval Aid Bill to provide Great Britain with \$35,000,000 to build three *DREADNOUGHTs* for the Royal Navy. Borden's bill, however, created as much controversy as Laurier's *tin-pot* fleet and was eventually defeated by the Liberal-dominated Senate. As a consequence, in August 1914 Canada entered Britain's war with a navy completely adrift. Borden had effectively suspended the Naval Service Act and left the RCN without policy, direction or operational ships. Ironically, for all of the political fuss made over Canada's role in Imperial naval defence, when it came time to defend the Empire, the Admiralty's response to Borden's request for advice was that "nothing effectual can now be done as ships take too long to build" and that "Canadian assistance [should] be concentrated on [the] army."¹¹

Initially, therefore, only the weary and undermanned training ships, *NIOBE* and *RAINBOW*, stood between Canada's shores and the prospect of German cruisers and commerce raiders. However, by 1915 the additional threat of a trans-Atlantic U-boat offensive prompted the expansion of the RCN's eastern coastal defence force to twenty vessels - "a dozen for Halifax (only a slight increase in the existing force) and eight at Sydney for the Gulf of St. Lawrence, the main summer shipping route."¹²

¹⁰ Hadley and Sarty, *Tin Pots and Pirate Ships*, p. 54.

¹¹ Secret Signal, Canadian High Commissioner, London to Prime Minister Borden, 10 October 1914 (cables): Borden Papers, O'C. No. 660, as cited in Tucker, Vol. I, p. 219.

¹² Barry Gough and Roger Sarty, "Sailors and Soldiers: The Royal Navy, the Canadian Forces, and the Defence of Atlantic Canada, 1890-1918," in *A Nation's Navy: In Quest of Canadian Naval Identity*,

Three years later, RCN initiative and perseverance established an "efficient ocean and coastal convoy system" and an expanded flotilla of over 100 coastal defence vessels, which included new anti-submarine trawlers and drifters, wooden US Navy submarine chasers and two seaplane squadrons.¹³ Despite small numbers of experienced and trained personnel and only limited support for modern weapons and equipment late in the war, the Canadian flotilla "played an important part through port defence and convoy escort in keeping losses to a minimum."¹⁴

At the final Imperial War Conference of June 1918, Dominion Prime Ministers endorsed a proposal to standardize their separate navies in a relationship with Great Britain that followed "the principle of association rather than integration."¹⁵ In order to gain a better appreciation of future requirements, Borden and his Dominion contemporaries encouraged "visits from a highly qualified representative of the Admiralty who, by reason of his ability and experience would be thoroughly competent to advise the naval authorities of the Dominions of such matters."¹⁶

The former First Sea Lord and Grand Fleet Commander, Admiral Viscount Jellicoe of Scapa, was selected and sailed for a naval mission and tour of the Dominions. After stops in India, Australia and New Zealand, he arrived in Esquimalt on 8 November 1919 and reached Ottawa a few weeks later. Following several sessions

eds., Michael L. Hadley, Rob Huebert and Fred W. Crickard, (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1996), pp. 125-26.

¹³ Ibid. pp. 128-29.

¹⁴ Sarty, "Canadian Maritime Defence," p. 24. Many of the new vessels required a period of *breaking in* before acceptance for use on patrol and several had yet to receive their gun armament from the Admiralty. Stocks of only 140 depth charges and 27 non-directional hydrophones in early 1918 were increased considerably by the summer, when some of the "more capable Mark II directional hydrophones" were introduced into service. See Roger Sarty, "Hard Luck Flotilla: The RCN's Atlantic Coast Patrol, 1914-18," in The RCN in Retrospect, 1910-1968, ed., James A. Boutilier, (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1982), pp. 112-13.

¹⁵ R.A. Preston, Canada and Imperial Defence, (Durham: Duke University Press, 1967), p. 502, as cited in Barry D. Hunt, "The Road to Washington: Canada and Empire Naval Defence," RCN in Retrospect, ed., Boutilier, p. 49.

¹⁶ Tucker, Vol. I, p. 303.

with Borden and members of the Cabinet, Jellicoe submitted his report to the Government of Canada on 31 December. In it, he proposed two options to satisfy Canada's requirement for post-war naval forces. He suggested a force of 3 light cruisers, a flotilla leader, 12 torpedo craft and 8 submarines for Dominion coastal requirements, and if "Canada decided to participate with the United Kingdom and the other Dominions in the naval defence of the whole empire, she should obtain and man, in addition to the purely defensive navy already mentioned, either one or two fleet units each of....a battle cruiser, 2 light cruisers, 6 destroyers, 4 submarines, 2 fleet minesweepers, an aircraft carrier, and certain additional vessels including a depot ship and a flotilla leader for the destroyers, and a parent ship for the submarines."¹⁷

Mindful of the pre-war naval debacles and alert to the country's growing sense of post-war nationhood, Borden and his successor, Arthur Meighen, tactfully rejected Jellicoe's recommendations for Imperial naval defence. Both were content to proceed with the demobilization of forces and to await policy decisions by the world's major powers respecting post-war security arrangements. At the Peace Conference and signing of the Treaty of Versailles earlier in the year, Canada's autonomy and independence had received a notable boost as each Dominion signed for itself and was given a seat at the League of Nations. Canadians were also witness to rising optimism for world disarmament such that by December 1921, when the Liberals re-assumed power under their new leader, William Lyon Mackenzie King, global initiatives were already in place to support continued reductions in defence. International negotiations at the 1921-22 Washington Conference on naval arms limitations boosted King's confidence even further. Not long after the conference he closed Canada's Naval College, slashed the fleet from five ships to two, and imposed "an immediate 40 per cent cut" to the navy's budget.¹⁸

¹⁷ Ibid. pp. 311-12.

¹⁸ Desmond Morton, *A Military History of Canada*, (Edmonton: Hurtig Publishers Ltd., 1985), p. 170.

For nearly two decades Canada virtually ignored defence. From 1922 until 1931, an average expenditure of less than \$2,000,000 per annum for the navy permitted operation of only one ex-Royal Navy (RN) training destroyer on each coast.¹⁹ HMC ships *PATRIOT* and *PATRICIAN*, replaced in 1928 by HMC ships *CHAMPLAIN* and *VANCOUVER* on the east and west coast respectively, represented Canada's front line fighting units and primary seaward defence. In the summer of 1931 the first destroyers purpose-built in Great Britain for the RCN, *SAGUENAY* and *SKEENA*, arrived in Halifax and doubled the size of Canada's navy overnight. Their cost of almost \$1.0 million each would weigh heavily on the minds of senior defence officials, who were later responsible for slashing defence spending as the world's economy worsened.

When pressured to take more drastic budget reduction measures during the depths of the depression in 1933, the Chief of the General Staff "considered the navy to be the least necessary of the three [Services], and therefore the one to be sacrificed."²⁰ Although the navy defended its position before the Treasury Board and crisis was averted, the vulnerability of the Naval Service was again emphasized. After this narrow escape, the fortunes of the RCN gradually improved. In 1935, a significant military build up and production of arms in Germany, Italy and Japan increased international tension and resulted in the beginning of a modest Canadian naval rearmament and modernization programme. The RCN doubled in size during the next four years and at the outbreak of war in 1939, Canada's navy was in much better shape than in 1914 with six modern fleet destroyers.

Throughout these first three decades of the RCN's existence and well into the 1950s, the influence of the Admiralty on Canada's naval affairs was significant. It was a relationship in which the Royal Navy was both mother and provider to the RCN for practically everything. The initial crews for *NIOBE* and *RAINBOW* were almost all RN,

¹⁹ Figures taken from Appendix X, "Estimates and Expenditures, 1910-40," Tucker, Vol. I, pp. 408-409.

²⁰ Tucker, Vol. I, p. 342.

and even later, during and after the Second World War, a number of key positions at Naval Service Headquarters (NSHQ) were assumed by officers on loan or transferred from the Royal Navy. Ships, equipment, weapons, tactics and all specialized training were provided by the Admiralty.²¹

At the end of the Second World War, many of the RCN's most senior officers were graduates of the Royal Naval College of Canada (RNCC, 1911-1922). For them, "rigid naval discipline" and "naval tradition" were a way of life under the close supervision of College Administrator, Commander E.A.E. Nixon, and other ex-Royal Navy officers who staffed most of the principal positions.²² During the initial years of the college, when RCN ships were not plentiful or available, and more so during the inter-war period, Canadian naval cadets and RCN midshipman received their training in big ships and establishments of the Royal Navy. As a midshipman, each young Canadian officer initiated seagoing naval life as "an embryo in a very carefully supervised English naval incubator - the very womb of the British navy and the source of the Royal naval ethic."²³ Upon "successful completion of their exams for the rank of lieutenant, about five years, they returned to Canada and the RCN."²⁴ Back home, they arrived as model naval officers; well versed in RN customs, traditions and a manner of social behaviour sometimes uncharacteristic and foreign to young Canadian seamen who volunteered for service in the Second World War.

²¹ C.P. Stacey, Arms, Men and Governments, The War Policies of Canada, 1939-1945, (Ottawa: Queen's Printer, 1970) pp. 79-80; and Tucker, Vol. I, pp. 349-51.

²² Hines, "The Royal Naval College of Canada, 1911-22," p. 167.

²³ Richard R. Leir, "Big Ship Time: The Formative Years of RCN Officers Serving in RN Capital Ships," in RCN in Retrospect, ed., Boutilier, p. 75.

²⁴ William Glover, "The RCN: Royal Colonial or Royal Canadian Navy?" in Hadley, Huebert and Crickard, A Nation's Navy, pp. 76-77. Glover presents an interesting argument in this paper which, for senior RCN officers of the immediate post-war period, suggests that the strong influence of RN training during their formative years and their lack of a broad education (a university curriculum) placed them out of step with national feeling and the country's political mainstream. He concludes that post-war naval policy modeled on the RN suffered for lack of Canadian relevance and identity as did some instances of post-war leadership.

Officers who did well by this system were assigned the most prestigious Canadian wartime commands and by 1945 emerged with seniority, power and influence. Their post-war vision was a Canadian fleet that embodied the same principles and equipment employed by their closest allies, the United States and Great Britain. Impressive United States Navy (USN) and RN fleet task forces advocated a combination of carriers, cruisers and destroyers, thus bringing together a balanced and formidable mix of sub-surface, surface and air warfare capabilities. For RCN regular force veteran officers who occupied senior executive positions at NSHQ, the balanced fleet was the RCN's task force of the future. To them, it was painfully obvious that the cost of doing business and maintaining parity in future command relationships with the RN, and more importantly the USN, would demand the development of naval aviation and supporting elements of a carrier task force.²⁵

There was great incentive therefore for the RCN, "more than its sister Services," to place considerable emphasis on preparing plans for post-war forces.²⁶ As early as November 1940, an official proposal to acquire larger ships indicated "that the RCN might take over four cruisers from the RN either by purchase or on loan."²⁷ The plan, however, was placed on hold because of disturbing convoy losses and the

²⁵ Despite heavy reliance on the Royal Navy during the early stages of the Second World War, Canada's defence relationship and that of the RCN with the United States grew progressively closer as the war continued. America's entry into the conflict in December 1941 served to intensify the continental partnership and expand ongoing efforts to defeat common enemies in the Atlantic and the Pacific. Increased access to war supplies and equipment and greater planning, scientific and technical co-operation and liaison supplemented to some extent the RCN's large contribution of ships and personnel in the Western Atlantic, Canadian naval participation in the Aleutian Campaign and combined defence efforts in northern Canada and Alaska. During the latter stages of the U-boat offensive, the highly successful exploits of American carrier-based hunter-killer groups in the mid-Atlantic did not go unnoticed by Canadian authorities. As noted by Marc Milner, the RCN looked increasingly to the USN as a role model for anti-submarine warfare through the adoption of USN A/S measures, oceanographic science (bathythermograph work and the effect of ocean temperature layers on sound propagation), and plentiful resources. See Marc Milner, The U-boat Hunters, pp. 229-31 and 249-54.

²⁶ James Eayrs, In Defence of Canada, Vol III, Peacemaking and Deterrence, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1972), p. 81.

²⁷ Naval Staff Memorandum, 11 November 1940, N.S. 1017-10-34 (1), as cited in Tucker, Vol. II, p. 89.

corresponding higher priority of escort duties and anti-submarine warfare in the North Atlantic. In the previous month alone, the introduction of wolf pack tactics by Rear Admiral Karl Donitz, Germany's Commander in Chief U-boats, resulted in "forty of the fifty-nine U-boat attacks" being "directed at convoy targets."²⁸ Significant numbers of Allied merchant ships continued to be sunk until the spring of 1943 when the situation was suddenly and quite dramatically reversed. During April and May 1943 huge losses were inflicted upon the packs. This forced Donitz to withdraw from the North Atlantic and ultimately accept defeat in the battle for these vital sea lanes. Good fortune and a timely combination of increased air and sea resources, excellent intelligence, fair weather and sagging morale throughout Germany's increasingly inexperienced submarine fleet all contributed to a highly successful Allied offensive.²⁹ With the Battle of the Atlantic under control, the RCN was once again able to divert more attention to the development of plans for a balanced fleet.

Under the guidance of Captain G.R. Miles, Director of Plans (DOP) at NSHQ, long-term fleet planning was formally re-introduced during the first Quebec Conference in August 1943. While Canada was not officially represented at the meetings between Churchill and Roosevelt, separate talks were organized between the Canadian and British Chiefs of Staff. Based on recommendations drafted by Miles, Nelles used this opportunity to direct the attention of Cabinet War Committee (CWC) members toward procurement items that would enhance the RCN's future role in the invasion of Europe and the defeat of Japan, and also satisfy Canada's post-war requirements. Canada's CNS left little doubt that the acquisition of RN cruisers, aircraft carriers and

²⁸ Marc Milner, North Atlantic Run, The Royal Canadian Navy and the Battle for the Convoys, (Markham: Penguin Books, 1990), p. 23.

²⁹ The removal in January 1943 of Canadian escort groups from the mid-ocean escort force (MOEF) to Londonderry for group training and some modernization proved to be bittersweet. While undergoing training on a rotational basis to improve their efficiency, RCN ships watched from the sidelines as RN convoy support groups and aircraft wreaked havoc among the wolf packs. Of the 65 U-boats sunk during the months of April and May, only one was prosecuted by a Canadian ship - HMCS *DRUMHELLER*. Her third of a kill accurately summarized the frustrations of many RCN crews who, having carried the burden of convoy escort for so long, would miss the great battles that turned the tide against the Germans.

destroyers would be highly visible items on the agenda planned for Sir Dudley Pound, First Sea Lord and Admiral of the Fleet.³⁰

For the Admiralty the conference provided an opportunity to resolve serious manning deficiencies. Landing craft intended for combined operations in France required crews that the Royal Navy was unable to provide. Admiral Pound hoped Canada could make up some of these shortfalls given the improved situation in the North Atlantic and the likelihood that corvette and frigate building programmes would be reduced. The RCN, although not yet entirely convinced the production of ASW escorts should be cut back, was prepared to play a larger role in combined operations if it meant idle Canadian sailors would gain valuable sea time in big ships of the Royal Navy. The benefits to Canada's potential post-war fleet were significant. Wartime exposure to RN carrier and cruiser operations went a long way toward increasing government confidence in the value of these ships, and would lessen Admiralty resistance to the transfer of warships with which RCN personnel were both familiar and trained to operate. On the opening day of the conference, Admiral Nelles endorsed Miles' recommendations and spoke for many Canadian senior officers by expressing his desire "to see that the RCN did not finish the war as a small-ship navy entirely."³¹

By the end of the conference, both sides were making progress. With support from their respective governments, Nelles and Pound reached a provisional agreement to have Canada provide the RN with sufficient manpower for three flotillas of landing craft, two fleet destroyers and two new light cruisers.³² The CWC, having

³⁰ Minutes of meeting held in Chateau Frontenac, August 11, 1943, D Hist 81/520/1270 Conferences 1920-1945, Vol. II. As Admiralty Director of Plans during the 1921 Imperial Conference on Defence, Pound was no stranger to Canadian interest in taking over British fleet units. Prior to the conference he suggested, "some transfers [of ships] might help to stimulate local interest in the development of a *useful* [author's emphasis] Dominion naval policy." Adm. 1/8587, Admiralty Memorandum, "Canadian Naval Forces," (n.d.), as cited in Barry D. Hunt, "The Road to Washington: Canada and Empire Naval Defence, 1918-1921," in *RCN in Retrospect*, ed., Boutilier, pp. 53-54.

³¹ loc. cit.

³² W.A.B. Douglas, "Conflict and Innovation in the Royal Canadian Navy, 1939-1945," p. 212.

satisfied Prime Minister King that the navy would not exceed its manpower allocation, approved the Quebec arrangements in principle, but withheld decision regarding Nelles' additional proposal to acquire two escort carriers until a thorough study was carried out.³³ A few days later, a joint RCN-RCAF committee was established to examine the feasibility of a Canadian Fleet Air Arm.

By November 1943 Admiral Nelles' efforts at the Quebec Conference began to pay off. The manning situation in the RN had worsened appreciably and as a result, the newly appointed First Sea Lord, Sir Andrew Cunningham, signalled NSHQ with a request for assistance. Nelles promptly sent the Assistant CNS, Captain W.B. Creery, to London to sort out what could be done. On 12 December, Creery recommended Canada follow the RN's recent decision to reduce its production of ASW escorts and accept a British proposal to utilize surplus Canadian personnel to "take over from the Admiralty 10 frigates and 2 C.V.E.'s [escort carriers]."³⁴ Cabinet initially approved only the procurement of smaller ships, but later agreed to the acquisition of cruisers. Within months several new or modernized and more capable frigates and fleet destroyers were transferred to the RCN. By October 1944 and April 1945 respectively, the light cruisers *UGANDA* and *MINOTAUR* (later renamed *QUEBEC* and *ONTARIO*) were commissioned in the RCN and readied for use in the Pacific War.³⁵ As for the carriers, the absence of Cabinet agreement on a defined naval air policy and protracted negotiations with Admiralty officials ensured that an RCN carrier would likely not be

³³ War Committee of the Cabinet Minutes, 8 September 1943, N.S. 8020-1 (2) as cited in Tucker, Vol. II, p. 92.

³⁴ Report by Captain W.B. Creery, R.C.N., 12 December 1943, N.S., M.S. 1017-10-22 (1) as cited in Tucker, Vol. II, p. 92.

³⁵ HMCS *UGANDA* joined the British Pacific Fleet in Sydney, Australia on 9 March 1945. She saw limited action in the Okinawa campaign and off Japan before her premature and somewhat embarrassing departure from the operational theatre. On 4 April 1945 Mackenzie King made it policy that only volunteers from those enlisted for general service would be required to serve in the Pacific War. A majority of *UGANDA*'s crew opted to return home. The Commanding Officer had no choice but to shape a course for Esquimalt. Two weeks later, atomic bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki brought the Japanese conflict to an abrupt end. See Stacey, *Arms, Men and Governments*, pp. 60-62 and 482-83.

commissioned in time to participate in hostilities. In the interim, however, Cunningham's offer to loan the escort aircraft carriers *NABOB* and *PUNCHER* gave Nelles and other senior officers reason to believe that the balanced fleet was achievable.

Admiralty's manning crisis and Cunningham's offer were indeed fortuitous for the RCN. Only eight months earlier the Naval Board had recommended that a senior RCN officer be sent to the United States and the United Kingdom to investigate the set up and organization of established naval air facilities.³⁶ The value of American and British escort carriers in the protection of convoys had not gone unnoticed by NSHQ, most notably by two of the RCN's up and coming senior officers, Acting-Captain H.G. DeWolf and Acting-Captain H.N. Lay. Assigned to NSHQ's Plans Division and Operations Division respectively, both men were intimately aware of the increased reliance that senior Allied partners placed on maritime aviation to deter and destroy U-boats. Both officers agreed that escort carriers would not only extend the reach of ASW aircraft and ships, but would reinforce the RCN's call for recognition and autonomy in the North Atlantic.

Selected for the mission was Horatio Nelson Lay - a naval officer whose personal interest in the development of maritime air in Canada had been well established early in his service career. Rejected as a candidate for the Royal Navy's Fleet Air Arm course in 1927 and again in 1928, Lay remained preoccupied with matters pertaining to naval aviation and later emerged as the RCN's expert and key participant in negotiations for the procurement of aircraft carriers and shore-based support.³⁷ After two years as Director of Operations Division, Lay eagerly accepted the fact finding assignment and departed Canada in late April for approximately four months. On his return he made a number of positive recommendations in a paper entitled *Report on the Formation of a*

³⁶ Minutes of the Naval Board, 12 April 1943, D Hist File 100-100/2, and Tucker, Vol. II, pp. 89-90.

³⁷ Interview conducted with Rear Admiral, RCN (Retired) H. Nelson Lay, 14 January 1974, D Hist, 74/653, pp. 9-10.

Royal Canadian Naval Air Service."³⁸ Lay made no attempt to disguise his enthusiasm for the project nor his preference to have a Canadian Fleet Air Arm organized along British, instead of American, precepts and standards. In his report he recommended:

- a. that a Royal Canadian Naval Air Service be established as soon as possible;
- b. that the Royal Canadian Naval Air Service should be manned by naval personnel under the direct administrative and operational control of the Royal Canadian Navy;
- c. that the organization and training of the Royal Canadian Naval Air Service should be modelled on that of the British Fleet Air Arm with modification;
- d. that the Royal Canadian Naval Air Service should concern itself with carrier operations only;
- e. that a naval air branch be immediately established at Naval Service Headquarters and that the Admiralty be asked to lend a number of experienced officers to fill the key positions; and
- f. that the growth of the Royal Canadian Naval Air Service should be planned to provide sufficient carriers of suitable types to ensure that the air balance is appropriate to the size of the Canadian fleet and to its commitments.³⁹

Armed with Lay's report, the support of the Naval Board, and encouraging signs from Admiralty during and after the Quebec Conference, Captain Miles circulated a planning document in mid-November 1943 which described in detail Canada's post-war maritime responsibilities. As expected, the document's strategic vision was heavily

³⁸ Acting-Captain H.N. Lay, RCN, "Report on the Formation of a Royal Canadian Naval Air Service," 27 August 1943, National Archives (hereafter NA), RG 24 83-84/167, Box 575, file N.S. 1700-913, Part A, copy no. 7.

³⁹ Ibid. pp. 32-35. Lay's preference to develop a Canadian Naval Air Service along RN rather than USN lines was essentially a matter of practicality. He assessed the USN air branches to be "infinitely superior" to those of the RN; however, by virtue of the RCN's long association with the RN, the fact that Canadians were already serving in the RN Fleet Air Arm (FAA), and familiarity with British procedures, equipment and training, it made imminent sense to go with the Royal Navy for the sake of expedience. See H. Nelson Lay, *Memoirs of a Mariner*, (Stittsville, Ont: Canada's Wings, 1982), p. 152.

biased by events of the day and Canada's growing participation and influence in the North Atlantic. Miles recommended the following tasks as those which the post-war navy should be capable of carrying out:

- a. to maintain command of the oceans adjacent to Canada, Newfoundland and Labrador, with the assistance of the R.C.A.F., against all attacks except sustained attacks by major task forces;
- b. to contribute to the maintenance of Imperial sea communications in proportion to Canadian resources, and not less than to the extent of providing trade protection forces proportionate to the size of Canada's Merchant Marine;
- c. to contribute assistance to the joint defence of oceans adjacent to North America;
- d. to protect Canadian shipping proceeding on its lawful purposes, and to ensure the preservation of trade routes vital to Canada in the event of passage on the high seas being rendered dangerous by the outbreak of war between two or more foreign powers;
- e. to prevent the commission of unneutral acts by belligerents in Canadian territorial waters;
- f. to support national policies and interests generally;
- g. to contribute to post-hostilities policing of defeated enemy countries; and
- h. to contribute to post-hostilities minesweeping.⁴⁰

Also included in Miles' paper was a prophetic assertion that Canada's "Naval Service may be called upon to contribute to any future international security forces which may be organized to ensure the preservation of peace in regions in whose continued tranquility Canada is interested." Specifically, Miles recommended an impressive Canadian armada consisting of 5 cruisers, 3 flotillas of destroyers each

⁴⁰ Memorandum, "Post-War Canadian Navy," prepared by Lieutenant G.F. Todd, Assistant Director of Plans, for Captain G.R. Miles, Director of Plans, 17 November 1943, File No. M.S. 1017-10-34, D Hist Naval Policy and Plans 1650-1, Vol. II.

consisting of 8 private ships and one leader, 16 frigates, 12 minesweepers, a Naval Air Service with 2 light fleet carriers, and a fleet train of necessary supply and maintenance ships in order to give the whole fleet complete mobility."⁴¹ To man the ships and support the fleet, he further estimated a complement of no less than 30,000 officers and men employed at two coastal commands and a single Naval Service Headquarters. In late December 1943, the Naval Staff approved in principle DOP's paper as "the minimum navy which could be considered as capable of effectively meeting the foregoing strategic requirements."⁴² Under subsequent direction by Nelles, however, the overall complement was reduced to a more affordable but still somewhat unrealistic peacetime planning figure of 15,000 permanent force personnel.⁴³ Even at this level of manning, NSHQ remained confident it would be possible to contribute an effective, interoperable and supportive naval task force to maintain autonomy over the North West Atlantic and to continue to share strategic responsibilities with her post-war coalition partners.⁴⁴

In relative terms, RCN optimism was similar to and equally ambitious as post-war plans for the Royal Navy. The Admiralty's Plans Division proposed an

⁴¹ loc. cit.

⁴² Minutes from 216th and 217th Naval Staff Meetings held on 24 and 27 December 1943 respectively, referred to in Lieutenant G.F. Todd's Memorandum, "Post-War Canadian Navy," prepared for Captain G.R. Miles, Director of Plans, 21 January 1944, File No. 1017-10-34 F.D. 394, D Hist Naval Policy and Plans 1650-1, Vol II. This particular memorandum summarized Todd's work and approximately six months of planning and discussion on the composition and tasks of Canada's post-war navy. Miles released it for general distribution in NSHQ on 25 January 1944.

⁴³ Minutes of the 217th Naval Staff Meeting, 27 December 1943, as referred to in Director of Plans Memorandum, "Post-War Canadian Navy," 21 January 1944, File No. 1017-10-34 F.D. 394, D Hist Naval Policy and Plans 1650-1, Vol II.

⁴⁴ During the early and most critical stages of the Battle of the Atlantic the RCN willingly sacrificed national aspirations for the common good. The protection of convoys and the defeat of U-boats were clearly the priorities. Once the crisis had passed, however, the RCN began to assert a measure of its own authority consistent with Canada's contribution of men and ships to the North West Atlantic. Achieving greater recognition and higher command responsibilities was eventually successful despite the reluctance of British and American authorities. See W.G.D. Lund, "The Royal Canadian Navy's Quest for Autonomy in the North West Atlantic: 1941-43," in James A. Boutillier, ed., The RCN in Retrospect, 1910-1968, (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1982), pp.138-57; and Milner, The U-boat Hunters, pp. 22-32.

incredible peacetime strength many times larger than Miles' recommendations with 50 capital ships and a manning requirement of 400,000 to 600,000 personnel.⁴⁵ Canada, Australia and New Zealand were included as contributors to the above totals as "no unit of the Empire, not even Great Britain, could by itself expect to defeat a major enemy."⁴⁶ Great Britain, however, was already bankrupt and immoderate spending of any kind would not be tolerated. As consumers of manpower, "material and, even more important, as spenders of scarce foreign exchange, the armed forces seemed to the Treasury to be a positive menace to Britain's recovery."⁴⁷

Mackenzie King could not have agreed more. He was very concerned about the survival of Canada's post-war economy and responded cautiously to RCN plans for the Pacific War, the post-war fleet, and Nelles' arguments for the acquisition of carriers. King made it perfectly clear to members of the Cabinet "that the government were not justified in employing their wartime powers to authorize expenditures which were primarily related to the post-war period."⁴⁸ Henceforth, as the end of the war drew nearer, greater government scrutiny was brought to bear in the procurement of military hardware.

On 12 January 1944, the Cabinet War Committee reluctantly approved RCN manning of the American-built Royal Navy CVEs *NABOB* and *PUNCHER*.⁴⁹ The

⁴⁵ Eric J. Grove, Vanguard to Trident: British Naval Policy since World War II, (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1987), p. 7.

⁴⁶ Memorandum, "Post-War Royal Navy," prepared by RCN Naval Assistant (Policy and Plans), 12 January 1945, M.S. 41-3-1 Plans Papers (P.P. 2/45), D Hist, Naval Policy and Plans 1650-1.

⁴⁷ Grove, Vanguard to Trident, p. 8.

⁴⁸ Minutes of the War Committee of the Cabinet, 21 October and 10 November 1943, N.S. 1700-913 (2), as cited in Tucker, Vol. II, pp. 96-97.

⁴⁹ HMS *NABOB* was commissioned into the Royal Navy on 7 September 1943 with a Canadian ship's company and a British air complement. Acting-Captain H. Nelson Lay was appointed as Commanding Officer a month later. The RCN kept their promise to man the CVEs even though formal approval from Cabinet did not take place until 12 January 1944. "Chronology of Events in the History of the Royal Canadian Navy," prepared by Naval Historical Section Ottawa, 16 March 1959, D Hist File 1440-5.

additional cost and commitment of personnel created some debate among Committee members, but given that *NABOB* had been manned by Canadians since September the decision to proceed was only a formality. Besides, the RCN-RCAF committee which they had set up in October to examine the feasibility of operating carriers was decidedly in favour of the proposal. There were also numerous other practical advantages. Both *NABOB* and *PUNCHER* were being fitted out in nearby Seattle and would soon be headed north to Burrard Drydock in Vancouver for RN modifications, sea trials, work ups, and operational service. In the RCN, a surplus of trained Canadian seamen were sitting idle and awaiting employment as a result of reduced corvette and frigate building programmes. In addition to the fleet destroyers and cruisers already approved, the manning of carriers would be seen as another gesture of support for British forces. Finally, and most critical to NSHQ, the introduction of *NABOB* would establish RCN expertise in an area of naval warfare central to the development of the balanced fleet. To delay until British-built carriers were available would jeopardize Canadian exposure to carrier operations for at least another year.

An additional hurdle which the RCN had to overcome was American aid legislation. Under terms of the United States lend-lease agreement, the American-built CVEs were loaned specifically to Great Britain as part of an aid programme and could not be sold to non-participating foreign nations such as Canada. The manning of all but air complements in the CVEs by Canadian officers and crew brought into question the sincerity of Canada's indifference to lend-lease legislation and the likelihood that *NABOB* or *PUNCHER* would ever be eligible for transfer to the RCN. At the end of the day, however, the ships remained part of the Royal Navy, the Americans accepted the Canadian arrangement, and the RCN fulfilled its promise to relieve Admiralty's manning shortage. Most important, the Canadian Cabinet could ignore the issue of ownership and continue to "emphasize its independence from American charity."⁵⁰

⁵⁰ Robert Bothwell, Ian Drummond and John English, Canada Since 1945: Power, Politics, and Provincialism, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1989), pp. 62-63.

In October 1943 Acting-Captain Lay, who had been appointed Commanding Officer of *NABOB*'s initial care and maintenance crew, was officially retained as first in command. He earned the dubious distinction of becoming the first Canadian to command an operational aircraft carrier and subsequently, the first to lose one as a result of damage from enemy action.⁵¹ Notwithstanding Mackenzie King's earlier reservations about large ships and manpower ceilings, approval to man the escort carriers enabled the RCN to gain firsthand experience in operating aircraft from ships and opened the door for future negotiations.

Shortly after Cabinet had authorized CVE manning, Miles saw to it that momentum gained was not lost. On 14 January 1944, he released another Plans Division paper in which it was recommended that "the cruisers *BLAKE* and *DEFENCE* (in addition to *UGANDA* and *ONTARIO*), 2 Light Fleet Carriers (completing late 1945), and the flotilla of *CRESCENT*-class destroyers" be obtained from the Royal Navy for use in the Pacific.⁵² Similarly, it was "about the beginning of 1944 the authorities in Ottawa began to give serious thought to the part Canada should play against Japan after Germany was beaten."⁵³ On 20 January the Cabinet War Committee endorsed a letter from the Minister of National Defence for Air, C.G. Power, to the British Secretary of State

⁵¹ Lay participated in two operations off the Norwegian coast. During the latter campaign, "Operation Goodwood", his tenure in command was cut short. On 22 August 1944, the carrier was torpedoed by U-354 and suffered extensive damage. Under Lay's direction, the ship's company survived additional U-boats and gale force storms and eventually made it back to Scapa Flow. Unluckily for Lay, *NABOB* was beyond economical repair and was paid off into Category "C" until the end of the war. See H. Nelson Lay, *Memoirs of a Mariner*, (Stittsville, Ont: Canada's Wings, 1982); Kealy, J.D.F. and E.C. Russell, *A History of Canadian Naval Aviation 1918-1962*, (Ottawa: Queen's Printer, 1965); Shawn Michael Cafferky, "Towards the Balanced Fleet: A History of the Royal Canadian Naval Air Service, 1943-1945," (unpublished MA thesis, University of Victoria, 1989); Tucker, Vol. II; Joseph Schull, *The Far Distant Ships*, (Ottawa: Queen's Printer, 1952); Naval Historical Section, "Brief History of HMS *NABOB*," 9 June 1960, D Hist 8000-HMS *NABOB*; and Stuart Soward, "Canadian Naval Aviation, 1915-69," in *RCN in Retrospect*, ed. Boutilier, pp. 273-74.

⁵² Aide-Memoire, "History of Negotiations in London for Acquisition of Light Fleet Carriers and Flotilla of Fleet Destroyers," 24 May 1945, D Hist 1650-1, Plans Papers - Index Number 17/45.

⁵³ Stacey, *Arms, Men and Governments*, p. 54.

indicating it desirable that Canada "take part in this phase of the war."⁵⁴ Admiral Nelles, who was relieved as CNS by Vice Admiral G.C. Jones earlier in the month, was sent to the UK as the Senior Canadian Flag Officer (Overseas) and arrived in London on 23 January. Although his dismissal from Ottawa had effectively removed him from the navy's executive body and decision-making process, his presence in London was still beneficial to the RCN. He was intimately familiar with the Royal Navy's cast of characters in London and was well positioned to advise on Canada's naval participation in the Pacific and to oversee negotiations between the Admiralty and NSHQ for the acquisition of ships.

Nelles' removal was the result of a falling out with the Minister of National Defence for Naval Services, Angus L. Macdonald. The issue centred on who was responsible for the RCN's poor performance and subsequent withdrawal from North Atlantic convoy routes the previous spring. Foremost among RCN problems was a lack of modern weapons and sensors needed to deal with the U-boat threat. Especially disheartening was the fact that most systems were already fitted and operational in RN and Admiralty-supported Allied escorts. David Zimmerman explains that "Macdonald placed the blame for the entire situation squarely on Nelles shoulders" because the CNS did not keep him fully informed of known deficiencies in Canadian shipboard equipment and convoy escort performance.⁵⁵ In comparison to the RN, the RCN was critically short of gyro-compasses and up to date asdic sets (sonar) and ASW weapons (hedgehog).⁵⁶ Consequently, Canadian ships were less capable and less efficient as submarine hunters

⁵⁴ loc. cit.

⁵⁵ Zimmerman, The Great Naval Battle of Ottawa, pp. 143-44. Zimmerman provides convincing evidence that Macdonald's expeditious removal of Nelles was necessary to prevent harmful media exposure of the equipment crisis; therefore, enabling him to protect the Liberals from embarrassment, to safeguard his own political neck, and to cover up Nelles' incompetence.

⁵⁶ Ibid. p. 145. Unlike depth charges which were rolled off the stern at a best estimate of the submarine's position, hedgehog was an ahead-thrown ASW weapon designed to provide ships with more accuracy and a higher kill percentage. In theory, hedgehog's pattern of 24 contact-fused mortar bombs would achieve greater success in hitting a target while the submarine was held *in-contact* forward of the ship by the asdic operator.

and killers. After detailed analyses of actual shipboard fits and official correspondence, Zimmerman and Marc Milner tend to agree that blame for the equipment crisis of 1943 should have been shared equally. Both Macdonald and Nelles were negligent in their failure to stay in touch with the operational fleet and to rectify equipment deficiencies when there was opportunity to do so.⁵⁷

With the equipment crisis behind him, Nelles switched his focus to the task of Admiralty liaison. By May 1944 he had succeeded in combining London's two separate Canadian naval authorities under one title, Canadian Naval Mission Overseas (CNMO), with himself as head of the Mission.⁵⁸ Captain F.L. Houghton, the former Senior Canadian Naval Officer (London), was absorbed as his Deputy. Of immediate benefit was the elimination of duplicate duties and the ability for a single authority to deal with navy and to some extent joint service issues.

As CNMO, Nelles spent most of his time pushing forward negotiations to acquire RN ships and mediating navy-to-navy arrangements for RCN participation in the Pacific War. In the conduct of these tasks, the Naval Mission was well served by reforms which Nelles himself had initiated in Canada to resolve the equipment crisis. A larger and much improved Canadian technical liaison staff in the UK dramatically increased information flow from Admiralty to NSHQ and raised the level of Canadian access and involvement in British research and development. These enhanced lines of communication were important as the development of RCN post-war plans would rely heavily on cooperation from the Admiralty.

Additionally, a rough blueprint of the 15,000 complement peacetime navy, which Nelles had ordered DOP to prepare in December 1943, had since been approved by the Naval Staff and was given wide circulation for comment and feedback from all naval departments. In this paper, Captain Miles directed particular attention "to the fact that

⁵⁷ For a detailed account of events which led to the dismissal of Vice Admiral Nelles see Zimmerman, The Great Naval Battle of Ottawa, pp. 135-47, Milner, North Atlantic Run, pp. 242-68, and Stacey, Arms, Men and Governments, pp. 315-19.

⁵⁸ Stacey, Arms, Men and Governments, p. 319.

only 6,187 officers and men will be available to meet all requirements other than those of manning ships in active commission, and that the utmost economy must consequently be exercised everywhere."⁵⁹ Shown below is a segment of DOP's broad outline plan which clearly illustrates the balance of ships desired for peacetime and the economies necessary to achieve the 60-40 sea-shore manning ratio:

| <u>Ships</u> | <u>Per Ship</u> | | <u>Total Complement</u> | |
|-------------------------------------|-------------------------|-----|-------------------------|--------------------|
| | <u>Officers/Ratings</u> | | <u>Officers/Ratings</u> | |
| 3 Fiji Cruisers | 50 | 733 | 150 | 2199 |
| 2 Lt Flt Carriers | 60 | 574 | 120 | 1148 |
| 16 Flt Destroyers | 14 | 245 | 224 | 3920 |
| 9 Frigates | 8 | 133 | 72 | 1197 |
| 8 Algerines | 6 | 92 | <u>48</u> | <u>736</u> |
| | | | 614 | 9200 |
| 10% reduction from war to peacetime | | | <u>61</u> | <u>920</u> |
| | | | 553 | 8280 |
| | | | | 553 |
| TOTAL AFLOAT | | | | 8813 ⁶⁰ |

By late spring 1944, principal elements of the RCN's overall plan for a balanced peacetime fleet seemed to be coming together. The impending invasion of Normandy and the opening of a second front against Hitler raised the level of dialogue between Canada and the UK regarding the allocation of forces to the Far East. A meeting in May between the Prime Ministers "hardly touched the matter," but clear direction was given to respective Chiefs of Staff to review the situation with a view to producing concrete and comprehensive recommendations.⁶¹

⁵⁹ Memorandum, "Post-War Canadian Navy," released by Captain G.R. Miles, Director of Plans, 21 January 1944, File No. 1017-10-34 F.D. 394, D Hist Naval Policy and Plans 1650-1, Vol II. Emphasis provided.

⁶⁰ Attachment to Memorandum, "Post-War Canadian Navy," 21 January 1944, "Post-War Canadian Navy - Outline Plan for Guidance of Estimating Departments," File No. 1017-10-34 F.D. 394, D Hist Naval Policy and Plans 1650-1, Vol II. For all departmental planning, it was assumed that peace-time complements of ships were 10% less than wartime complements, and that in peace-time, 60% of the total permanent naval complement would be afloat.

⁶¹ Stacey, Arms, Men and Governments, p. 56.

On 14 June, the Admiralty submitted an Aide Memoire to CNMO suggesting "that the RCN should man a flotilla of new Fleet Destroyers," and "that the two Escort Aircraft Carriers [*NABOB* and *PUNCHER*] whose ship's companies were then provided by the RCN should continue in service."⁶² The Canadian Naval Staff reviewed the proposal and directed CNMO to advise the Admiralty they agreed with the manning of the flotilla of Fleet Destroyers, however, "the RCN contribution to the war against Japan should include two Escort Aircraft Carriers, subsequently to be exchanged for two Light Fleet Aircraft Carriers."⁶³

There remained little doubt now that the Naval Staff was relying on Canada's participation in the Far East to cement the process of RCN modernization and preparations for post-war purposes. Ships identified for the reinforcement of British Pacific forces reflected little of the small-ship navy which carried the burden of the Battle of the Atlantic. The carriers, cruisers and destroyers comprised the core of the navy devised by NSHQ. Members of the Naval Staff knew full well the improbable odds of Cabinet approving the ship acquisitions after the defeat of Japan, and therefore pressed hard to ensure the RCN would be well represented in the Pacific theatre. After a summer of discussion, NSHQ decided to accept the Admiralty proposals as outlined in the 14 June Aide Memoire with a few exceptions. Most notably, the CVEs were to be exchanged for Light Fleet Carriers at a later date and the provision of additional RCN manning would be considered primarily for eight of the RN's new *CRESCENT*-class fleet destroyers. Just prior to the First Sea Lord's departure for the second Quebec conference in September

⁶² Aide-Memoire, "History of Negotiations in London for Acquisition of Light Fleet Carriers and Flotilla of Fleet Destroyers," 24 May 1945, D Hist 1650-1, Plans Papers - Index Number 17/45. In reference to the 14 June 1944 Admiralty Aide Memoire, Tucker provides more information on British proposals for Canadian naval participation, including the use of "2 cruisers, 2 CVEs, 2 fleet "V" destroyers, and all the Canadian tribals, for fleet work in the Pacific; the *PRINCE ROBERT*, 10 river-class destroyers, 69 frigates, and 12 castle-class corvettes, for anti-submarine or anti-aircraft escort duty; the *PRINCE HENRY* and *PRINCE DAVID* for combined Operations [sic]; and 12 Algerines for minesweeping. For employment in European waters they recommended as many Canadian *BANGORS* as "could be made available...for mine clearance," and a "small *token force* of corvettes" for occupation duties. Tucker, Vol II, p. 99 and pp. 464-65.

⁶³ loc. cit.

1944, Nelles reinforced these points in a hand delivered Aide Memoire. Similarly, Angus L. Macdonald was brought up to date by the Naval Staff on the latest proposals and the navy's preferred course of action in preparation for the Pacific. In all, the RCN estimated a requirement of "just over 22,000" to fight the Japanese.⁶⁴

In Arms, Men and Governments, C.P. Stacey describes King's fear of being entangled in an exhaustive Pacific campaign and his determination not to upset Canadian voters by overextending Canada's commitment of forces in what could be perceived as an Imperial war. King successfully defended this position before Cabinet, and later pointed out Canada's limitations in resources and manpower to an apparently sympathetic Prime Minister Churchill at the second Quebec conference.⁶⁵

In the post-conference debates, reductions to the planned contributions of all three services were now a foregone conclusion. On 11 October, NSHQ was informed that the proposed commitment of Canadian naval forces would be halved to approximately 13,000 men and that the RCN "was not to be employed in the Indian Ocean."⁶⁶ This came as a great shock to the navy's senior staff as they had little warning of the War Cabinet's plan to slash personnel and to place restrictions on where the navy would operate in the Pacific theatre. Equally embarrassing was the loss of credibility with the Admiralty, which had received the highest assurances from NSHQ that their agreements on manning arrangements and the transfer of warships would be approved. Political naivety and wartime self-assuredness at NSHQ helped to create a difficult situation, only made worse by the Liberal government's deferral of a policy for the Pacific and its neglect to keep the Chiefs of Staff informed of an intent to delay such a decision. In this instance, poor communications enabled military plans to proceed in the absence of

⁶⁴ Memorandum prepared by Director of Plans for the Naval Staff and forwarded to the Minister through ACNS and CNS, 7 September 1944, N.S. 1655-2(1), as cited in Tucker, Vol. II, p. 100.

⁶⁵ Stacey, Arms, Men and Governments, pp. 55-60.

⁶⁶ Naval Signal, N.S.H.Q. 131712/10/44, as cited in DOP Aide-Memoire, "History of Negotiations in London for Acquisition of Light Fleet Carriers and Flotilla of Fleet Destroyers," 24 May 1945, D Hist 1650-1, Plans Papers - Index Number 17/45.

firm government direction. In view of NSHQ having never been informed of Cabinet's pre-conference decision not to engage in operations in Southeast Asia, the above results for the RCN were entirely predictable.

While the Naval Staff set about reorganizing its priorities in Ottawa, Vice Admiral Nelles was left the difficult task of informing the Admiralty of Canada's reduced contribution. Disappointment and bitterness in London was followed by a flurry of activity and signals which brought to light NSHQ's preeminent concern to safeguard the procurement and employment of Light Fleet Carriers and the Admiralty's critical need of troop-carrying ships for combined operations in Southeast Asia. The Admiralty's concerns were dealt with expeditiously, but the negotiations for Light Fleet Carriers and *CRESCENT*-class destroyers carried on for months. On 23 May 1945, 17 days after Germany surrendered, Admiralty officially allocated the *CRESCENT*-class flotilla of destroyers and two *COLOSSUS*-class light fleet carriers, *WARRIOR* and *MAGNIFICENT*, for transfer on loan to the RCN.⁶⁷

Although not scheduled for completion until late 1945, the Light Fleet Carriers were exactly what RCN planners had in mind for Canada's post-war navy. The ships were British-built and designed as carriers from the keel up. They could be acquired on loan as agreed to initially or purchased outright without any concern for the lend-lease complications associated with the American-built *ESCORT*-class ships *NABOB* and *PUNCHER*. Operationally, the *COLOSSUS*-class ships were bigger and faster and possessed the latest weapons and sensors.⁶⁸ Together, *WARRIOR* and

⁶⁷ Ordered as a batch of sixteen ships, the last six of the *COLOSSUS*-class "were modified to a revised design which took account of the need to operate heavier aircraft with higher landing speeds." These carriers, which included *MAGNIFICENT*, were known as the *MAJESTIC*-class. Although identical in dimension, their displacement increased slightly as a result of the additional stressing of flight decks. Roger Chesneau, *Aircraft Carriers of the World, 1914 to the Present*, (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1984), pp. 129-34. See also Roger Chesneau, ed., *Conway's All the World's Fighting Ships, 1922-1946*, (London: Conway Maritime Press, 1980), p. 22.

⁶⁸ In comparison to the CVEs, *MAGNIFICENT* and *WARRIOR* were vastly superior ships. They possessed a flight deck 200 feet longer (length overall almost 700 feet compared to 500 feet); they could carry 30 aircraft instead of 20; and they had a 7 knot speed advantage (25 as opposed to 18) which made a significant difference in their ability to create acceptable winds for flying operations. Ship particulars from

MAGNIFICENT represented the cornerstone of Canada's future balanced task force and peacetime fleet. Their commissioning into the RCN would form the focal point of NSHQ's post-war fleet reorganization and become the obsession of Naval Staffs for the next two decades.

Ken Macpherson and John Burgess, *The Ships of Canada's Naval Forces, 1910-1981: A Complete Pictorial History of Canadian Warships*, (Don Mills: Collins Publishers, 1982), Appendix 7, p. 208 and p. 221.

Chapter Two

Demobilization and Decline

Like a mighty wave, its foam-laden crest broken on the beach, its power spent, the Royal Canadian Navy in the fall and winter of 1945 was losing its strength.¹

Prior to the defeat of Japan, Canada's Naval Staff stood by the principle of self-sufficiency as the way ahead for its post-war forces. They remained convinced that "if Canada failed to provide a reasonable contribution to her own defences...she might lose prestige and be subordinated unnecessarily to other Powers, either hostile or friendly."² In support of this conviction, NSHQ promoted three basic tenets of a peacetime fleet. They envisioned a balanced surface task force of carriers, cruisers, destroyers and a naval air service that would be capable of operating independently or jointly with navies of the United Kingdom and the United States. To support this fleet and provide a balanced coastal defence, they were committed to retaining separate east and west coast naval bases at Halifax and Esquimalt. Finally, to preserve public support and to promote recognition for the navy beyond the confines of HMC dockyards, they believed in the maintenance of a large country-wide naval reserve organization.

With these essential elements intact, senior staff were confident the RCN would be well positioned to execute the strategic tasks outlined by the Director of Plans in November 1943³ and re-emphasized by the Canadian Joint Staff Mission (London) in late March 1945. Essentially, the navy argued that given Canada's inability, "by independent action, to ensure her own strategic security," it would be necessary to participate with the United States in the joint defence of North America, with Great

¹ Harbron, "Royal Canadian Navy at Peace," p. 311.

² Tucker, Vol. II, p. 485.

³ See Chapter One, pp. 22-23.

Britain and the Dominions in the defence of Commonwealth interests, and with the proposed World Security Organization.⁴ This statement was typical of Canada's official stance on post-war security arrangements and also reflected the nation's maturity and growth as an independent *middle power* throughout the war.

Continental defence was of utmost importance to Mackenzie King. Although concerned about American hegemony, he clearly saw that Canada's post-war security requirements were inextricably tied to those of the United States and that their emergence as a military superpower would necessitate increased support of bi-lateral defence. As for the new world security organization, King remained cautious and sceptical because the former League of Nations had failed to prevent the Second World War. However, with a pool of talented minds such as Lester Pearson and Hume Wrong to deal with collective diplomacy, he grudgingly gave External Affairs the nod for continued participation. King noted that the alternative - continental or regional blocs - "must be approached with caution" and "that a major lesson of this war is that the seas do not divide and that the peace and prosperity of the world are indivisible."⁵ Traditional alliances within the Commonwealth would also change as Canada's defence needs were no longer aligned with or restricted by Imperial priorities. Throughout the war, less and less reliance on Great Britain encouraged Canadian statesmen to pursue semi-independent military and external policies with greater confidence. In the area of operational planning, formal lines of communication between the RCN and navies of the UK and US had already been established. Pre-war arrangements with Great Britain were augmented during the war with closer operational and technical liaison, while issues concerning continental defence were resolved through the establishment of the Canada-United States Permanent Joint Board on Defence in August 1940. After the war, a permanent position for Canadian military liaison officers was established at the High Commission in London.

⁴ Policy Paper, "Post-War Strategic Security of Canada - A Personal Interpretation," prepared by the Joint Secretary, Canadian Joint Staff Mission (London), 14 March 1945, PP 5/45 (Final), D Hist, Policy and Plans, 1650-1.

⁵ King Papers, as quoted in Eayrs, In Defence of Canada, Vol. III, p. 141.

Ultimately, it appeared that under the Dumbarton Oaks proposals, liaison with other regional forces and Allied navies would take place through the Military Staff Committee of the future Security Council of the United Nations.

The Admiralty's Plans Division supported the RCN's notion of collective security, but wished to establish Commonwealth defence along Imperial sea lines of communication and to preserve the Royal Navy's traditional lead in the conduct and administration of maritime affairs. They acknowledged that the Dominions were "taking an increasing interest in their Navies," and recommended "every encouragement and assistance be given to Dominion Governments to build up modern Fleets and Base Facilities, and to maintain their shipbuilding and munition industries" so that they too can "bear their full share of the burden of Imperial Defence in Peace as well as in War."⁶ Such statements left little doubt that Great Britain expected Canada and other capable former colonies to contribute toward the cost of post-war Empire security. High level diplomatic requests from the Foreign Office also proposed that "several Dominions could assume responsibility for the defence of their respective regions" under a single foreign policy for the Commonwealth.⁷ Canada objected strongly to these proposals and any form of centralization despite the desperate post-war economic conditions which forced Great Britain to seek defence-sharing arrangements. Furthermore, King believed "that members of the Commonwealth were first and foremost independent nations, which should not be expected to form a bloc in the pursuit of international objectives."⁸ Failure by the Admiralty to fully recognize the Dominions as separate and distinct political partners was the result of traditional assumptions and an Empire mind set typical of senior RN officers. The reality was that Britain was no longer capable of or responsible

⁶ Memorandum, "The Post War Navy and the Policy Governing its Composition," Admiralty Plans Division, 29 May 1945, P.D/O.L.133/45, Public Record Office, London, ADM 167/124, XC/84616, D Hist, Policy and Plans, 1650-1.

⁷ Eayrs, Vol. III, p. 222.

⁸ John Hilliker, Canada's Department of External Affairs: The Early Years, 1909-1946, Volume I, (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1990), p. 303.

for worldwide maritime security, and that forming the Dominions under one Imperial strategy was no longer politically acceptable. Her post-war Prime Minister, Clement Attlee, was unreceptive to the Admiralty proposals for a massive Imperial peacetime naval force and "said that Britain ought to recognize that the United States of America was now the dominant naval power and that it was prepared to take over the responsibility for the Pacific and part of the Atlantic."⁹

This was also the view of Canada's Naval Staff, who were desirous of preserving their wartime partnerships with the United States and Britain and were willing to assume their share of maritime responsibilities. NSHQ persevered in the acquisition of large ships that would be compatible and easily integrated into USN and RN task forces for continental and collective defence. Predictably, these were the principal arguments used by NSHQ to convince Cabinet to authorize the transfer of 2 Light Fleet Carriers and 8 Fleet Destroyers after the war. The First Lord of the Admiralty used similar reasoning when making his case to the British Cabinet during transfer negotiations. He simply maintained, "that the post-war advantages of having a Canadian Navy consisting of these ships, in addition to the two cruisers already transferred to the RCN, justified the transaction."¹⁰ It was not mere coincidence, therefore, that the RCN's proposed peacetime fleet was a scaled down version of what the Admiralty's Plans Division in January 1945 considered the smallest effective naval force - 1 battleship, 2 aircraft carriers, 3 cruisers, and 9 destroyers.¹¹ As hostilities wound down, it was equally advantageous for the Admiralty to have other Commonwealth and Allied forces purchase or take over surplus ships the RN could no longer man or support financially. However, as retrenchment and demobilization gained momentum in Canada and elsewhere, smaller navies faced similar manning and monetary shortfalls. For the RCN, restructuring the navy on a smaller scale

⁹ Grove, p. 8.

¹⁰ Aide-Memoire, "History of Negotiations in London for Acquisition of Light Fleet Carriers and Flotilla of Fleet Destroyers," 24 May 1945, D Hist 1650-1, Plans Papers - Index Number 17/45.

¹¹ Policy Paper, "Post-War Royal Navy," prepared by RCN Naval Assistant (Policy and Plans), 12 January 1945, M.S.41-3-1., (PP 2/45), D Hist, Policy and Plans 1650-1.

with fewer and fewer resources became a problem of such magnitude that it severely hampered early post-war training and prevented naval forces from reaching and sustaining full operational status until the Korean War in 1950.

Concurrent with the demobilization of personnel and the disposal of ships and shore establishments were structural changes in Canada's government and the Department of National Defence. Of particular importance to the RCN was the continuing effect these changes would have on the determination of defence policy and strategic guidance. On 17 April 1945, Angus L. Macdonald relinquished his appointment as Minister of National Defence for Naval Services. He was replaced by Douglas C. Abbott who, in turn, replaced General A.G.L. McNaughton on 20 August 1945 as Minister of National Defence. Henceforth, Abbott became responsible for both portfolios and evolved as King's principal architect for the demobilization of the armed forces. A separate Minister for Air Services, Colonel C.W.G. Gibson, would continue to serve alongside Abbott until the appointment of Brooke Claxton as the single Minister of National Defence in December 1946.

The Cabinet War Committee, which had operated under the Prime Minister's chairmanship as the primary policy making and executive body for the "control and management of the Canadian defence effort," was also modified after the cessation of hostilities.¹² King, who was keen on maintaining a tight grip on the activities and expenditures of the three services, accepted guidance from his Secretary to the War Committee, Arnold Heeney. Heeney's recommendation was to have "a continuing subordinate Committee of Cabinet in peacetime to deal with defence, international security and other political military questions to ensure that the service departments did not lose touch with government thinking and policy and proceeded in the implementation

¹² Colonel R.L. Raymont, "The Formulation of Canadian Defence Policy, 1945-1964," A report on the organization and procedures designed to develop Canadian defence policy, and on the provenance of documents and records compiled by Colonel R.L. Raymont and placed in the custody of the Director of History, DND, and other sources, dealing with the formulation of Canadian Defence Policy since World War II, February 1978, D Hist 79/17, Copy No. 2, Vol. I, p. 16.

of major measures without adequate government direction."¹³ The Cabinet Defence Committee (CDC) was duly formed and immediately set to work on their first task - to review proposals set forth by the Chiefs of Staff for Army, Navy, and Air Force regarding post-war military establishments and to provide recommendations to Cabinet.

All three services were placed in the awkward position of preparing establishment proposals without policy guidance. In the weeks following Japan's surrender, parliamentary debate on future foreign and military affairs was not a leading issue nor would it be until the major powers convened to establish post-war security arrangements at the newly formed United Nations. Consequently, interim establishment proposals from the Chiefs of Staff proved to be an overly ambitious display of turf protection. Not surprisingly, their wish lists were given a cold reception by Cabinet and all proposals for interim complements were returned with major reductions. The RCN's initial request for 20,000 men was reduced by half, and each of the Service Chiefs received as their priority tasking, "demobilization in all its aspects - personnel, wartime establishments, surplus stores and equipment."¹⁴

After reaching a peak strength of 92,000 men and women in January 1945, it is difficult to imagine that manpower would constitute a serious problem for a planned peacetime RCN many times smaller than its wartime predecessor. These manpower figures were deceiving, however, as the wartime Naval Service was largely inflated by volunteer reservists who, after hostilities ended, were particularly eager to adopt the "let's get out as fast as we can" attitude.¹⁵ Only too willing to assist in their departure was the navy's Directorate of Demobilization. The Directorate had been preparing for VE Day and VJ Day for over 18 months and was exceedingly well organized and motivated by

¹³ Ibid. p. 16a.

¹⁴ Colonel R.L. Raymont, "The Evolution of the Structure of the Department of National Defence 1945-68," Report to the Task Force on Review of Unification of the Canadian Armed Forces, 30 November 1979, D Hist 87/47, p. 1.

¹⁵ Report of Interview with Peter Godwin Chance, Commander, RCN (Retired), 1 October 1982, Sidney, British Columbia, D Hist, Personnel Records.

Abbott. After victory celebrations had ended, Discharge Establishments across the country shifted into high gear and proceeded to demobilize RCN personnel with exceptional military precision and speed. From mid-June 1945 until sufficient numbers for the war against Japan had been recruited, some 5,400 officers and 22,600 ratings were qualified for discharge.¹⁶ By September 1945, the continued departure of reservists was particularly noticeable as only a small nucleus of 3,800 Regular Force professionals, mostly made up of officers and senior ratings, remained behind to run ships and shore establishments intended for a navy almost three times as large.

In order to cope with the shortages, Captain H.S. Rayner, who had succeeded Miles as Director of Plans in December 1944, suggested to the CNS in early September that the RCN adopt a policy of manning only 3 heavy ships until the required permanent force interim complement of 10,000 was reached. He and his planning staff remained optimistic that recruiters could make up the shortfall and therefore proposed an operational fleet consisting of 2 carriers, 2 cruisers, 3 *TRIBAL*-class destroyers, 2 *V*-class destroyers, and 3 *CRESCENT*-class destroyers.¹⁷ Manning would be established on a one to one sea-to-shore ratio and broken down to permit 4,400 for operational ship's companies; 600 to man training ships, ships in reserve and auxiliary vessels; and 5,000 to man the shore establishments and air squadrons. Rayner's staff based their calculations on the supposition that only four-fifths of the normal wartime complements were needed to operate the ships. Therefore, despite fewer numbers, trained men could be spread out among fleet units in order to satisfy the safe conduct of basic operations at sea. More important, this would permit the RCN to maximize its proposed list of ships in commission and for a short while give the government and the Admiralty a comfortable feeling that Canada's navy was ready to develop and support a task force which included its own naval air service.

¹⁶ Tucker, Vol. II, p. 475.

¹⁷ Memorandum, "Planned Composition of the RCN," Director of Plans to Chief of the Naval Staff, 6 September 1945, D Hist, NSS 1650-26, Vol I.

By the end of September, it became apparent that recruiting was not going to make up for the severe shortage of personnel. In fact, recruiting for the next two years was abysmal. The war was over and many of the navy's best simply had no continuing interest in the RCN and preferred to look for work elsewhere. Over a period of a few short months, hundreds of experienced officers and ratings left the navy without replacement. NSHQ was forced to rely on temporary billets until sufficient permanent force numbers could be reached. Included in this group was a surplus of officers and men who had originally signed on until September 1947 to fight in the Pacific War. They were designated interim force personnel and were divided into three classes after Japan's unexpected early surrender: "those who wished to hold to their two-year engagements in spite of the termination of hostilities; those desiring release from the full two-year period, but wishing to serve until some specified date within that time; and those wishing to cancel their engagements."¹⁸ Those who stayed for the abbreviated period of service were a vital source of manpower and NSHQ used them freely to supplement the small core of permanent force personnel maintained through 1947. There were, however, some serious drawbacks with this temporary arrangement in addition to the departure of most of these men before the end of their agreed engagement. As a young naval officer whose career began as a cadet at Royal Roads Naval College in 1942, Vice Admiral Andrew L. Collier remembered the interim forces as a rambunctious lot with little regard for the Service or their work:

from '45 to '47...the RCN was still running down. We were getting over a lot of the teething troubles we had gone through [during the war] but then they kept this bunch of guys on for another two years who didn't give a damn, they were impossible to control....The Navy suffered very badly after the war when a lot of trouble was started by people who were only there to kill time.¹⁹

A lack of discipline and motivation from some interim force members

¹⁸ Tucker, Vol. II, p. 481.

¹⁹ Report of Interview with Vice Admiral Andrew L. Collier, RCN (Retired), Victoria, British Columbia, undated, D Hist, Personnel Records.

exacerbated an already difficult situation as the RCN was still short 6,000 men despite their additional numbers. Demobilization of manpower had been conducted so efficiently that coastal Commands experienced significant delays in demobilizing equipment. This, they feared, would be detrimental to the commencement of fleet operations. Shortages of labour made it impossible to lay up ships in reserve and at the same time prepare other ships for turnover to and subsequent disposal by the War Assets Corporation (WAC). As the workforce in the coastal commands was gradually depleted, the conduct of these and other tasks grew increasingly difficult.²⁰ With only 25 new entries signing on each week, the Commanding Officer Atlantic Coast (COAC) estimated an acute manpower shortage at least until the spring of 1947.²¹ He endorsed the immediate elimination of all non-essential positions both ashore and afloat and included other radical means of solving manning shortfalls. Surplus *BANGOR*-class minesweepers, he submitted, could be disposed of by sinking at sea and furthermore, owing to the weak response by interim force reserves for two-year engagements, he thought it would be necessary to retain *Hostilities Only* (HO) entries beyond their present terms of service.

Additional manning complications were created by the protected operational status of carriers and cruisers. The Assistant Chief of the Naval Staff (ACNS), now Captain H.G. DeWolf, was well aware that possession and operation of the carriers were critical if the RCN had any hope of preserving the balanced fleet and Naval Air Service. His advice to the Chief of the Naval Staff, Vice Admiral Jones, was that the commitment was necessary and that "a second carrier must be manned whatever the delay."²² This was contrary to an earlier recommendation by Rayner who suggested the RCN man only *WARRIOR* and give up on *MAGNIFICENT* until better circumstances

²⁰ "Between September 1944 and March 1946, 298 of the larger war vessels and 319 local and harbour craft had been disposed of by the Naval Service." Ninety-five per cent of the larger ships were sold by the War Assets Corporation while the remainder were turned over or resold by the Crown Assets Allocation Committee. See Tucker, Vol. II, pp. 492-93.

²¹ Naval Signal, COAC to NSHQ, 2 October 1945, D Hist NSS 1650-26, Vol. I.

²² Minute from A/CNS to CNS, written in ink on Director of Plans "Planned Composition of RCN" Memorandum, 6 September 1945, D Hist, NSS 1650-26, Vol. I.

permitted adding her to the fleet. At this late stage of transfer, however, there was a possibility that any lack of confidence by the Admiralty or the Canadian government regarding the RCN's ability to man and operate the carriers could lead to outright cancellation or a significant reduction in the Naval Air Service. DeWolf believed the RCN could not afford to take any chances and persisted in holding out for both *WARRIOR* and *MAGNIFICENT* despite the additional drain on manpower.

Priority manning of the carriers and cruisers, as initially recommended by Rayner and now strongly encouraged by DeWolf, meant that scant resources would be swallowed up by the big ships. Carriers and cruisers, exclusive of the air squadrons, averaged a four-fifths complement of approximately 750 men each and altogether would absorb an enormous 60 per cent of personnel assigned to the fleet. Given that these three ships alone had the capacity to exhaust such a large percentage of seagoing personnel, it would be difficult to man the proposed number of destroyers. Furthermore, there would be no flexibility to compensate for absentees due to sickness and leave, or for sailors to cycle through training ashore.

In effect, the RCN was trapped in a *Catch-22* situation. Preserving the balanced fleet hinged on keeping the carriers, which in turn needed sailors, and the sailors in turn needed training. In order to address the situation, Rayner gave the Chief of Naval Personnel (CNP), Captain A.M. Hope, advance notice that the manning of shore training establishments would likely have priority over the manning of ships.²³ New recruits and re-engaged reservists were expected to fill these training positions, but with so many billets vacant NSHQ remained under considerable pressure to come up with solutions.

By early October, Rayner was ready with answers. In view of the extreme personnel shortages, he recommended that manning of establishments and ships be accomplished in stages and executed on a priority system. The RCN would no longer concentrate on manning fleet units for operations. Instead, first line ships and shore

²³ Memorandum, "Post-War Navy," Director of Plans (DOP) to Chief of Naval Personnel (CNP), 10 September 1945, D Hist, NSS 1650-26, Vol. I.

establishments would be maintained on a care and maintenance (C and M) basis until such time sufficient trained personnel were available to make these units functional. Once C and M manning levels were achieved, the navy could concentrate on raising the complements of selected areas of the fleet. In order of priority, DOP recommended that RCN regular force and two-year RCNVR interim force personnel should satisfy the following manning requirements as servicemen became available:

- a. shore training establishments in order to carry out essential training;
- b. selected ships to carry out essential training;
- c. operational ships (at peacetime strength); and
- d. all remaining shore establishments (at peacetime strength).²⁴

Rayner again recommended that only one carrier be purchased and that a second one be obtained when the personnel situation was more favourable. He also strongly urged that all RCN ships except two fleet destroyers be placed into maintenance reserve. Rayner intended to have the two destroyers commissioned as training platforms on each coast, while all levels of priority manning from C and M to full peacetime complements were advanced. After reviewing DOP's recommendations, Vice Admiral Jones gave his blessing to a core fleet proposal of two carriers, two cruisers, eight destroyers and 10,000 sailors. He authorized the Naval Staff "to proceed along these lines," and on 3 October he indicated he would "inform the Minister."²⁵

In the week following, Rayner continued work on a detailed proposal for the fleet and its support establishments while Vice Admiral Jones advised the Minister on the recommended way ahead. Days before the CNS met with Abbott, the Cabinet Defence Committee had already recommended to Cabinet indicating that "until some

²⁴ Memorandum, "Post-War Navy - Planning," DOP to Assistant CNS (ACNS), 3 October 1945, D Hist, NSS 1650-26, Vol. I.

²⁵ Minute written by the CNS, Vice Admiral Jones, 3 October 1945, on Director of Plans "Planned Composition of RCN" Memorandum of same date, D Hist, NSS 1650-26, Vol. I.

estimate can be made as to the nature and extent of Canada's international commitments and the effect of new weapons, it will not be possible to assess with any accuracy Canada's defence requirements and consequently no final decision on the exact size and composition of forces can be made."²⁶ They did, however, recommend that the armed services continue with the interim complements previously announced in August - 10,000 for the Navy, 20,000 for the Air Force and 20,000 to 25,000 for the Army for planning purposes. The Committee's final recommendations were submitted to the separate service Ministers for review and subsequent presentation in the House of Commons. Defence policy would not be announced or discussed until the post-war world had stabilized and Canada's international role was better understood.

In the House of Commons on 9 October 1945, Douglas Abbott dutifully announced "that at the outset Canada's peacetime Navy should comprise two cruisers, probably two light fleet carriers, ten to twelve destroyers,...necessary ancillary craft" and "a force of about 10,000 officers and men."²⁷ It was a force he later described as a "good, workable little fleet" which, like the provisional military establishment for the Army and the Air Force, could "easily be expanded if need be."²⁸ Naval authorities were relieved at the mention of aircraft carriers and cruisers, but they were no longer under any illusion that the long-term maintenance of these ships was guaranteed.

Abbott's words had been chosen very carefully. Cabinet's continuing involvement in defence matters would remain focused on the reduction of wartime complements while the procurement of ships, tanks and aircraft would be delayed until cost and need were properly assessed. Interim service establishments would permit the Chiefs of Staff some leeway in deciding which critical equipment should be retained and which programs already in progress should continue, while major expenditures would

²⁶ Extracts of Cabinet Committee Meeting Minutes, 28 September 1945, D Hist NSC 4100-1 and Lieutenant-Colonel Herbert Farlie Wood, Strange Battleground: Official History of the Canadian Army in Korea, (Ottawa: Queen's Printer for the Army Historical Section, DND, 1966), p. 17.

²⁷ Canada, House of Commons, Debates (hereafter Debates), 9 October 1945, p. 876.

²⁸ Debates, 23 October 1945, p. 1368.

have to wait until the annual estimates were approved.

These were frustrating times for all of the Service Chiefs and their planning staffs. Efforts to maintain a sense of stability in the midst of intense demobilization were near impossible as the outcome of future policy guidance was purely speculative and most major plans could not progress beyond the tentative stage. Any optimism held out by the Chiefs of Staff for interim force levels to remain as benchmarks for future growth were quickly eroded by significantly reduced defence spending. Compared to a budget of \$241.8 million during the last year of the war, the navy's allocation for 1946-47 would fall almost seventy-five per cent to \$64.9 million, and most of this was used to pay for demobilization.²⁹

Of the three services the RCN could least afford to compete for less money. "Unlike the Army and the RCAF, each overwhelmed by wartime weaponry with which to make a peacetime start," the Navy had taken early and substantial steps to replace most of its wartime escort fleet with recently constructed surplus ships from the Royal Navy.³⁰ Therefore, at a time when fiscal restraint and severe manning shortages dictated moderation, the RCN's early commitment to a big-ship fleet placed at risk the flexibility of choosing other smaller, less expensive, but progressive options.³¹

²⁹ All figures from Canada, Department of Finance, Public Accounts of Canada, (Ottawa, 1945-47). By comparison, the RCN in 1946 was much better off than the pre-war navy which had only tiny budgets of \$6.64M and \$8.8M in 1938-39 and 1939-40 respectively. Of note, only \$1.87M had been expended in 1939 prior to the outbreak of war.

³⁰ Eayrs, In Defence of Canada, Vol III, p. 81.

³¹ The only truly effective escorts near the end of the war in the RCN were the twelve *CASTLE*-class corvettes and three *LOCH*-class frigates. Transferred from the Royal Navy throughout 1944 as a result of manpower shortages in Great Britain, all were fitted with the most advanced anti-submarine (A/S) weapons and sensors. A combination of the new depth and range capable type 147B asdic and the *ahead throwing* triple-barrelled mortar, Squid, provided A/S teams with an automated fire control system and a lethal weapon against deep-diving U-boats. Both vessels were designed with modern, naval standard bridges and a heavy lattice mainmast which carried the highly successful type 277 or type 272 high definition radar (*CASTLE*-class carried one of either type). Although both were considered excellent anti-submarine warships, the A/S frigate with its twin screws, greater endurance and higher speed represented the future as a cost effective post-war escort and the best ship to counter the fast submarine. See Zimmerman, The Great Naval Battle of Ottawa, pp. 127-30 and Milner, The U-boat Hunters, pp. 15-16, 86-91, 122-26 and 179-81.

Further complicating the navy's ability to adjust to monetary and manning difficulties was the absence of an up-to-date review of the threat and the RCN's strategic role in continental and global security. As noted above, the plan to develop large surface warfare combatants as the core of Canadian naval task forces had remained unchanged from recommendations outlined by DOP in late 1943. Even more influential was the emotional and historical standing of professional (RCN) naval officers who strongly advocated Admiral Nelles' outspoken desires for a surface warfare fleet instead of a small-ship anti-submarine force at the end of hostilities. Blatant disinterest by NSHQ in the corvette navy's U-boat war unfortunately characterized a general lack of ASW expertise among RCN officers and a shaky wartime relationship between the regular and part-time branches of the Naval Service.

As explained by Marc Milner, the reasons behind the RCN's professional rejection were twofold: first, "the close escort and A/S [anti-submarine] war in the Atlantic was never at any time part of the RCN's long-term ambitions;" and second, the operational inefficiencies of the escort fleet were "between 1941 and the end of 1943, a major source of embarrassment for the RCN."³² The latter criticisms of Canada's reservists, although true in many respects, were unfair and undeserved given their relative inexperience, training, and lack of leadership and modern equipment in comparison to Royal Navy ships and peers.³³

Remarkably, even by 1944, when experience and confidence had raised their level of performance and efficiency, battle-hardened and battle-honoured ship's companies of Canada's escort fleet were still deemed second-class by the RCN's shore-based ruling elite. The size and primarily defensive role of the corvettes and frigates

³² Milner, *The U-Boat Hunters*, p. 259.

³³ The level of detailed interest shown towards ships involved in the submarine war differed considerably between NSHQ and the Admiralty. As noted by Marc Milner, RCN frigates "were quite outside the stream of Canadian professional officer development," but "such was not the case in the RN, where the principal A/S vessels - the Captains, Lochs, Rivers, and Colonys - were commanded by RN officers." Milner qualifies this somewhat by adding that there were fewer professional RCN officers to choose from. A fact which did not seem to hinder the selection of RCN officers for destroyer, cruiser or carrier appointments. Milner, *The U-boat Hunters*, pp. 256-57.

were not considered worthy by senior naval authorities of providing the demanding professional experience necessary for future big-ship commands. For the reservists, considerable resentment also built up over the belief that most RCN officers spent the entire war ashore. While it was true that many career officers were kept away from the waterfront to deal with the navy's early growing pains, many received operational assignments and did go to sea. RCN professionals were routinely selected for prestigious appointments in Motor Torpedo Boats (MTB), destroyers, cruisers and carriers, but "of the seventy [A/S] frigates commissioned into the RCN, none was commanded by a professional RCN officer."³⁴ By the end of the war, very few career officers had served in the escort role and thus had little personal exposure to the volunteer service and convoy operations. Given their early physical separation and NSHQ's general lack of concern for submarine warfare, it is not surprising that an air of animosity was immediately created between the two groups. Battle of Atlantic veteran and former RCNVR Commanding Officer, James B. Lamb, remembers with bitterness and cynicism the distance between regulars and reservists:

Canada had two navies in the Second World War. First...was the Royal Canadian Navy, the big navy, the *real* navy, the *pusser* navy....Here was the repository of naval tradition, the showcase of talent and ability, the dynamic centre of thrust and growth and expansion....Canada's second navy was a much different force: a bunch of amateur sailors, recruited from every walk of civilian life, manning ships deemed too small for command by professional naval officers....A dominant factor of life in the escort fleet was the *them and us* mentality, which separated crews of ships from their Canadian counterparts ashore....Envy and resentment of the greater opportunities ashore were only part of the sense of alienation felt by the men in the seagoing navy.³⁵

Ironically, the submarine threat, which through necessity spawned the remarkable growth of the volunteer service and RCN prominence in the North West Atlantic, was not duly considered by NSHQ in planning the composition of peacetime

³⁴ Milner, *The U-boat Hunters*, p. 257.

³⁵ James B. Lamb, *The Corvette Navy*, (Toronto: Macmillan of Canada, 1988), pp. 6-7, 126-7.

forces. Allied intelligence indicated that as early as 1944 the Germans were ready to introduce new long-range submarines that could make a significant difference in the outcome of the war. Type XXI U-boats were "the ultimate submersible," capable of running down their targets with "a submerged speed in excess of between 16 and 17 knots" and "operating below the surface without recourse to frequent resurfacing or use of the schnorkel."³⁶ After Germany's capitulation, the Type XXI and other advanced designs and technology for high speed U-boats found their way into the Soviet Union through captured submarines and from members recruited from Germany's scientific community.³⁷ Joseph Stalin, the Western alliance's most probable post-war adversary, now possessed the resources and the potential to develop a significant underwater threat. In early October 1945, NSHQ advised the Admiralty through CNMO London that "in view of rapid development in speed and underwater endurance of subs," all RCN escort vessels, other than destroyers, were considered obsolescent and surplus.³⁸ The Admiralty agreed, and as a result hundreds of RCN escorts were turned over to the WAC for disposal while only 17 frigates and 12 *ALGERINEs* were retained for training or in maintenance reserve.³⁹

³⁶ Michael L. Hadley, *U-Boats Against Canada: German Submarines in Canadian Waters*, (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1990), p. 273.

³⁷ Eberhard Rossler, *The U-boat: The Evolution and Technical History of German Submarines*, (London: Arms and Armour Press, 1981), p. 283. The development of non-conventional high speed U-boats was initiated in the early 1930s by the German engineer, Hellmuth Walter. His innovative hull design and *Walter* drive technology enabled thermal engines to operate submerged at speeds up to 25 knots. Stored Hydrogen Peroxide (H₂O₂) was fed into a closed-cycle engine to provide the oxygen necessary for combustion. While on the surface, the submarine automatically switched to air drive. After disastrous U-boat losses in May 1943, Germany's Supreme Naval Command was desperate to have high speed submarines in order to improve detection against faster convoys and to increase survivability. Numerous development snags and interruption from Allied bombing denied the few *Walter* U-boats produced from seeing operational service. Donitz turned to the mass production of the more reliable and rapid pre-fabricated assembly of conventional Type XXI's to resurrect the U-boat campaign in the Atlantic. pp. 168-87, 208-12, 214-19, 235-38, 266-75.

³⁸ Signal, NSHQ to CNMO, 14 September 1945. Signal, CNMO to NSHQ, 27 September 1945, D Hist, extracts from NSS 1650-26, Vol I.

³⁹ Appendix "A" to Memorandum on the "Employment of Canadian Naval Forces During the Fiscal Year 1946-47," 17 January 1946, D Hist, NSS 1650-26.

In terms of strategic forethought, the RCN's planned composition of peacetime forces did not adequately address the known underwater threat. Despite being witness to the nearly unstoppable destructive power and strategic success of U-boats in both world wars and having identified the submarine as the most serious post-Second World War maritime threat, Operations and Planning staffs at NSHQ did not give serious consideration first to the replacement of obsolescent corvettes and frigates. Comparable ships of the proposed peacetime navy, anti-surface Fleet Destroyers, were ill-equipped to provide carrier-borne aircraft the mutual support necessary for A/S protection of convoy ships and heavy carriers and cruisers. The proposed balanced fleet was, in reality, unbalanced without modern A/S escorts. In retrospect, the RCN's primary strategic roles of maintaining sea lines of communication and defending continental seaways and coastal shores were limited by this obvious omission in their tactical appreciation of fleet requirements. NSHQ's decision to relegate their best A/S ships, the frigates and *CASTLE*-class corvettes, to primarily Care and Maintenance status only served to emphasize again the low priority assigned to A/S warfare.

In order to comprehend the reasons behind the big-ship philosophy espoused by Canada's wartime Naval Chiefs, their peacetime successors, and senior staff at NSHQ, one must revisit the profound influence of the Royal Navy. Through years of close association and training, RCN officers were also nurtured in the same school of thought which promoted the heavily gunned and armoured battleship as an indispensable component of Britain's post-war fleets at home and abroad. Remarkably, despite its prohibitive cost and accepted vulnerability to fast submarines, the Admiralty persisted in protecting the battleship as a strategic requirement "based on the need for outgunning the enemy when he is brought to surface action."⁴⁰ "The modern navy in war," they said, "must contain or control...a proper proportion of capital ships [battleships], aircraft carriers, cruisers and destroyers, organised in composite fighting squadrons or groups...to

⁴⁰ Policy Paper, "Post-War Royal Navy," prepared by RCN Naval Assistant (Policy and Plans), 12 January 1945, M.S.41-3-1., (PP 2/45), D Hist, Policy and Plans 1650-1.

counter the enemy's heavy surface forces."⁴¹ Even as late as 1949, the First Sea Lord declared that Great Britain "must have battleships" and "must continue to have battleships."⁴²

Attlee's Labour government ignored these pleas in favour of more important priorities. In the opinion of the British Cabinet, large, manpower intensive and costly battleships had outlived their usefulness and were quite rightly displaced by efforts to re-establish the country's financial health. Therefore, with the resources available and in keeping with America's global strategy of maintaining forward deployed strike aircraft in theatres of interest, the RN sought to develop appropriate roles for their major warship of the future and "principal striking weapon of the fleet" - the carrier.⁴³ Prestige was also at stake. Notwithstanding the crushing effect of severe economic restraint on fleet size and the necessary withdrawal of British forces from the world's oceans, the Admiralty remained stubbornly committed to keeping a deployed naval presence in the Mediterranean and the Middle East and a token force at each of the colonies. Ideally, Dominion navies were expected to provide sea control over their areas of maritime responsibility within the Commonwealth, while the USN maintained presence and security in all remaining oceans, including those traditionally British.

Hence, carriers, cruisers, destroyers and other small ships, in that order, represented the RN's planned fleet composition for the next decade and were similarly the focused objective of the RCN. Like the Admiralty, the Naval Staff at NSHQ was forced to reduce the scope of Canada's post-war fleet and be selective in choosing ships and establishments until better economic conditions or a new world threat dictated otherwise. Unlike the RN, however, the relative small size of the peacetime RCN significantly

⁴¹ Memorandum, "The Post-war Navy and the Policy Governing its Composition," Admiralty Plans Division, 29 May 1945, P.F/O.L.133/45, Public Record Office, London, ADM 167/124, XC/84616, D Hist Policy and Plans, 1650-1. Covering minute indicates that the memorandum was prepared by the Naval Staff and circulated by direction of the First Lord for the information of the Naval Board on 17 July 1945.

⁴² Grove, p. 56.

⁴³ Policy Paper, "Post-war Royal Navy," 12 January 1945.

narrowed the scope with which fleet reductions could be made without destroying the core capability of their perception of a balanced fleet. In the Naval Staff's initial effort to achieve stability, a common obsession with big ships and a sense of military indispensability, which some falsely expected to carry on after the war, only served to heighten the RCN's vulnerability in an unfriendly fiscal environment. Cabinet's response to overambitious demands from the navy would surely be no less encouraging than the political treatment received by the RN, nor could they expect any sympathy or support from within their own department.

In his personal papers, Abbott later disclosed that he "had no particular interest in post-war reorganization of the Department of National Defence or for planning of post-war defence policy."⁴⁴ In assuming the defence portfolio he believed his primary mandate was demobilization. As Minister, he devoted most of his energy to this task and developed policies that were so effective that most of his objectives were reached within six months. Bringing home the boys as quickly and efficiently as possible was immensely popular and it enabled the government to expedite other areas of demobilization and to press ahead with domestic concerns. However, Abbott's inattention to the formulation of even the basic groundwork for future defence policy and the establishment of operational roles for the armed forces meant little, if any, progress was made in implementing recommendations from his Chiefs of Staff.

As frustrating as it was for operations and planning staff at NSHQ to conduct business in a virtual policy vacuum, their situation was not unlike that of many other Western navies. Most governments had adopted a wait and see attitude towards defence until satisfied that agreement had been reached on provisions of the United Nations charter regarding collective security. Ideally, the concept foresaw all members uniting to form a collective of military or economic power to be used against a state which the Security Council had identified as an aggressor. Much work remained,

⁴⁴ Abbott Papers, Public Archives of Canada, as quoted in R.L. Raymont, "The Evolution of the Structure of the Department of National Defence 1945-68," Report to the Task Force on Review of Unification of the Canadian Armed Forces, 30 November 1979, D Hist 87/47, p. 1.

however, as the great power veto limited the effectiveness of the Security Council and ideological differences between the United States and the Soviet Union were appearing. For Mackenzie King, the discourse between nations to resolve the military mandate of the United Nations and the commitment of forces from member states was a serious issue which demanded input from smaller powers. More importantly, the unhurried pace of discussions was a convenient vehicle upon which Canada's own defence policy could be deferred while Cabinet attended to national economic priorities:

So seriously did Canadians take the provisions under article 43 of the Charter for the delegation of forces that the government shaped or professed to shape its postwar defence policy around this expectation. Canada withdrew its occupation forces from Europe, demobilized and reduced its defence budget as fast as possible, for domestic reasons. When questions were asked about defence policy the reply was that the government could make no long-range decisions until Canada had its negotiations with the [United Nations] Military Staff Committee. Impatience was expressed over the slowness of the great powers to reach agreement with this committee, but long after such agreement had proved impossible it was still being said that Canada was counting on this system of *collective security* within the United Nations.⁴⁵

Thus, by the close of 1945 economic not military strategy dominated the agenda of Canada's parliamentarians. For NSHQ, the RCN's greatest problem was not that the military had been singled out for reduced spending or that the absence of a perceived threat placed all three services in an extremely weak negotiating position, it was their failure to accept the long-term prospect of managing limited resources and to adjust the composition and roles of peacetime forces accordingly.

⁴⁵ John Holmes, *The Shaping of Peace: Canada and the Search for World Order, 1943-1957*, Vol. II, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1982), p. 144.

Chapter Three

A Fleet in Turmoil

after 1945, for the next two years anyway, its [the RCN's] entire energy was devoted to getting rid of the wartime Navy, endless arguments about selling ships, disposing of dockyards and that sort of thing, and, disposing of people. All things fairly emotional and as far as the Navy was concerned, completely non-productive. The Navy was definitely waning and we really had no arguments to put forward to increase it, as I said, because the entire emphasis was on getting rid of it.¹

--Rear Admiral Robert P. Welland, RCN

From August 1945 to July 1947 a significant reduction in wartime establishments and military hardware took place on both sides of the Atlantic except in the Soviet Union. It was a trend expected to continue while countries most affected by the war attempted to rebuild their economies and re-integrate displaced civilians into the workforce. In Canada, unemployment climbed as thousands of returning servicemen were discharged and wartime factories either shut down or underwent conversion for peacetime production. The Unemployment Insurance Act (introduced in 1940) and generous re-training and education programs for veterans alleviated some of the discomfort felt by Canadians, but uncertainty about the future and fear of a post-war depression, such as had followed the First World War, weighed heavily on Mackenzie King and his Cabinet.² As a result, tight-fisted management of federal resources would continue until Canada's economic recovery was firmly established.

On 7 December 1945 the Cabinet Defence Committee agreed that proposals for the post-war organization and composition of each Service should be put

¹ Report of Interview with Rear Admiral Robert P. Welland, RCN (Retired), 1 June 1985, Ottawa, D Hist Personnel Records.

² Bothwell, Drummond and English, *Canada Since 1945*, p. 68. Rationing for staples such as meat, butter, sugar and clothing were still necessary in Canada long after the war had ended due to increasing demand and a scarcity of supplies.

before the Cabinet in preparation for the 1946-47 estimates.³ In responding to this direction, the Naval Staff proceeded to work out final details for a peacetime force structure and employment programme that reinforced prior recommendations for a balanced fleet. Captain Rayner, in the process of handing over DOP duties to Captain Lay, produced a draft memorandum for the estimates in which a maximum force of two carriers, two cruisers and twelve destroyers was recommended. Also, in order to stay within the government directed ceiling of 10,000 men, he advised that *WARRIOR* and four destroyers should be placed in maintenance reserve and that once the second carrier, *MAGNIFICENT*, was ready for service in early 1947 the navy's complement should be increased to 11,500 to man her fully for operations.⁴ The A/CNS, DeWolf, agreed with the proposal, but was concerned about Cabinet's proven intolerance towards attempts by the services to increase complements. He returned the memorandum to Rayner with the following direction:

11,500 is out. Try again - within the limits of 10,000. The Minister might be prepared to consider an extra 500 - but a strong argument will be necessary. I think we must now work on reducing *WARRIOR* to C and M to man *MAGNIFICENT* -subsequently hoping to replace *WARRIOR* in 1947 - with the equal forces on each Coast as an argument for the extra complement.⁵

The Naval Staff agreed with DeWolf. Only \$75 million was expected to be allocated to the naval estimates and it was still too early to assess the stability of the RCN's peacetime manning programme. As a result, when Abbott presented the department's final proposal to Cabinet the desired post-war composition of the navy remained at 10,000 men and an operational fleet of 2 Light Fleet carriers (1 of them after

³ Memorandum, Secretary Chiefs of Staff Committee to Planning Directorates for Army, Navy and Air Force, D Hist, extracts from NSS 1650-26, Vol. I.

⁴ Draft of Memorandum to Cabinet for Minister's signature, prepared by Captain Rayner (DOP), with minute added by Captain DeWolf (A/CNS), undated, but probably written around mid-December 1945, D Hist, extracts from NSS 1650-26, Vol. I.

⁵ loc. cit.

1947), 2 cruisers, 9 fleet destroyers (2 *V*-class, 5 *TRIBAL*-class, 2 *CRESCENT*-class), and a reserve fleet of 1 *TRIBAL*, 2 *RIVER*-class destroyers, 12 *ALGERINE*-class minesweepers and 17 frigates.⁶ He also recommended appropriate shore establishments to support fleet commands on both coasts and five fleet air arm squadrons composed of 2 Torpedo Bombing Reconnaissance (TBR) Squadrons, 2 Fighter Squadrons, and 1 Fleet Requirements Unit at Dartmouth, Nova Scotia.

In order to commission the heavy ships and destroyers successfully, NSHQ placed extraordinary faith in the recruiting and training system to supply both quantity and quality over a short period of time. Initially, the figures produced by the Chief of Naval Personnel (CNP) were optimistic. Total strength of the RCN, including interim force reserves, was expected to reach 6,600 by 1 April 1946 and full strength by 1 January 1947. The numbers were calculated using an average intake and training rate of 1200 recruits per quarter, and took into account the demobilization of all 3,400 *Hostilities Only* personnel by 1 July 1946.⁷ If the manning and training programmes succeeded, DOP anticipated the RCN would commission an additional destroyer in the second quarter of 1946 and an additional cruiser and five more destroyers before the end of the year. Interspersed with his optimism, however, was a note of caution that forewarned naval authorities that the scheduling of "HMC Ships [was] entirely dependent on the actual intake of recruits and [was] therefore subject to variation."⁸

Initial recruiting figures for reservists were equally promising. Estimates of 2,000, predicted for 1 April 1946, were expected to grow to 7,500 by 1 July; 9,000 by

⁶ Memorandum, "Navy Post-War Organization and Composition," MND to Cabinet, 17 December 1945, D Hist, extracts from NSS 1650-26, Vol. I.

⁷ Memorandum, "Navy Post-War Organization and Composition," MND to Cabinet, 17 December 1945; "Manning Priority - Seagoing Units," DOP to the Naval Staff, 27 December 1945; "Employment of the Canadian Naval Forces During the Fiscal Year 1946-47," Naval Secretary to General Distribution, 17 January 1946, D Hist, NSS 1650-1, Vol. I. Depending on the Government's policy regarding Newfoundland, it was possible that 200 of the *Hostilities Only* personnel would be retained at St. John's.

⁸ Memorandum, "Employment of the Canadian Naval Forces," 17 January 1946.

1 October; and 12,000 by 1 January 1947.⁹ At this rate of enlistment, the Naval Reserve would achieve an impressive two-thirds of its approved complement of 18,000 within a year. From this total, appropriate strengths would be assigned to 24 Naval Divisions in cities across Canada under a single banner - the RCN Reserve - that incorporated and superseded the wartime RCNR, RCNVR and the RCNFR (Fishermen's Reserve).

Without much debate or fanfare, Cabinet accepted these proposals and cleared the way for NSHQ to promulgate the first definitive naval forces employment programme since the end of the war. On 17 January 1946, naval directorates received details of the programme and a sweeping picture of how the fleet would be re-organized and what operations were planned for the coming year. As expected, manpower was identified as the most critical factor. NSHQ could not make operational commitments until C and M ships and shore establishments were manned and shore training facilities were brought up to strength. This would not be easy as many qualified technicians and experienced tradesmen had been lost to demobilization, and it would be months before sufficient personnel were qualified to conduct training or carry out operational duties.

NSHQ understood that while filling manning quotas would represent progress, the figures did not truly reflect the navy's operational readiness. The employment programme, therefore, stressed the need for all departments to appreciate that although the Service expected to have 6,600 personnel in April, this number would "not be proportionately divided between officers and men; higher and lower substantive rates; or between different mens' branches." Until training was well advanced, the fleet would have to accept a less than ideal manning situation in a number of essential trades. Singled out as those areas requiring the most attention were stokers, cooks, stewards, telegraphists and supply personnel. The Naval Staff further emphasized that "every effort must be directed towards the training of first, Royal Canadian Navy and then Royal Canadian Navy (Reserve) personnel....and that organizational planning shall be

⁹ Memorandum, "Navy Post-War Organization and Composition," 17 December 1945, Appendix II - "Estimated Manning Programme," D Hist, Extracts from NSS 1650-26, Vol I.

continuous in order that the peacetime Naval Service may be as efficient as manpower and financial limitations permit."¹⁰

For seagoing units, this meant that vessels identified for commissioning in the first two quarters of 1946, *UGANDA* and the destroyers *NOOTKA*, *MICMAC* and *CRESCENT*, would be dedicated to basic training. *WARRIOR*, scheduled to be commissioned in England on 24 January 1946, was set to arrive in Halifax in May with one Fighter Squadron and one Torpedo Bombing Reconnaissance Squadron embarked. For the next year her ship's company would face the steepest learning curve and put up with marginally acceptable equipment and support. Former Royal Canadian Naval Air Service (RCNAS) aviator, Stuart Soward, recalled the RCNAS manning situation in 1946 as "clearly impossible," and one in which inadequate numbers would cripple "the branch's ability to plan orderly development for many years."¹¹ Thus, while NSHQ struggled under the weight of post-war demobilization and manning shortages throughout the fleet, the development of a modern Naval Air Service, with its complex and expensive support infrastructure and training, was poised to stretch naval resources to the limit. The RCN, with its enthusiastic aviators and fledgling Air Staff at NSHQ, had indeed entered uncharted waters.

Overall, the 1946-47 employment programme was an ambitious undertaking that placed an excessive burden on the RCN's recruiting system for its successful implementation. Clearly, if enrolment figures did not match the optimistic numbers expected, the RCN would not meet its training commitments and would be forced to limit the number of ships commissioned. Additionally, the Naval Staff would have to re-think its distribution of fleet manpower, keeping in mind the efficiency and morale of sailors who were either inactive or overburdened as a result of manning shortages.

In this regard, it remains unclear just how much stock the Naval Staff

¹⁰ Memorandum, "Employment of the Canadian Naval Forces," 17 January 1946.

¹¹ Stuart Soward, "Canadian Naval Aviation, 1915-69," in *RCN in Retrospect*, ed., Boutilier, p. 275.

placed in CNP's recruiting estimates. Social programmes and improving investment and employment in the spring of 1946 made it difficult for the services to compete with civilian employers for a young labour force. An upbeat economy tended to distance Canadians from the military and added weight to the possibility that CNP's optimistic recruiting predictions were way out of line with reality. However, for the Naval Staff and those who preferred to remain optimistic, CNP's early recruiting forecast helped create a favourable atmosphere for manning the big ships and gave credibility to the RCN's ambitious commissioning programme. After all, in the absence of firm policy and strategic guidance, NSHQ had every reason to press on with its own best estimate of determining the priority of ships for operations and training.

Accordingly, senior staff took whatever measures were necessary to ensure that at least one of each class of the big ships was made active and stayed active despite limited resources. Out of a total of five ships selected for first quarter operations, the RCN invested almost eighty per cent of its seagoing personnel into *WARRIOR* and *UGANDA*. They were also the most expensive ships to operate in the RCN inventory. Together they provided the least efficient means of producing trained seamen for a planned peacetime fleet in which the majority of ships were destroyers. Additionally, *WARRIOR* was authorized to carry ninety per cent of its wartime complement while the remaining ships were limited to only eighty per cent.¹² The four-fifths complement formula, originally outlined by DOP as the maximum allowed for operational ships under the 10,000-man ceiling, was amended for carriers only. Furthermore, the same priority and follow-on expenses committed to *WARRIOR* and its two squadrons of aircraft for sea operations were also dedicated to the carrier's shore-based support facilities. Shared buildings and runways at the Royal Canadian Air Force (RCAF) station at Dartmouth permitted the development of the RCN's Fleet Requirements Unit, but again diverted scarce resources away from core training in the fleet.

Concerns of the surface fleet in the spring of 1946 were being handled by

¹² Memorandum, "Employment of Canadian Naval Forces," 17 January 1946.

the newly appointed Director of Plans, Captain Lay. He was given the difficult task of balancing training and readiness requirements for a fleet of 43 warships that, for all intents and purposes, existed mainly on paper.¹³ Based on his wartime experience, Lay knew that time was a critical factor in bringing the RCN up to speed. Idle ships meant idle sailors and introduced the very real danger of further degrading seamanship and fighting skills - professional talents which perished quickly without practical experience and usage at sea. Understandably, Lay was eager to get ships underway to commence basic sea training programmes and to pave the way for full fledged operations. He and his planning staff remained confident that the fleet would be operational within the year despite a backlog in training and the uneven distribution of trades throughout the fleet. One of their goals, a West Indies rendezvous of the carrier, 2 cruisers and 8 destroyers for fleet exercises in early 1947, seemed to indicate that the turmoil of demobilization had passed and that 1946 would be the year to set the navy back on course.¹⁴ They could not ignore, however, that the peacetime fleet was currently neither operational nor fit to carry out the strategic tasks proposed at the end of the war. It was becoming increasingly apparent that unless ships were activated soon, the already diminished level of fleet readiness would only worsen and lead to further delays in the Fleet Employment Programme.

Initially, expectations for the Royal Canadian Navy Reserve were no less ambitious than those of the regular navy, and likewise, their success was dependent upon effective recruitment and training. Commanded by a Reserve Captain, each of the 24 Naval Reserve Divisions reported directly to the Director of Naval Reserves (DNR) at NSHQ who, in turn, answered to the Chief of Naval Personnel (CNP). At each Naval Division, a number of RCN officers and ratings were appointed as instructors to assist in divisional administration and to maintain liaison with their RCN counterparts at NSHQ

¹³ Five major fleet vessels were scheduled for commissioning between January and June 1946, while the remaining 38 were listed under Care and Maintenance, and Reserve.

¹⁴ Memorandum, "Employment of the Canadian Naval Forces," 17 January 1946.

and the coastal commands. The Fleet Employment Programme anticipated that a number of frigates and escorts would be commissioned annually and manned almost entirely by reserves for the duration of summer training periods.

Recruiting for the RCNR was scheduled to commence in April 1946. NSHQ hoped a good number of the men recently released from the former RCN Volunteer Reserve would re-enlist to serve their country part-time and, with their small-ship experience, speed up the formation of Reserve Divisions and assist the organization's development and transition to peacetime roles and its integration with the RCN. Unfortunately, some of the bitterness and resentment which existed in varying degrees between the professional navy and the amateur navy throughout the Second World War was not easily forgotten.

After the war, only a handful of reservist officers transferred to the RCNR and, exclusive of interim force volunteers, the situation was much the same for enlisted personnel. By the end of 1947, the RCNR had only attracted 2,500 officers and men out of a potential authorized ceiling of 18,000 positions.¹⁵ The permanent release of many experienced veteran reservists through demobilization and a poor showing at the recruiting centres made the RCN's task of independent reserve summer training nearly impossible and threatened to diminish the navy's profile in land-locked Canadian cities. Post-war public debate and RCN rhetoric assured those who chose to join or stay that reservists were an essential component of the navy. They were Canada's nucleus of maritime experience, ready at a moment's notice to expand and strengthen the RCN in time of crisis just as they had done during the last war. However, despite a proclamation by parliamentarians that Naval Reserve Divisions were to "be kept open even when bases were being closed and ships paid off," the reserves faced an uphill struggle for recognition and funding.¹⁶ Like C and M ships of the Reserve Fleet, the RCNR would be

¹⁵ RCN Planning Document, "Plan "C", Naval Plan for Fiscal Year 1948-49," 26 September 1945, D Hist, NSS 1650-26, Vol. II.

¹⁶ Michael Hadley, "The Impact of Public Policy on a Naval Reserve Division," in RCN in Retrospect, ed., Boutilier, p. 310.

left to stagnate while big-ship priorities were attended to first.

At the beginning of the second quarter of 1946 the navy's recruiting programme showed no sign of improvement. Additionally, poor communication at NSHQ resulted in confusion and misinformation about the status of manning. On 25 March, only days before the official commencement of the RCNR recruiting campaign, NSHQ advised both coastal commands that it could not provide RCN personnel for reserve shipboard training and support because it was short of trained men.¹⁷ The Director of Naval Reserves, with less than two months remaining to find qualified instructors and crew, stood to lose valuable training and even more crucial, the confidence of new recruits. NSHQ set aside up to seven frigates and *ALGERINE*-class escorts for summer training, but the ships were in jeopardy of going nowhere without RCN assistance.¹⁸

While DNR and his staff worked on a solution, NSHQ appeared to reverse its position with respect to manning shortfalls. Within a week, a signal from NSHQ to the Commanding Officer Atlantic Coast (COAC) and the Commanding Officer Pacific Coast (COPC) was transmitted with the following direction:

1. In view of the favourable recruiting situation since the beginning of the year it will be possible to advance the estimated manning schedule contained in NSS 1650-26 of 17th January, 1946;
2. HMCS *CRUSADER* is to be commissioned so as to be ready for new entry training duties by the 31st May; [and]
3. Permanent complement will be as laid down for *CRESCENT*...

¹⁷ Memorandum, "RCN(R) Summer Training Programme - 1946," Naval Secretary to Commanding Officer Pacific Coast and Commanding Officer Atlantic Coast for General Distribution, 25 March 1946, D Hist, NSS 1650-26, Vol II.

¹⁸ loc. cit. During the next two months, a number of memoranda reiterated NSHQ's policy to man reserve training ships entirely with reserve crews. Demands for more volunteers continued, and in late May a directive from NSHQ indicated that the programme was faltering. In the end, only three ships, *NEW LISKEARD*, *PORTAGE*, and *WALLACEBURG* were retained from 15 May to 15 September for training on the East Coast, the St. Lawrence River and the Great Lakes respectively.

manning priority 8A.¹⁹

Conflicting information in the signal created confusion and sent the wrong message to the RCNR. On one hand the reserves were advised that insufficient RCN personnel were available to support summer training, while on the other, NSHQ announced the advancement of HMCS *CRUSADER's* commissioning date by almost six months because of favourable recruiting results. It appears that DOP released the signal to COAC and COPC without consulting CNP, and that the positive bias on recruiting was premature. After an initial surge of recruits between January and mid-March 1946, the intake of new entries dropped off dramatically and the manning situation was anything but healthy. Within weeks of DOP's signal, the commissioning of *CRUSADER* was postponed. By July, continued poor recruiting and the early release of interim force personnel forced the Naval Staff to make fundamental revisions to the fleet operations schedule.²⁰

The fact that any favourable signal on recruiting was approved for release in late March is even more remarkable given the broad distribution of an important message from CNP just three days prior to DOP's directive to the commands in Halifax and Esquimalt. In this message, the Chief of Naval Personnel made a fleet wide appeal for more volunteers to join the continuing navy or the interim force reserves and laid out a plan in which the RCN promised to improve conditions in the Service.²¹ The message clearly shows that the RCN was deficient in most trades at the lower rank level, and that it would take up to a year of solid recruiting to rectify the shortages. CNP alerted all ranks that as the demobilization of *Hostilities Only* personnel neared completion, it would become "increasingly evident that the total number of volunteers to serve in the

¹⁹ Naval Signal, DOP (NSHQ) to COAC, COPC and General Distribution, Date/Time Group 301828Z March 1946, Extracts from D Hist, NSS 1650-1, Vol. I.

²⁰ Memorandum, "Employment of the Canadian Naval Forces During 1946-47," Naval Secretary to General Distribution, 18 July 1946, D Hist, NSS 1650-26, Vol I. The new employment programme revealed that fleet exercises planned for early 1947 would "be on a reduced scale to that previously anticipated" because of fewer re-commissioned ships.

²¹ Naval Signal, CNP to RCN General Distribution, nil Date/Time Group, but signal is dated 21 March 1946, D Hist, NSC 4100-100/14, Vol. I.

continuing navy as members of the RCN interim force will be far short of requirements." He explained further that most men who entered the RCN before or early in the war and now held the temporary rating of Chief Petty Officer or Petty Officer might be required to revert their employment status momentarily due to a continuing deficiency in the total number of lower ratings. CNP assessed this as an exceptional situation that he expected to resolve within a year "when suitable men entered as recruits and trained to fill the gap between the higher ratings in the Navy and the lower categories."²²

Despite these temporary setbacks, CNP assured his audience that the RCN would maintain the interest and welfare of personnel as a high priority. Guarantees for a new pay system and consideration for pay equity with men of equivalent skill and responsibility in civilian life were also promised. Finally, CNP praised and thanked the Women's Royal Canadian Naval Service (WRCNS) for volunteering to serve until 1 August 1946, at which time he expected sufficient male personnel in the Supply and Secretariat Branch would be able to assume their duties.

CNP's promises for a better life in the navy added to the RCN's growing financial commitments, but more than any other obligation undertaken by naval authorities during this period, these assurances would not be forgotten by the lower deck. Barely three months into the first *Fleet Employment Programme*, quality of life had become such an important issue that ignoring it would risk dissatisfying and demoralizing sailors. Lower standards of pay and spartan living conditions aboard HMC ships stood to damage the navy's image and benefit the civilian job market through attrition.

By the summer of 1946 the decline in recruiting was so severe that a complete revision of the navy's first Employment Programme was necessary. On 18 July, NSHQ promulgated a new document in which incorporated many changes. The most significant amendments involved a slow down in the commissioning schedule and a modification of the manning priority system. "It is unlikely", the Naval Secretary

²² loc. cit.

pronounced, "that the RCN will be up to strength of 10,000 personnel until late 1947."²³ Various decisions were cited for the delay in meeting expectations, including recent approval for an increase in educational requirements for entry into the navy. Not surprisingly, however, the most severe blow was delivered by the government. Cabinet's decision to permit the release of interim force personnel over a year ahead of the scheduled September 1947 date was a serious setback to RCN plans.

Notwithstanding the reputation for interim forces as the least disciplined of sailors, the skill, knowledge, training expertise, and wartime experience of some would be sorely missed. The RCN relied on interim force numbers to augment new entries of the continuing navy and to keep the fleet in operation. Now, faced with another shortage of skilled men, NSHQ found it necessary to redirect its focus away from the commissioning programme and toward non-substantive²⁴ training and the re-qualification of personnel.

At a meeting of the Naval Staff on 24 June 1946 the Director of Warfare Training (DWT) advised members that the RCN placed too much emphasis on elementary seamanship training. He recommended that non-substantive instruction in recently completed facilities receive greater attention so that future fleet units, although fewer in number, would be manned by trades qualified personnel and operate as fighting units rather than training ships.²⁵ DWT found agreement among the senior officers

²³ Memorandum, "Employment of the Canadian Naval Forces," 18 July 1946. The stated purpose of the revised programme was to "bring Royal Canadian Navy authorities up to date on the organization and intended employment of the Fleet."

²⁴ Non-substantive was a term used to describe specialist training at different levels of classification within the various branches of the RCN. The duty of a sailor in each branch was obvious from branch titles such as seaman, writer, stoker or shipwright. Within each branch, seaman were further graded according to their level of responsibility. In the seaman branch for example, they were designated ordinary, able, and leading seaman, petty officer and chief petty officer in ascending order of seniority. Specialized or non-substantive training for the seaman branch included gunnery and torpedo. Once qualified, the seaman was again graded but this time it was done according to skill level. A Leading Seaman, therefore, could qualify as a third, second or first-class gunnery rating depending on his success at non-substantive training courses. See Tucker, *Naval Service of Canada*, pp. 278-313.

²⁵ Minutes of the 338th Meeting of the Naval Staff, 24 June 1946, D Hist 1000-100.

present, and the RCN's manning priority system was revised. For the first time since the end of the war, the Naval Staff finally agreed "that the manning of the Fleet could best be achieved in the long run by giving priority now to non-substantive training at the expense of accepting delays in the commissioning of ships."²⁶

Although on the surface the decision appeared to result in only a temporary delay in the RCN's *Fleet Employment Programme*, it was obvious the navy had neither human nor fiscal resources to maintain the rate of commissioning as originally envisaged. Fleet exercises planned for early 1947 had to be reduced in scale and even those remaining were subject to the outcome of non-substantive training. Plans for the commissioning of additional ships could only be scheduled one quarter in advance, and thus the attainment of routine operations and an acceptable level of readiness in the RCN would remain out of reach until trained men became available and the recruiting situation stabilized.²⁷

Despite these obvious shortfalls and the need for restraint, NSHQ managed to increase overall fleet numbers by one frigate. Naval planning staff accomplished this by conveniently retaining less than twelve per cent of the fleet in commission while placing remaining ships in maintenance reserve or allocating them to the RCNR for summer training. Between July and September 1946, *WARRIOR* was the only RCN ship fully manned for operational duty, and even then her focus was solely on work ups and training for fleet aviation. *UGANDA* and *CRESCENT* on the west coast, and *MICMAC* and *NOOTKA* on the east coast were exclusively manned by training complements and were largely employed on New Entry Training duties. The *RIVER*-class frigate *CHARLOTTETOWN* and two Algerines, *NEW LISKEARD* and *WALLACEBURG*, were commissioned for RCNR summer training. The remaining 36 ships, including *ONTARIO* and eight destroyers, were manned by Care and Maintenance crews. At an estimated annual cost of approximately \$100,000 per Reserve Fleet ship,

²⁶ loc. cit.

²⁷ Memorandum, "Employment of Canadian Naval Forces," 18 July 1946.

the preservation of a comparably large number of ships exacted an additional toll on RCN resources.²⁸ Approved status for the fleet now stood at "two Light Fleet Carriers, two Cruisers, 12 Fleet Destroyers, 18 Frigates, 12 Algerines, and a number of auxiliary vessels".²⁹

In the fall of 1946, air proficiency objectives were stepped up in preparation for the planned transfer of aircraft and air crews to *MAGNIFICENT* in the spring of 1947. The Naval Board approved earlier recommendations from the Naval Staff "that in view of the fact the *WARRIOR* is not arcticized and in view of the change in *MAGNIFICENT*'s programme, it would be necessary to transfer *WARRIOR* to the West Coast late in 1946 in order that plans may be made to provide the necessary shore facilities at the RCAF Station, Patricia Bay."³⁰ *WARRIOR*'s work ups, therefore, continued on the East Coast until November, after which the ship sailed for Esquimalt to conduct training and carrier familiarization for an additional two months.³¹ Similarly, 803 (SEAFIRE) and 825 (FIREFLY) Squadrons would continue training at Royal Canadian Navy Air Station (RCNAS) DARTMOUTH until the facilities at Patricia Bay, near Victoria, were arranged with the RCAF.

In preparation for *WARRIOR*'s return to the United Kingdom, arrangements were planned for the ship's company to transfer to the newly completed *MAGNIFICENT* while 803 and 825 Squadrons were disembarked for advanced training. Two additional Squadrons, 826 (FIREFLY) and 883 (SEAFIRE), were to continue

²⁸ Extracts from an address by the CNS, Vice Admiral H.T.W. Grant, to the Montreal United Services Institution, 16 February 1948, as quoted in Eayrs, *In Defence of Canada, Vol. III*, p. 398.

²⁹ Appendix 1 to NSS 1650-26 (Staff) Memorandum, "Estimated Ship Manning Programme," 18 July 1946, D Hist, 1650-26, Vol. II.

³⁰ Minutes of the 329th Meeting of the Naval Staff, 1 April 1946, D Hist 1000-100.

³¹ Although *WARRIOR*'s crew was relieved at not having to maintain the carrier's operational programme inside non-winterized compartments in the frigid climate of the North Atlantic, a transfer to the milder West Coast meant even more time away from home port than originally planned. Hence, the beginning of a hectic operational schedule for aviation trained crews during the formative years of Canada's single carrier Naval Air Service.

training at DARTMOUTH until the autumn of 1946, and were then to proceed to England for additional training, eventually joining *MAGNIFICENT's* crew and returning to Canada by mid-1947.³²

The carrier training and exchange programme was an impressive but otherwise expensive illustration of the complexities and logistics involved in building a carrier-based fleet and again represented the determination of senior RCN officers to realize the balanced fleet. Unfortunately, for every advantage gained in personnel management practices through training, the RCN thwarted any real benefit by spreading thin its trained personnel in the Naval Air Service and the multitude of ships being kept in maintenance reserve.

Notwithstanding the emphasis placed on fleet size and carrier training, the RCN also made an effort to branch out in other areas of naval operations. Experience gained in the war generated new ideas aimed at expanding and substantiating the navy's role in national and continental defence. NSHQ, aware of the importance of re-examining and improving lessons already learned, committed to "assisting the Army in combined operations training" at the Combined Operations Training Centre near Courtenay, British Columbia.³³ Under the administration of the Canadian Army, the continued operation of the wartime school reinforced the fiscal necessity of shared resources between Services and was a means to preserve valuable joint experience gained during the war.

In order to support combined operations training, NSHQ attempted to secure surplus combined operations landing craft from the United States Army. DWT and the Naval Staff pursued this initiative with the intention of holding the craft in reserve in Esquimalt until the RCN reached the authorized post-war complement of

³² Memorandum, "Employment of Canadian Naval Forces," 18 July 1946; and Minutes of the 354th Meeting of the Naval Staff, 25 November 1946, D Hist 1000-100.

³³ Minutes of the 335th Meeting of the Naval Staff, 27 May 1946, D Hist 1000-100. Incorporating lessons learned from Dieppe, the Combined Operations School at Courtenay was ready for training in the spring of 1943 and was officially opened on 1 July of the same year. See Colonel C.P. Stacey, *Six Years of War: The Army in Canada, Britain and the Pacific*, (Ottawa: Queen's Printer, 1955), pp. 136 and 533.

10,000.³⁴ For the navy, benefits from combined operations training were emphasized by the *two coast* aspect of the balanced fleet concept and to a lesser degree, by evaluating the utility of landing craft and carriers in amphibious warfare.

Expansion into Canada's Arctic region was also explored by NSHQ. Long neglected as an area of little military importance, the region increased in prominence as relations between the United States and the Soviet Union deteriorated after the war. In a new era of nuclear weapons, jet aircraft and guided missiles, Canada's north was recognized as a geographical buffer or defence zone between northern Russia and the North American continent. Not surprisingly, American naval interest in the Arctic quickly manifested itself through two major USN operations in 1946. During March, RCN officers embarked in USS *MIDWAY* to participate as observers in Operation FROSTBITE near Baffin Bay, while a second group of RCN officers prepared for another USN exercise called NANOOK. The second exercise included a mix of logistic support forces and was carried out for a three month period, commencing 1 July, in an area from Lancaster Sound to Melville Island.³⁵

Interest in Arctic operations and research led to NSHQ making an official proposal to designate northern waters as the Arctic Zone, thus joining the Atlantic and Pacific Coastal Zones as the third area of naval responsibility. Accordingly, the RCN made a commitment to support and participate in Arctic exercises and tests as part of the Department's Joint Winter Warfare Committee. The Committee coordinated "all Service activities (including research) connected with winter warfare" and established Joint Service Exercises in the Arctic as early as September 1947.³⁶ Benefits for the navy were summarized as follows:

- a. to obtain topographic, hydrographic, magnetic, meteorological and

³⁴ loc. cit. At the 344th Meeting of the Chiefs of Staff Committee held on 28 February 1946, requirements for combined operations craft were approved as 12 Landing Craft Assault, 6 Landing Craft Tank, 2 Landing Craft Mechanized, 6 Landing Vehicles Tracked, 6 DUKVs, and 1 Landing Ship Tank.

³⁵ Memorandum, "Employment of the Canadian Naval Forces," 18 July 1946.

³⁶ loc. cit.

- other scientific information;
- b. to test communications and wave propagation across the maximum auroral belt and close to the magnetic pole;
 - c. to establish experimental outposts for meteorological and radar observation;
 - d. to study and test various methods of navigation;
 - e. to experiment in the unloading of heavy equipment for [sic] ship to ice; and
 - f. to carry out extended trials of Service clothing, vehicles and equipment.³⁷

Although interested in the joint proposals for the initial Arctic experiments, the Naval Staff considered it more advantageous to send a ship into Arctic waters during the open navigation season in order to "study navigational and operational conditions."³⁸ In any event, notwithstanding the RCN's genuine interest and eagerness to expand naval horizons, the navy remained handicapped by personnel shortages. NSHQ could only hope to take a more active part in combined training and Arctic exercises and tests when the manning situation improved.

As 1946 drew to a close and the deadline for the 1947 Naval Estimates approached, additional documentation from NSHQ was circulated in support of the balanced fleet and an increase to the RCN complement. Captain Lay, the senior officer in charge of plans, spearheaded another effort by NSHQ to restore interest and to re-affirm government support for carrier-based task forces. In his post as the Director of Naval

³⁷ Minutes of the 351st Meeting of the Naval Staff, 28 October 1946, D Hist 1000-100. As part of the proposal, the Army suggested that the RCN charter a suitably outfitted cargo ship of approximately 4,700 tons and allow it to freeze in place at Admiralty Inlet for a year while a composite party of 160, representing the three Services, carried out the appropriate tasks. NSHQ came to the conclusion that freezing up a ship in the Arctic at the expense of \$.5M to \$.75M was not justified.

³⁸ loc. cit.

Plans and Intelligence (DNPI),³⁹ Lay drew upon his wartime experience to reassure the Naval Board and ultimately to convince Cabinet that it was in Canada's best interest to activate the balanced fleet.

His efforts were strongly supported by the Assistant Chief of the Naval Staff, newly promoted Commodore Harry G. DeWolf, who, during the wartime negotiations for carriers, was also an active participant and promoter of Canadian naval aviation. Both agreed with British and American assessments that carriers were the principal warships of future task forces and that carrier-borne air power would play a significant part in world security. Lay expanded these roles, stressing the utility of fleet air support in ship protection, anti-submarine warfare, combined operations and strike campaigns beyond the range of shore-based aircraft.

Commencing in November 1946, Lay formulated a series of convincing arguments to increase the RCN's complement to a level that would match the number of ships already approved for fleet composition. Citing a report from the Navy's Standing Committee on Complements, Lay reasoned that 1,500 officers and 8,500 men were insufficient to maintain and operate the size of fleet currently approved.⁴⁰ Already well known and documented by NSHQ, the shortages were concentrated in various non-commissioned trade groups. Therefore, to rectify the situation the Committee recommended increasing the number of ratings by 820. If approved, the increase would result in a total of 9,320 men and 1,500 officers - well in excess of the government's authorized limit of 10,000. Undeterred, Lay argued that the figure of 10,000 was only a *quick fix* approximation for reasons of political expediency and that a readjustment of complements to fit the approved fleet size was overdue. He made it clear that any increase in strength should go first to support a second carrier, otherwise both coasts

³⁹ Formerly referred to as the Director of Plans (DOP).

⁴⁰ Memorandum, DNPI to ACNS, 9 November 1946, D Hist, NSS 1650-26, Vol. I. The Standing Committee on Complements was set up by the Director of Seaman Personnel (DSP) after numerous frustrating attempts to co-ordinate demands for personnel from various branches in the navy. CNP approved the formation of the Committee in December 1945. Memorandum, DSP to CNP, 1 December 1945, D Hist, 4000-100/14, Vol. I.

would not be supported by a small well-balanced task force. His next concern was to ensure provision was made for combined operations training. Lay stipulated that without such a provision in the RCN's training regimen, the Army and the Air Force stood to lose a critical element of modern joint warfare training. Lastly, he identified the establishment of a training destroyer on the West Coast as an essential requirement that needed to be addressed as soon as possible. Lay's bottom line was to have a small fleet task force on each coast consisting of one Light Fleet Carrier, one six-inch Cruiser, and four Fleet Destroyers. The total complement required would be 12,000 - 1,595 officers and 10,405 men.⁴¹

Lay forwarded the above recommendations to DeWolf, who quickly passed the information to the CNS. Although he endorsed Lay's proposals in his correspondence, DeWolf acknowledged that the RCN, if forced, could manage with 10,000, but a margin of five per cent or 500 extra personnel would make for efficient manning. His preferred course of action was to man both carriers, maintain the balanced fleet and have enough men left over to meet additional outside commitments such as combined operations, wireless telegraphy and a portion of the world-wide site development for LORAN (Long Range Aid-to-Navigation). "In other words," in order to truly manage the minimum balanced fleet proposed by Lay, DeWolf agreed that, "12,000 is about the lowest figure [they] could recommend [to the Minister] for a continuing Service."⁴²

The CNS, Vice-Admiral H.E. "Rastus" Reid, was favourably disposed towards the increase in complement and was more than ready to approve its inclusion in the next *Employment of the Canadian Naval Forces* programme. Only one week prior to receiving DeWolf's memorandum, Reid had infuriated Mackenzie King and was reprimanded by Abbott for comments in a public speech regarding the inadequate number of personnel in the RCN. Reid pointed out:

⁴¹ loc cit.

⁴² Memorandum, ACNS to CNS, 13 November 1946, Extracts from D Hist, NSS 1650-26, Vol. I.

The United States Navy plans a post-war personnel of 500,000 men. We have 10,000. Our population is one-twelfth that of the United States. You can figure out for yourself the arithmetic.⁴³

Nonplussed by Reid's politically inappropriate remarks, Mackenzie King forged ahead with his plans for the navy and the other two services. On 12 December 1946, he persuaded his Minister of National Health and Welfare, Brooke Claxton, to replace Douglas Abbott as Minister of National Defence. Abbott, who had excelled in his efforts to demobilize the armed forces, was rewarded with a new Cabinet post, Finance. The RCN, with a new Minister at the helm and a new fiscal year approaching, hoped to build confidence and momentum that would improve recruitment and make the balanced fleet ready for sea.

⁴³ "Reid Warns Our Navy Too Small," *Ottawa Morning Journal*, 7 November 1946, as quoted in Eayrs, *In Defence of Canada*, Vol. III., p. 57.

Chapter Four

The Submarine Threat

By far the most pressing problem from the Naval angle is the improved detection of the fast submarine. Here is a weapon of great offensive power which loses nothing and possibly gains in importance in future warfare.

--VAdm H.T.W. Grant, 16 February 1948.

As the RCN entered its second year of peacetime operations the immediate future did not look promising. Poor recruitment throughout 1946 virtually immobilized an ambitious training and commissioning programme, while the likelihood of further reductions to the Naval Estimates meant even more ships would be forced to remain alongside. The balanced peacetime fleet had been justified by wartime planners to command Canada's oceans, to protect Canadian shipping on the high seas and to maintain sea lines of communication, but these roles no longer seemed appropriate to the strategic and fiscal reality of 1947. It appeared that only a greater sense of perceived threat against Canada or Canadian interests could slow the downward trend of post-war retrenchment and offer any hope to the services for moderate recovery.

In this regard, fate seemed to respond with the emergence of a second superpower. The RCN believed that the Soviet Union and its aggressive stance on the advancement of communism in Europe threatened Western security and compelled it to re-examine the navy's strategic role, the allocation of resources and the shortcomings of post-war plans. Intelligence estimates indicated that modern, long-range Soviet aircraft and fast submarines had the capacity to wage war across oceans and continents and the potential to unleash weapons of greater destructive power and accuracy. These factors, combined with Canada's geographic position between the world's two most powerful nations, increased the country's strategic significance and prompted the RCN to look to the United States and Great Britain for guidance. NSHQ's initial reaction was to follow an approach similar to that which had been unfolding at the Admiralty since the end of

hostilities.

Early in 1947, the Royal Navy came under fire from the Chancellor of the Exchequer and the Cabinet Defence Committee over proposals to maintain manpower and ships above pre-war numbers. In a heated debate, the Admiralty defended its recommendations by citing Britain's "slim margin of superiority" over "an increased estimate of Soviet naval strength [of] 230 submarines, 17 cruisers [and] 69 destroyers."¹ Ironically, after neglecting small ships and the anti-submarine role for nearly two years, NSHQ would cite similar reasons for turning the RCN back to anti-submarine warfare as one of its principle missions. Just as the German U-boat had done in 1940 and to a lesser extent in 1915, the RCN hoped that an emerging Soviet submarine threat would allow for naval expansion in Canada.²

Efforts to establish these changes in the RCN would not go unchallenged. NSHQ proceeded under the careful scrutiny of Mackenzie King during his final months in office and more importantly, it competed with the other two services for recognition under the leadership of a new regime at the Department of National Defence (DND). The day after being sworn in as Minister, the Honourable Brooke Claxton met with his Service Chiefs and wasted no time in taking charge. Unhappy with the condition of his office in the run down Woods Building, Claxton simply walked out and never went back.³ A couple of days later he initiated a major re-organization of the entire headquarters staff by re-establishing his own offices in one of the many makeshift structures that the government had acquired during the war - the navy's "A" Building.

¹ Grove, p. 30.

² Of grave concern to Canadian authorities in 1915 was a fear that the deadly U-boat campaign being waged in the western approaches to Great Britain could make its way across the Atlantic. In the confined waters of the Gulf of St. Lawrence, a German submarine would be uncontested and could stalk and kill ships at will. Patey to Admiralty, 3 June and 19 July 1915, Great Britain, Public Record Office, Admiralty Records 116/1400; G.J. Desbarats diary, 29 June, 1 and 14 July, NA, G.J. Desbarats papers, MG 30 E89, Vol. 5, as quoted in Sarty, "Canada and Submarine Warfare," p. 188.

³ Captain P.C. Paterson, "The Defence Administration of Brooke Claxton, 1946 to 1954," (unpublished MA thesis, RMC Kingston, 1975), D Hist, Copy 5, p. 22.

Over the next few months, Claxton's actions assured him the undivided attention of his military leaders. In an effort to reduce infrastructure and create a shake up, he moved and consolidated all of the Service Chiefs and Deputy Ministers and their staffs, the secretariats, and the joint intelligence agencies into a single headquarters at "A" Building and renamed it National Defence Headquarters (NDHQ).⁴ All under one roof, the new organization appropriately christened the beginning of the Claxton era and the age of a unified armed forces in Canada.

Although a relatively junior member of Parliament, Claxton's dramatic rise through the ranks of the Liberal Party earned him recognition as a problem solver and consequently earned him the difficult task of leading the services out of their post-demobilization depression. Representing the riding of St. Lawrence-St. George in Montreal, he brought to the Defence Department six years of parliamentary skills and an extraordinary stamina for hard work. A veteran artilleryman of the Great War, Claxton rose to the rank of Battery Sergeant-Major and received the Distinguished Conduct Medal for his service overseas - a fact that subordinate generals at DND were not allowed to forget.⁵ After graduating from McGill University with a law degree in 1921, Claxton spent the next two decades practicing law in Montreal and teaching part-time at McGill before being elected to the House of Commons for the first time in 1940. Appointed as Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister in 1943, Claxton was able to impress King with his dedication and loyalty as the government wrestled with the formulation of post-war strategy and policy.

Teamed with Alex Skelton of the Bank of Canada, Claxton was delegated by King in 1944 to spearhead a comprehensive plan to restructure Canadian federalism, and later that year he was appointed to his first Cabinet post as Minister of National Health and Welfare.⁶ At the Paris Peace Conference in 1945, Claxton assumed even

⁴ loc. cit.

⁵ Morton, A Military History of Canada, p. 227.

⁶ Bothwell, Drummond and English, Canada Since 1945, pp. 74 and 84.

greater responsibility when King chose him to head the Canadian delegation while the Prime Minister returned to Canada to prepare for a general election. Like the Prime Minister, Claxton witnessed first hand the shocking display of combative behaviour between Soviet diplomats and representatives from the West as they argued over the restoration of formalities between war-torn nations of Europe. The obvious division between former allies was a disheartening experience for Claxton and removed any illusion he had held of an easy or lasting world peace. When offered the position of Minister of National Defence (MND), Claxton accepted, "not only because it was the toughest and most challenging, but also because at the time [he] believed it to be the most important."⁷

Mackenzie King's instructions to his new Defence Minister were straightforward and set the tone of Defence Estimates for the next three years. In addition to defining a new defence policy, Claxton was expected to trim the armed forces' balance sheet. "Your task," asserted the Prime Minister, "should be to see that the utmost economy consistent with security should be effected in the Defence Department."⁸ The Army's historian, Colonel C.P. Stacey, went so far as to tag King's choice for Defence Minister as a *hatchetman*, but this was only partially true.⁹ Claxton fully intended to reduce the operating cost of the three services, but he was not prepared to do it by simply slashing budgets as had been the case with his predecessor, Abbott. He set out to reorganize the defence establishment from the top down, thereby weeding out wartime extravagances, eliminating duplication between the services and creating small but competent fighting forces that suited Canada's domestic security needs.

Above all, Claxton recognized the need to establish operational guidelines

⁷ The Honourable Brooke Claxton Papers, NAC, RG 32 B5, File B.C. 1946-1954, Vol. 221, Autobiography, p. 828.

⁸ J. Pickersgill and D.F. Forster, The Mackenzie King Record, Vol. 3, 1945-1946, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1970), p. 394.

⁹ C.P. Stacey, "The Life and Hard Times of an Official Historian," Canadian Historical Review, LI, 1 March 1970, as quoted in Eayrs, In Defence of Canada, Vol. III, p. 23.

for the three services. The Department of National Defence had been without a defence policy since the end of hostilities. As a result, budgets, plans and procurement programmes had been organized and executed without adequate consultation or co-ordination between the Chiefs of Staff and the government. To correct this, he intended to integrate defence planning "into the overall making of governmental policy, something virtually unheard of prior to 1939."¹⁰ Claxton also began to consider methods of streamlining various channels of communication, but first he needed to resolve Canada's internal and external priorities for security.

His initial policy was one of co-operation with Canada's closest allies; namely, the United States; the United Kingdom; and other Commonwealth countries. In an effort to advise the Prime Minister of his plans for a future defence policy framework, Claxton provided his own personal analysis and interpretation of Recommendation No. 35 - a joint appreciation of continental defence by members of the Canada-U.S. Permanent Joint Board on Defence (PJBD).¹¹ In the first of two memoranda to King, he stressed the importance of joint North American defence and suggested Canada concentrate on the exchange of information and the development of domestic training facilities for overseas commitments rather than maintain a large standing army.¹² He was confident that Canadian involvement in a military conflict within the next five to ten

¹⁰ David Jay Bercuson, True Patriot, The Life of Brooke Claxton, 1898-1960, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1993), p. 174.

¹¹ The PJBD was created on 18 August 1940 at Ogdensburg, New York by Canadian Prime Minister Mackenzie King, and U.S. President Franklin D. Roosevelt. Its purpose was to commence immediate studies relating to sea, land and air problems including personnel and material and also to consider in the broad sense the defence of the north half of the Western hemisphere. From each country, the Board's members included a civilian Chairman and a representative of the Defence Departments, the Armed Services, External Affairs and State Departments, with secretaries provided from the latter two departments. During the Second World War, the Board coordinated the recommendation of 33 agreed plans for executive approval, of which virtually all were implemented. Recommendation No., 35 received PJBD approval on 20 November 1946 and Cabinet approval on 16 January 1947. See C.P. Stacey, Arms, Men and Governments, pp. 336-343, and Colonel R.L. Raymont, "The Formulation of Canadian Defence Policy 1945-1964," February 1978, D Hist 79/17, Copy 2, Vol. I, pp. 30-35.

¹² Memorandum, "Defence Policy," MND to Prime Minister, 7 January 1947, Claxton Papers, NAC, MG 32 B5, Vol. 122.

years was highly improbable, but that political and technical developments made it necessary for North America to defend itself.

In the event of war, he thought the front to be defended would be as far away from Canadian soil as it had been during the previous two world wars. Applying his speculative analysis to the RCN he advised King that, "our navy's primary purpose is to train personnel rather than to have ready a task force and the training should be definitely designed to equip men to fight in northern waters."¹³ For the RCN at least it was an early indication that Claxton was less interested in developing the navy's vision of a capable *blue water*¹⁴ task force than in having a fleet that trained close to home at an affordable price. Nevertheless, accepting that Canada would not be able to uphold or afford a military force capable of dealing with any eventuality, Claxton advised King that the work of the Board should be approved. In its final version, the Board's recommendation endorsed a strategy of close co-operation with the United States in areas of planning, training, and equipment - similar to then existing arrangements with Great Britain. "Everything must be done," Claxton added, "to ensure that we obtain the utmost value for the defence dollar."¹⁵

Obviously pleased with Claxton's policy assessment and personally satisfied that the bilateral agreement did not encroach upon Canadian sovereignty, the Prime Minister applauded the new Defence Minister's efforts. "Claxton," he said a short while later, "has done wonderful work in compelling the defence forces to cut down different establishments, effecting a saving of something like \$100,000,000."¹⁶ On 12 February 1947, from the text of a joint statement, King publicly announced that the wartime co-operation between the armed forces of Canada and the United States would

¹³ loc. cit.

¹⁴ *Blue Water* is a term used to describe a naval service that possesses ships of sufficient size and endurance such that it is capable of sustained independent operations on the high seas; as opposed to a *Brown Water* navy which is primarily restricted to riverine or coastal operations.

¹⁵ Memorandum, "Defence Policy," 7 January 1947, Claxton Papers.

¹⁶ Eayrs, In Defence of Canada, Vol. III, pp. 23-24.

continue in the post-war period:

In the interest of efficiency and economy, each Government has decided that its national defence establishment shall, to the extent authorized by law, continue to collaborate for peacetime joint security purposes. Both Governments believe that this decision is a contribution to the stability of the world and to the establishment through the United Nations of an effective system of world-wide security.¹⁷

The Prime Minister was delighted with Claxton's progress at his new post, but the Defence Minister's flair for frugality and re-organization was a cause for concern at NSHQ. Prior to his arrival, word had been circulating that sizeable reductions in the Naval Estimates were being contemplated. RCN commissioning plans and sailing schedules, previously approved by the Naval Board and the CNS, were either rescinded or placed on hold. At DNPI, two of Captain Lay's most important initiatives, a proposal to operate both cruisers and a re-tailored 1947 employment programme, were now very much in doubt. DeWolf advised him to "hold until more [was] known of the estimates" and the Naval Staff directed that he revise and resubmit his recommendations as previous decisions were being "reconsidered in light of the anticipated reduction in Naval Estimates."¹⁸ On the same day that Lay received instruction from the Naval Staff, Claxton confirmed the expectation with an official announcement. There would be significant reductions in the Defence Estimates and the three services were not to recruit more than three-quarters of their approved interim strength as laid down by the Cabinet Defence Committee on 28 September 1945. Thus, after nearly two years of presuming that force levels would eventually rise, senior naval authorities were faced with the reality of planning and re-structuring for a 7,500-man navy.

¹⁷ Copy of statement made by the Prime Minister of Canada in the House of Commons on defence co-operation with the United States, 12 February 1947, D Hist, 82/196, Journal of the PJBD, Vol 5.

¹⁸ Minute, A/CNS (DeWolf) to DNPI (Lay), undated, and Minute, Deputy Secretary Naval Staff to DNPI, 16 January 1947, extracts from D Hist, NSS 1650-26, Vol. I. In view of the impending reduction in the Naval Estimates, DeWolf's minute was probably written about the same time he cautioned the CNS that Lay's proposed 1947 employment programme was a forecast of "what we hope to do, but it now appears that we won't be able to do all of it." Minute, A/CNS to CNS, 9 January 1947, extracts from D Hist, NSS 1650-26, Vol. I.

The impact of this decision was staggering. In expectation of the Minister's announcement, Rear Admiral H. Grant, the Chief of Naval Administration and Supply (CNAS), outlined for the Naval Staff a series of items where substantial cuts or savings could be made. Details of the Naval Staff's reply to Grant, although preliminary in nature, left no question that there would be a sizeable decrease in the number and extent of Canada's naval commitments. The document's main item, *Reduction of RCN Complement*, revealed that the planned size of the Fleet, in both ships and personnel, would be halved. Formal decisions made by the Naval Staff, together with recommendations for action to be taken, were as follows:

- a. It was considered that the target [fleet ratio] should be approximately 50% ashore and 50% afloat - 3500 afloat and 4000 ashore was suggested;
- b. Consideration was given to manning HMCS *ONTARIO* by a special reduced complement to allow 50% of the armament to be manned;
- c. It was recommended that the following six Destroyers be retained in peacetime commission as all are equipped with modern HA/LA [High Angle/Low Angle] armament. HMCS *NOOTKA*, HMCS *MICMAC*, HMCS *CAYUGA* (completing in 1947), HMCS *ATHABASKAN* (completing 1947), HMCS *CRESCENT*, HMCS *CRUSADER*;
- d. The following 4 Destroyers to be kept in reserve: At Esquimalt - HMCS *SIoux*, HMCS *ALGONQUIN*; at Halifax - HMCS *IROQUOIS*, HMCS *HURON*; and
- e. It was noted that the return of HMCS *WARRIOR* to the RN and terms of loan for HMCS *MAGNIFICENT* would be negotiated on a diplomatic level.¹⁹

Also of consequence were reductions of up to one-third in the number of instructors at warfare training schools on both coasts, a reduction in the Reserve Fleet to half strength,

¹⁹ Memorandum, "Proposals and Recommendations to Reduce the Preliminary 1947-1948 Naval Estimates by \$50,000,000," Deputy Secretary of the Naval Staff to CNAS, 20 January 1947, D Hist, NSS 2200-47, Vol. I.

a reduction of \$500,000 in the Fuel Vote and, the laying up of the second cruiser, HMCS *UGANDA*. Above all, the most telling indication the RCN was headed for rough seas was spelled out in the subject title on both sets of correspondence: *Proposals and Recommendations to Reduce the Preliminary 1947-1948 Naval Estimates by \$50,000,000*.²⁰ Trimming the estimates by fifty million dollars was a reduction of such significant proportion that it turned out to be greater than the navy's entire budget. During Fiscal Year 1947-1948 the RCN was allocated a total of only \$43.7 million dollars - the smallest amount in its post-war history.

Five days after Claxton announced the reduced manning ceiling, the Acting Director of Naval Plans and Intelligence (A/DNPI), Commander A.H.G. Storrs, provided a preliminary assessment of the shape fleet dispositions should take as a result of the cutbacks. Given a proportionate total force reduction of approximately 3,500 personnel afloat and 4,000 ashore, Storrs' main concern was to effect an even distribution of personnel and ship types between the two coasts. As it was, an earlier decision rendered by the Naval Staff had split *WARRIOR*'s crew between Home Port Divisions in Halifax and those in Esquimalt. Storrs worried that if the situation were to remain unchanged a large imbalance would occur between East and West, thereby jeopardizing projected hopes for separate but comparable numbers of fleet units in both the Atlantic and Pacific oceans. Therefore, in concluding his report, he recommended maintaining a carrier and two destroyers in full peacetime commission on the East Coast while on the West Coast, four destroyers were to be kept at full peacetime complements and *ONTARIO* reduced to training complement only.²¹

Following a prolonged period of deliberation by the Naval Staff and the Naval Board, the allocation of HMC Ships was finally promulgated on 20 February 1947. The net outcome of Storrs' recommendations resulted in *ONTARIO*, *CAYUGA*,

²⁰ loc. cit.

²¹ Memorandum, A/DNPI (Storrs) to A/ACNS, 21 January 1947, Extracts from D Hist, NSS 1650-26, Vol. II.

ATHABASKAN, and *CRESCENT* being based at Esquimalt while *WARRIOR*, *NOOTKA*, *MICMAC* and *Haida* were based at Halifax.²² Additional details were provided in the third *Employment of the Canadian Naval Forces Employment* programme, released by the Naval Secretary four days later. The programme merely re-confirmed earlier proposals set forth by the Chief of Naval Administration and Supply and the Naval Staff. Actions taken to reduce the composition of the peacetime fleet were substantial:

- a. Light Fleet Carriers reduced by one;
- b. Cruisers in commission reduced to one for training;
- c. Destroyers in commission reduced to six;
- d. Reserve Fleet reduced by approximately one half;
- e. Auxiliary vessels and Yard craft reduced by one-third;
- f. HMCS *SCOTIAN* and HMCS *GIVENCHY* [Senior Officer Reserve Force ashore establishments] to be paid off; and
- g. Electrical Training Centre and Mechanical Training Establishment at *NADEN* inactivated.²³

While NSHQ paused to absorb these reductions and re-organize for fleet training, an escalation of political events in Europe gave the RCN opportunity to push forward its reassessment of naval policy in terms of the growing Soviet threat and to act on joint plans for the security of North America. At the United Nations Security Council, heightened emotions and a stalemate between the Great Powers gave Canadians reason to reflect on Winston Churchill's sobering message from the year before. While a guest of President Harry S Truman in the small town of Fulton, Missouri, Churchill declared on a continent-wide radio broadcast that "from Stettin in the Baltic to Trieste in the Adriatic,

²² Naval Signal, NSHQ to COAC, COPC and General Distribution, Date/Time Group 201703Z February 1947, Extracts from D Hist, NSS 1650-26, Vol. II.

²³ Memorandum, "Employment of the Canadian Naval Forces," Naval Secretary to General Distribution, 24 February 1947, D Hist, NSS 1650-26, Vol. II.

an iron curtain had descended across the [European] continent."²⁴

The Soviet Union did not disappoint Churchill and continued to give credence to the ominous tone of his widely publicized statement. Since the end of the war, Joseph Stalin and his Foreign Affairs Minister, Vyacheslav Molotov, had established a clear pattern of Communist aggression. Following earlier transgressions in Iran, Greece and Turkey, Russian-backed Communists had seized power in Bulgaria, Romania and Albania in 1946; and similarly in 1947 their controlled elections in Poland and Hungary added two more satellites to the Soviet Bloc. Canada was not immune to the challenges posed by Soviet politics, and in September 1945 made international headlines with the first of many post-war diplomatic revelations that would contribute to anti-communist hysteria in North America. Igor Gouzenko, a cipher clerk at the Soviet Embassy in Ottawa, escaped with documents which clearly pointed to the operation of a Russian spy network in Canada. Gouzenko's evidence and further investigation by the RCMP led to the arrest of 12 suspects and revealed that government workers were involved in the spy ring. Trust between the West and the Soviet Union would never be the same.

For Canada's naval community, the onset of the Cold War and the threat posed by superior Soviet military strength in Europe marked the beginning of a crucial period of change. Despite assurances from both the United States and Great Britain that the world was not headed for war, Canadian authorities could no longer turn a blind eye to defence. The RCN now believed they had a viable and known threat from which to formulate a post-war *raison d'etre* in the absence of purely big-ship ideals.

Concurrent with these developments, Canada's defence relationship with the United States continued to advance at the expense of traditional, imperial links to Great Britain.²⁵ Since early in the war, a pattern of increasing Canadian commitment and

²⁴ Bothwell, Drummond and English, *Canada Since 1945*, p. 88.

²⁵ Although the influence of the Admiralty and inherited traditions from the RN were slowly waning, the post-war Commonwealth connection still carried a lot of weight at NSHQ. Most of the senior RCN officers who occupied positions of authority were, as noted above (Chapter 1, pp. 16-17; Chapter 2, p. 51), graduates of the RN training system and followed closely, if not exactly, the post-war planning and fleet composition proposals of the RN; albeit on a much smaller scale. William Glover outlines in detail

allegiance to continental issues through wartime defence and economic agreements, such as the PJBD in 1940 and Hyde Park in 1941, tended to shift attention away from the Commonwealth.²⁶ Canada's geographic proximity and post-war economic ties to the United States extended this trend and led to the re-affirmation of many close bilateral working relationships by the new administration under President Truman.

Most notable of these was the PJBD-initiated security statement issued jointly from Ottawa and Washington on 12 February 1947. Not only would both countries continue to formulate joint plans for the "security of Alaska, Canada, Labrador, Newfoundland, and all northern portions of the U.S.A.,"²⁷ but they would work towards the "encouragement of common designs and standards in arms, equipment, organization, methods of training and new developments."²⁸ For their part, the RCN did not hesitate to consummate critical operational aspects of the new relationship and forged ahead with fundamental changes to tactical organization and procedures. In a memorandum to the

the strong imperial connections that prevailed during the genesis of RCN policy papers and post-war plans by British-born and educated RCNVR officers employed at NSHQ's Plans Division during the war. The big-ship "prestige" scripted by these well-educated young officers was accepted by the RCN Directors in charge, and successively by Admirals Nelles, Jones, Reid, Grant and other senior leaders from the old school. It is particularly interesting to note that recent statistical research conducted by David Zimmerman on members of the RCN who served during WW II, confirms many popular notions on the social background of the wartime navy's professional officers. A remarkable 28 per cent were born in the British Isles, compared to "less than 8 per cent of the total Canadian male population who were British-born." Zimmerman cautions that despite the findings of the study, the RCN "emerged by the end of the war as a Canadian institution, distinctly different from the Royal Navy." Notwithstanding this unique character, a number of key posts at NSHQ continued to be occupied by RN officers on loan after the war. Their liaison and advice concerning matters of warfare, training, and equipment acquisition were required until experienced Canadian officers could replace them. See William Glover, "The RCN: Royal Colonial or Royal Canadian Navy?" and David Zimmerman, "The Social Background of the Wartime Navy: Some Statistical Data," in *A Nation's Navy*, eds., Hadley, Huebert and Crickard, pp. 71-90 and pp. 256-79.

²⁶ In *The Great Naval Battle of Ottawa*, David Zimmerman describes another important facet of America's increasing influence over Canadian affairs. In matters concerning Canada's defence industry, "the American entry into the war in December only increased the pace of scientific and technical interchange between the United States and Canada." pp. 69-70.

²⁷ Colonel R.L. Rayment, "The Formulation of Canadian Defence Policy 1945-1964," February 1978, D Hist 79/17, Copy 2, Vol. I, pp. 30-35.

²⁸ Defence Co-operation Statement by Prime Minister, 12 February 1947, D Hist 82/196, Journal of the PJBD, Vol. 5.

Naval Staff, DNPI outlined some of the necessary modifications:

In view of the recent adoption by the RCN of USN communications and associated tactical publications, the basic USN system of operational numerical designations must also be accepted. An operational Canadian Task Force organization will therefore be promulgated shortly, together with a revised administrative organization based on a system of Forces.²⁹

Historic bonds to the Royal Navy would remain strong throughout the remainder of the 1940s and 1950s, however, the gradual process of forging a unique Canadian naval identity would evolve as the RCN adapted to systems or routines from either country which best favoured national interests. A classic example of this evolution was the combination of a British-designed propulsion plant and USN-standard electrics and electronics in the production of a distinctly Canadian warship, the *ST LAURENT*-class destroyer escort.³⁰ Difficulties experienced in the transition to the new American relationship were found mainly in the professional officer corps where years of personal allegiance and tradition would die hardest. Peter Haydon accurately summed up their situation by noting that "links with the Americans were largely forged of geographic and economic necessity, [while] the retention of many British concepts and traditions was voluntary."³¹

In other developments, a firm demonstration of solidarity and commitment to the defence of North America saw members of the PJBD mutually agree to revise the joint Canada-U.S. Appreciation and Basic Security Plan (ABC 22), first approved by Cabinet on 15 October 1942. To conduct the review, a subordinate planning agency of

²⁹ Memorandum, "Employment of the Canadian Naval Forces," draft prepared by DNPI for the Naval Staff, 9 January 1947, D Hist, HSS 1650-26, Vol. I. This paper revised previous "Employment" memoranda and was to be the official 1947 programme until reductions in the Naval Estimates delayed its release. The administrative and operational instructions were repeated in full in the 24 February 1947 programme.

³⁰ S. Mathwin Davis, "The ST LAURENT Decision," in *RCN in Retrospect*, ed., Boutilier, pp. 196-201.

³¹ Peter T. Haydon, "Sailors, Admirals and Politicians: The Search for Identity after the War," in *A Nation's Navy*, eds., Hadley, Huebert and Crickard, p. 234.

the PJBD was created and eventually became known as the Canada-United States Military Co-operation Committee (MCC). Given a mandate to "initiate free and comprehensive exchange of military information between Canada and the U.S.A.," it did not take long for committee members to agree on the *who and what* of the threat against North America.³²

A PJBD statement in 1945 warned of an all-out aircraft and submarine attack on the U.S. as a probable strategic scenario.³³ The strategem was revived at the inaugural meeting of the MCC in May 1946 when "long-range aircraft and the submarine" were again singled out "as the principal threats to the continent."³⁴ Seven months later, following tripartite discussions in Washington, the Canadian Chiefs of Staff Committee raised the Soviet submarine issue and noted the present lack of capability in the RCN to deal with this threat.³⁵ It was an embarrassing moment for the CNS who, in response, suggested that "by next year, a complete and detailed plan would be available."³⁶

Officially no plan existed, but the Naval Staff had shown some forethought by recommending outside submarine services for basic A/S training. Barring this, however, little had been done or planned in Canada to advance A/S technology and capability to counter the fast submarine. During the summer and fall of 1946, the RCN leased the obsolescent and slow-going RN training submarine, HMS *TOKEN*, primarily to conduct air training but also to provide elementary refresher training to Executive

³² Colonel R.L. Raymont, "The Formulation of Canadian Defence Policy 1945-1964," February 1978, D Hist 79/17, Copy 2, Vol. I, p. 115.

³³ Recommendation No. 35 of the PJBD, "A Joint Appreciation on Defence," as referred to in Claxton Papers, NAC, MG 32 B5, Vol. 122.

³⁴ Henry and Curtis, "Report of Proceedings at Washington, D.C., 20-23 May 1946," 23 May 1946, with enclosures, printed in Documents on Canadian External Relations, Vol. 12: 1946, Donald M. Page, ed. (Ottawa: Department of External Affairs, 1977) as quoted in Sarty, "Canada and Submarine Warfare," p. 208.

³⁵ Minutes of the Chiefs of Staff Committee, 9 December 1946, D Hist.

³⁶ loc. cit.

Branch officers and A/S ratings. In return for assuming four months of *TOKEN's* operating expenses and the cost of fuel and pay and allowances for the crew, the RCN managed to accomplish joint exercises with the RCAF, A/S work ups for two escort ships and a full A/S air training programme.³⁷

The training for *WARRIOR's* air crews was largely a rewarding learning experience, but it was quickly apparent that the *TRIBAL*-class destroyers, configured primarily for anti-surface and anti-air warfare, had neither the search or attack capability to screen the carrier effectively or to cope with even a slow submarine.³⁸ Not surprisingly, naval records show no indication that NSHQ had previously seriously considered adjusting the fleet plan or fleet combat capabilities to tackle the post-war A/S problem. Part of the reason for this was the tendency of Canada's Naval Staff to follow the lead of the Royal Navy in matters of naval policy and fleet development. Notably, it was not until 1948 that the Admiralty gave serious thought to developing new frigate designs and a new convoy escort force "to deal with the 17-18 knot high-performance, conventionally powered submarine."³⁹

Appropriately, it was not a graduate of the Royal Naval College of Canada or the Royal Navy's big-ship training system who brought much needed attention to A/S warfare and the requirement for modern escorts in the RCN. Commander A.H.G. Storrs, an ex-RCNR officer with wartime command experience, produced the first official correspondence at NSHQ to promote A/S warfare as an operational role properly suited to

³⁷ Minutes of the 332nd and 359th Meeting of the Naval Staff, 29 April 1946 and 20 January 1947 respectively, NSS 8375-476 Vol. I and Vol. II, D Hist, 1000-100.

³⁸ Ironically, of the RCN vessels operational in the fall of 1946, only the RCNR training ships, the *RIVER*-class frigate *CHARLOTTETOWN* (West) and the two *ALGERINES*, *NEW LISKEARD* and *WALLACEBURG* (both East), were moderately equipped to combat submarines with wartime A/S sensors and hedgehog. The east coast destroyers, *NOOTKA* and *MICMAC*, were completely ineffective, fitted only with older vintage asdic and depth charges. The best available post-war A/S weapon, the ahead-throwing mortar, Squid, was in use during the war in RCN *LOCH*-class frigates and ex-RN *CASTLE*-class corvettes, but by April 1946 all of these ships had been disposed of by the RCN. Appendix 1 to Memorandum, "Employment of the Canadian Naval Forces," 18 July 1946. See also Zimmerman, *Naval Battle of Ottawa*, pp. 127-30 and MacPherson and Burgess, *Ships of Canada's Naval Forces*, pp. 44, 68 and 211-15.

³⁹ Grove, p. 61.

the economic and strategic reality of post-war Canada.

In an interview over fifty years later, Storrs still remembered the focus and desire of RCN professional officers to develop a big-ship navy. "There was no philosophy or subjective argument attached to their vision of a peacetime fleet," he recalled, "but rather it was a purely emotional crusade based on nothing more than having bigger ships."⁴⁰ Even as dire economic conditions dictated prudence and the evolving submarine threat prescribed a return to the escort ship, many senior officers were extremely reluctant to part with or agree to a reduced role for *ONTARIO* and *UGANDA*.⁴¹ The intensity of their objections diminished, however, and their opposition became less vocal as the fiscal situation for the services became clearer and consultation with the USN reinforced their strategic concerns.

After frequent visits to Washington as an assistant to Captain Lay for PJBD and MCC meetings, Storrs and all of the Canadian officers present recognized that by mid-1946 the Americans were well advanced in developing war plans against the USSR. On the Canadian side, government and military representatives were not permitted to identify an enemy in any of their planning documents, yet it was apparent to the delegates that the American threat assessment applied equally to Canada, and that Canadian military preparations for the defence of North America should naturally match those of the United States.⁴²

Based on naval intelligence shared at PJBD and MCC meetings and from the Admiralty's assessments on the Soviets, members of NSHQ's Plans Division worked together to prepare a visionary paper on naval policy. By mid-January 1947, and close on the heels of the Chief of the Naval Staff's commitment to counter the submarine threat,

⁴⁰ Personal interview conducted with Rear Admiral A.H.G. Storrs, RCN (Retired) by author, 23 November 1997.

⁴¹ Admiral Storrs indicated that at NSHQ there was never any questioning of the necessity to retain A/S carriers and to develop modern A/S escorts; however, the decision to dispense with an operational role for the cruisers was an exceptionally difficult one for senior officers to accept.

⁴² loc. cit.

Commander Storrs submitted a remarkably insightful paper entitled *RCN Future Planning*.⁴³ As chief architect and the motivating force behind the document, Storrs relied on his personal experience and post-war international exposure to re-define the relevance of modern A/S warfare in the RCN and to re-shape the composition of the fleet to fit his proposed operational priorities and commitments.

As the paper's primary author, Storrs' credentials were solid. Appointed to five commands during the war, he had combat experience against U-boats in the North Atlantic and was awarded the Distinguished Service Cross (DSC) for outstanding service in the face of the enemy. Storrs received the Bar to his DSC for similar service as Commander of the 31st Canadian Minesweeping flotilla at Normandy on D-Day.⁴⁴ In retrospect, it was no small feat for an ex-RCNR officer to propose fundamental revisions to a customary way of doing business which, to this point in the post-war RCN, had been considered inviolable by senior officers at NSHQ.

Nevertheless, despite the risk of upsetting traditionalist thinking and possibly jeopardizing his own advancement, Storrs presented a candid analysis of Canada's strategic role in future world conflict and related this to the changing nature of naval warfare. He predicted that the major threat to Canadian naval forces would be posed by submarines, aircraft and mines - specifically those of the Soviet Union. Accordingly, he emphasized his personal belief that the RCN would primarily be involved in "the direct defence of coastal and overseas communication" as in the last war,

⁴³ Memorandum, "RCN Future Planning," A/DNPI to ACNS, 17 January 1947, D Hist, NSS 1650-26.

⁴⁴ Rear Admiral Storrs' wartime commands included the *BATTLE*-class trawler HMCS *ARMENTIERES* (31 March-29 July 1941; employed primarily as a West Coast examination vessel out of Prince Rupert), the *FLOWER*-class corvette HMCS *DAWSON* (6 October 1941-7 June 1943; a participant in the Aleutian Campaign, August 1942), the ex-RN *BANGOR*-class minesweeper HMCS *CARAQUET* (4 November 1943-18 September 1944; a participant at D-Day in Normandy), the *BANGOR*-class HMCS *MILLTOWN* (19 September 1944-16 October 1945, and the *FLOWER*-class HMCS *DRUMHELLER* (21 August-26 September 1943; a member of the ill-fated ON.202/ONS.18 convoy battles against U-boats in mid-September 1943. Six merchant ships and three Allied escorts were lost). After the war, Storrs went on to command the *RIVER*-class frigate HMCS *ANTIGONISH* (October 1945-February 1946), the *TRIBAL*-class destroyer HMCS *NOOTKA* (1948-49), and the carrier HMCS *MAGNIFICENT* (1955-56).

but that "the development of the submarine...made the bulk of present day surface escorts virtually obsolete."⁴⁵ He thought that the Fleet Task Force concept was of limited use because the RCN could not afford to retain such a force in peacetime. "Canada's naval planning," he concluded, "should therefore be governed by the dominant requirement for anti-air, anti-submarine and anti-mining forces."⁴⁶

In reference to the planning paper, ex-RCN Naval Constructor, S. Mathwin Davis, suggested that Storrs' commentary on the submarine threat, and future naval developments to counter it, contained elements that would "revolutionize the RCN and lead to major new construction programs...well in advance of [the] Western European Union, the Brussels Treaty, or NATO".⁴⁷ Davis also singled out *RCN Future Planning* as the "first recorded hint of change" that would eventually lead to the genesis of *ST LAURENT*-class anti-submarine escorts and a definitive post-war role for the RCN.⁴⁸ Along these lines, Storrs maintained that Canada should only acquire warships suitable for the type of warfare in which the RCN was likely to be engaged. He had serious doubts about Canada's ability to operate or maintain large ships of a Task Force, and as a result he strongly recommended a return to smaller ships that would serve primarily in the A/S role. He predicted that the RCN would need a modern vessel - a warship designed and built to challenge contemporary and future submarine technology, and one that combined many of the lessons learned from the previous war:

The escort of the future does not yet exist. It will be necessary, however, for it to have greater speed, better sea keeping qualities, and be of such construction as to promote rapid production in an emergency. The ultimate development may well be a form of modified HUNT-class [Escort] Destroyer.⁴⁹

⁴⁵ Memorandum, "RCN Future Planning," 17 January 1947.

⁴⁶ loc. cit.

⁴⁷ S. Mathwin Davis, "The ST LAURENT Decision," p. 196.

⁴⁸ Ibid. pp. 196-205.

⁴⁹ "RCN Future Planning," 17 January 1947.

Discussion related to the evolution of Storrs' paper and the future of A/S warfare in the RCN was not limited to the personnel of Plans Division. In general, reference to A/S activity in RCN correspondence, and the importance attached to it, gradually increased near the end of 1946 and was notably more prevalent as impending reductions to the Naval Estimates were confirmed in early 1947. By encouraging solutions for the navy's manning and training problems and providing the basis for future naval policy and ship design, Storrs' recommendations proved to be a catalyst for further discussion.

At a meeting of the Naval Staff only days after the paper was officially released, A/S training was the first item on the agenda and, as reflected in the minutes, the discussion took on a much more serious and urgent role than it had nine months earlier. Compared to April 1946, when the Director of Warfare Training proposed the loan of a submarine for a four-month training period "to work with the A/S school...and ships in commission," his January 1947 list of requirements had grown considerably.⁵⁰ At the January meeting DWT recommended a full time loan of twelve months. "A submarine," he noted, "is considered a necessity for A/S training and refresher courses and should be accepted as a continuing commitment."⁵¹ The proposal also contained a more comprehensive training programme and a research project involving "bathythermographic [BT] trials in East Coast waters and the Gulf of St. Lawrence." Classified information from the bathy trials would permit the production of accurate BT charts and "show expected Asdic ranges and areas U-boats are likely to operate in with comparative safety."⁵²

Similarly, after receiving no mention in the 18 July 1946 *Employment Programme*, A/S warfare was of uppermost importance in the 24 February 1947 programme. Attention was drawn to the significance of specialized training and

⁵⁰ Minutes of the 332nd Meeting of the Naval Staff, 29 April 1946, D Hist, NSS 8375-476, Vol I.

⁵¹ Minutes of the 359th Meeting of the Naval Staff, 20 January 1947, D Hist, NSS 8375-476, Vol. 2.

⁵² loc. cit.

personnel were reminded that "any future war in which the RCN is likely to be involved will be predominately submarine and air in character." Hence, a carefully worded directive was included that indicated "training throughout the fleet [was] to lay particular stress on all aspects of anti-submarine and anti-air warfare."⁵³

By April 1947, the persistent efforts of DWT and DNPI to provide quality A/S training to the fleet began to bear fruit. NSHQ secured the loan of a Royal Navy submarine for two months and did not hesitate to finalize plans for concentrated RCN and RCAF exercises in September and October. Despite this opportunity, the Naval Board strongly desired year-round submarine training and "considered that a two month period of loan would be inadequate for Canadian Naval Training and considered that more satisfactory results might be obtained by the use of U.S. submarines." Consequently, ACNS was tasked to approach the USN to discuss the possibility of arranging informal visits of U.S. submarines with the ultimate aim of approaching the USN for a loan of a submarine on each coast as indicated below:

- a. East Coast - June to August inclusive. Jan. [sic] to June 1948 inclusive; and
- b. West Coast - periodically as arranged between C.O.P.C. (Commanding Officer Pacific Coast) and local USN authorities.⁵⁴

In March 1947, the content of Storrs' paper was repeated, almost verbatim, in a memorandum entitled *Planning the Post-War Navy*. Written by his boss, Captain Lay, unofficially it meant that Storrs's proposals had been accepted. Naval authorities agreed that the survival of the RCN depended on a strong role that both the public and politicians could identify and were comfortable with. Anti-submarine warfare fitted this description and would prove to be a timely and fortuitous means of articulating the navy's strategic relevance. More importantly, for the Naval Board it laid the groundwork for the

⁵³ Memorandum, "Employment of the Canadian Naval Forces," Naval Secretary to General Distribution, 24 February 1947, D Hist, NSS 1650-26. Ibid.

⁵⁴ Minutes of the 213th Meeting of the Naval Board, 16 April 1947, D Hist, NS 1270-65.

Minister's upcoming announcement on defence policy and was broad enough to incorporate their continuing desire to maintain an operational Naval Air Service, and a semblance, at least, of the balanced fleet.

Chapter Five

At the Crossroads

...there is a certain minimum size for a Navy below which it becomes uneconomical. Even a brief consideration of our probable tasks in a future war seems to me to make it abundantly clear that we are right now below that minimum size.

--RAdm F.L. Houghton, VCNS, 17 April 1948

On 9 July 1947, the Minister of National Defence presented the long awaited policy on defence together with the Department's estimates for 1947-1948 and gave the "people of Canada the first rationale of military expenditure to come from the Government since the end of the Second World War."¹ In his address to the House of Commons, Claxton pointed out that rapid advances in weapons technology made it necessary for Canadians to rethink and revise domestic security. The atomic bomb, jet aircraft, rockets, chemical and bacteriological agents, and high-speed submarines now had the potential, he warned, to wreak such global havoc that "the destruction and devastation in World Wars I and II would be small in character or extent when compared." He stressed that North America's natural defence mechanisms, "distance and space, [were] drastically reduced and still shrinking; and the shaping of world events and the changing centres of power...put Canada in a more important strategic position than she had ever been before." Claxton stated that Canada's long standing conventional roles of *defence against direct aggression* and *aid to the civil power* would no longer suffice as the country's military policy. The threat of Armageddon, he intimated, would force all countries out of isolation in order that a common solution could be worked out to prevent the unthinkable. In conclusion, Claxton urged that future defence policy might have to be undertaken in co-operation with friendly nations or under any effective plan of collective

¹ Eayrs, In Defence of Canada, Vol. III, p. 95.

action under the United Nations."²

Claxton's speech accurately reflected strategic concerns of the day, but there was a gap between his publicly stated support for collective security and the humble state of Canada's armed forces. After two years of demobilization, restructuring and disposal of wartime assets, the three services remained short of trained manpower and, for the most part, operated obsolescent equipment. In earlier sessions with Cabinet, Claxton promised utmost economy in the department in exchange for agreement on a final appropriation of \$200 million with a provision for supplementary estimates, if needed, for defence programmes already approved.³ His efforts resulted in the hard won allocation of \$196 million from Abbott's original \$326 million budget for the 1947-48 Estimates and assurances from Cabinet for the sanctity of defence programmes.⁴ Claxton, nonetheless, was troubled over the relative insignificance of Canada's defence contribution in comparison to other countries. Worried that the small size of the forces could be a potential source of embarrassment, he warned Mackenzie King of the implications:

On a per capita basis the present manpower ceilings are far below what is being planned in any other country. They are almost one fifth of the per capita expenditure of the United States. The forces at present planned are more likely to be criticized inside and outside Canada as too small rather than too large. They will certainly be well under any limits set in consequence of any disarmament agreement or United Nations security plan.⁵

King, apparently unmoved by Claxton's concerns, was satisfied with the service complements as previously approved and for the time being saw no need for an increase.

² Debates, 9 July 1947, p. 5270.

³ Claxton Papers, Vol. 221, Autobiography, pp. 872-73.

⁴ Canada, Department of Finance, Public Accounts of Canada, (Ottawa, 1947-48). Defence Estimates of \$195,999,000 for 1947-48 are the lowest in Canada's post-war history. When dealing with King and Abbott over fiscal matters, Claxton found that obtaining approval for the Defence Estimates was never an easy task. As noted in his memoirs, "it was usually... of considerable advantage to have in the Minister of Finance someone who had a good working knowledge of the Defence Department...[but] sometimes...he [Abbott] knew just a bit too much." Bercuson, True Patriot, p. 167.

⁵ Memorandum, "Defence Policy," 7 January 1947, Claxton Papers.

The Defence Minister had made his point, however, and it was generally agreed that further reductions would be inadvisable.

In regard to strategic planning and administration, Claxton had four peacetime objectives: re-organization, training, defence research and industrial co-operation. Re-organization was the top priority from which his ultimate aim was to advance "closer co-ordination of the armed services and unification of the department so as to form a single defence force."⁶ These changes and the sweeping administrative shake up already completed at DND Headquarters were underscored by his preoccupation with continentalism, hemispheric defence, and an assumption that Canada would enter the next war only when fully prepared. In a memorandum to King, Claxton listed 28 observations on the defence needs of Canada. The following items are representative of his near isolationist position and somewhat optimistic expectation that time would not be a limiting factor in preparing for war:

- a. operations outside of Canada would only be undertaken after the war had continued for some time;
- b. this time would permit a large part of the armed forces being organized and trained, and a large part of the materials of war being manufactured subsequent to the commencement of hostilities;
- c. we should not involve ourselves in any considerable expense in building up mobilization reserves of materials of war which would only be useful in fighting a war outside of Canada;
- d. the possibility of any part of North America being the target for a major offensive during the next five years seems slight indeed; and
- e. the only possibility sufficiently great to enter into our calculations is that of an attack by planes, submarines, and later, guided missiles, designed to cripple industrial production and affect morale so as to contain the war effort of North America in this continent.

⁶ Debates, 9 July 1947, p. 5272.

For his recommendation on naval policy, Claxton adapted these and other theoretical notions on defence to input received from NSHQ. From this combination, two general areas of responsibility for the RCN evolved; each obligation differing only by the geographical location of Canada's military commitment. First, if an attack were to occur in Western Europe the navy was expected to duplicate its primary Second World War role of North Atlantic submarine escort work and conduct defensive operations in the Atlantic, Arctic and Pacific Oceans. Second, in hemispheric or North American defence, the RCN was expected to conduct coastal defence and again carry out anti-submarine operations.⁷

With these basic strategies firmly in place, the re-oriented A/S navy was ready to take its place alongside the other services in Claxton's renewed organization for defence. At the waterfronts of Halifax and Esquimalt, however, the same manning difficulties that plagued the navy in 1946 continued to cause grief in 1947. NSHQ initially attributed personnel shortages to the government's imposed reduction in complement, but these complaints were unfounded. Not once since the end of the war had the RCN been able to attract sufficient numbers to meet the 7,500 complement limit. The real problem - competition from civilian employers - was all too familiar and it looked as though it would continue to cut into the small gains made earlier in the year.

Canada's improving economy had acquired considerable momentum by the spring and quickly tapped into the armed forces' most reliable source of recruits. "In January 1947 over 50,000 veterans of the Second World War were registered as seeking work," but by September "only 15,000 were still jobless, and even the seasonal rise in unemployment failed to reproduce the previous winter's large figures."⁸ The frequency of periods when more men were leaving the navy than were coming in had reached chronic proportions during the first half of 1947 and led to such a high rate of attrition or wastage

⁷ Memorandum, "Observations on the Defence Needs of Canada," MND to PM, 17 February 1947. Claxton Papers, NAC, MG 32 B5, Vol. 122.

⁸ Bothwell, Drummond and English, Canada Since 1945, p. 82.

that by September the RCN could only expect to achieve manning levels twenty per cent below the 7,500 complement limit.⁹ Help was badly needed and, as promised by Claxton, a joint-Services recruiting drive was launched in the fall of 1947.

The first official recruiting blitz since the end of hostilities marked the beginning of Claxton's administrative initiatives to re-establish the forces on a firmer foundation prior to implementing further changes in the defence organization.¹⁰ More importantly for the RCN, the Minister's personal involvement forced the Naval Staff to look within the Service for causes of the high rate of wastage and solutions to improve retention. The days of heady optimism for recruiting had long since vanished as evidenced by the navy's markedly reduced operations schedule and limited exercise opportunities for the few fleet units in commission. In response, members of the Naval Staff seriously considered that a general improvement in the conditions of service and a possible lowering of educational requirements would assist in attracting more recruits.¹¹ Their recommendations prompted an internal review.

Under the modest title, *Plan C - Naval Plan for Fiscal Year 1947-1948*, NSHQ laid the groundwork to achieve a cost effective personnel structure for a minimum-sized peacetime navy of combat-ready ships and reserves.¹² CNP would continue to work at solutions to reverse the RCN's chronic manning problems while Plans Division pressed ahead with options to restructure the fleet and convert active and Reserve Fleet ships to a configuration which was better suited for their primary role in

⁹ Minutes of the 381st Meeting of the Naval Staff, 5 August 1947, D Hist, NSS 1650-26, Vol. 2.

¹⁰ Debates, 9 July 1947, p. 5276.

¹¹ Minutes of the 381st Meeting of the Naval Staff, 5 August 1947, NSS 1650-26, Vol. 2, D Hist, 1000-100. Proposals to reduce education standards for entry into the RCN provides some indication of the desperate search for a means to attract naval recruits. This action reversed a decision, recorded in the 18 July 1946 *Employment Programme*, to raise education requirements.

¹² Planning Document, "Plan C - Naval Plan for Fiscal Year 1948-49," D Hist, NSS 1650-26, Vol. II. As noted in D Hist Extracts from NSS 1650-26, Vol. II, prior planning documents, "Plan A - Long-term RCN Plan," and "Plan B - Basic RCN Plan," were not included with "Plan C," but references to both clearly link them to Claxton's overall goal of achieving a core of well trained fighting forces and reserves while maintaining the utmost economy in the department.

anti-submarine warfare. *Plan C*, if successful, would eliminate the excessive wastage problem and provide a steady stream of new entries for the recently completed basic and non-substantive training facilities and the rejuvenated A/S fleet. Barring unforeseen difficulties and further changes in the economy, NSHQ hoped to increase the strength of the navy to 1,200 officers and 6,200 men by 1 April 1948.¹³

If Claxton held any suspicions that retention problems in the RCN were directly related to quality of life issues in the navy, they were firmly reinforced by an incident in HMCS *ONTARIO* during a month long work-up and trials period in August 1947.¹⁴ This, the first of four similar post-war incidents or *mutinies*, involved a group of non-commissioned members of the crew who refused to obey orders to work because of growing discontent over the conditions of service on board the cruiser. In the Naval Service, any refusal to obey orders is considered a serious breach of discipline; however, it was not until after a series of work stoppages in *MAGNIFICENT*, *ATHABASKAN*, and *CRESCENT* in February and March of 1949 that Claxton became personally involved and ordered a Commission of Inquiry to investigate. This became known as the Mainguy Commission or Mainguy Report after Rear Admiral E.R. Mainguy, Chairman and one of its three commissioners. The implementation of the Commission's recommendations had a notable impact on RCN conditions of service and the *Canadianization* of the post-war

¹³ loc. cit.

¹⁴ Even for a fully manned and prepared ship's company, a trials and work-up period is a highly demanding and fatiguing process which requires solid leadership and teamwork at all levels in order to be successful. Until upgraded to Category B (two weeks notice for steam) in mid-July 1947, HMCS *ONTARIO* had just completed a lengthy refit and before that had been laid up with a Care and Maintenance crew since the end of the war. As an additional burden, the ship was designated on commissioning to conduct New Entry and non-substantive training with a special reduced complement to allow 50% of the armament to be manned. Given these circumstances and the ship's intense schedule, any weakness in the chain of command would have resulted in problems. After a year and a half of operations, the Director of Naval Plans and Operations (DNPO - formerly DNPI), Commander J.V. Brock, complained that use of *ONTARIO* as a semi-operational cruiser instead of her intended use as a training cruiser was overly demanding on the reduced complement. He urged that the original policy to use her strictly as a training ship be rigidly enforced. See *Employment of the Canadian Naval Forces* Memoranda for 24 February and 1 August 1947, D Hist, NSS 1650-26, Vol. II, and Memorandum, DNPO to DWT, DN Org and ACNS, 30 December 1948, D Hist, Extracts from NSS 1650-26, Vol. II.

navy.¹⁵

Remarkably, the *ONTARIO* incident took place within weeks of an important NSHQ directive "to all ships ordering that *immediate steps* be taken to institute welfare committees and ensure that all classes of ratings were represented on them."¹⁶ Like the *ONTARIO* before them, the Inquiry determined that the Command organizations in the ships involved in the 1949 incidents disregarded orders from higher authority to convene committees and provide a forum for non-commissioned members to voice their grievances.¹⁷ It was a shaky start for the RCN given that one of Claxton's long-term defence objectives was to make improvements in "clothing, food, quarters, pay, pension and working conditions."¹⁸

No doubt motivated and embarrassed by the *ONTARIO* incident, findings by the RCN under *Plan C* revealed to the Naval Staff that excessive wastage problems were indeed "mainly caused by unsatisfactory conditions of service." Not surprisingly, dissatisfaction was most prevalent among new ratings, whose specific complaints focused on poor accommodation in naval barracks and civilian housing at Halifax and Esquimalt; the rising costs of living; fixed rates of pay in the Navy; and the cancellation of travel concessions.¹⁹ Despite the seriousness of their complaints, it appears the information did not go much further than NSHQ and "there was not sufficient flexibility in the naval budget to keep the fleet going and deal with all the support requirements for the sailors

¹⁵ "Report on Certain *Incidents* which Occurred on Board H.M.C. Ships *ATHABASKAN*, *CRESCENT*, and *MAGNIFICENT*, and on other matters concerning the Royal Canadian Navy," (Ottawa, October 1949). Over two-hundred witnesses, ranging in individuals from the Chief of the Naval Staff to Ordinary Seaman recruits, were interviewed. The hearings produced over 3,600 pages of transcripts from which the "Report on Certain *Incidents*" was produced. After reviewing the report, Claxton ordered all recommendations not already in effect to be commenced immediately. See L.C. Audette, "The Lower Deck and the Mainguy Report of 1949," in *RCN in Retrospect*, ed., Boutilier, pp. 235-49.

¹⁶ L.C. Audette, "The Lower Deck and The Mainguy Report of 1949," in *RCN in Retrospect*, ed., Boutilier, p. 243. Emphasis provided.

¹⁷ "Report on Certain *Incidents*," October 1949.

¹⁸ *Debates*, 9 July 1947, p. 5272.

¹⁹ "Plan C," 26 September 1947, D Hist, NSS 1650-26.

and their families."²⁰ Furthermore, as reported in the Mainguy Commission, the adoption of RN traditions and methods associated with training, personnel and shipboard routines by some Canadian officers (at all rank levels) was highly unsuitable for, and not in keeping with the social environment embraced by the sailors of Canada's post-war fleet.

In another related occurrence recounted by James Eayrs, it is strongly suggested that the leadership problems which alienated officers from their men were not restricted to seagoing or mid-level officers. In an effort to correct the slumping morale of his ship's company, a Commanding Officer requested the services of a naval chaplain and surgeon to investigate possible causes for the dispirited state of his crew. Their report to the Commanding Officer indicated grievances similar to those listed in *Plan C* and generally accepted throughout the fleet as common complaints. The men were unhappy about food, pay increases and general living conditions aboard ship. When the findings were brought to the attention of the Commanding Officer Atlantic Coast, a Rear Admiral, he "was struck forcibly with the...colossal ignorance of the service of both of the officers who had prepared it."²¹ From the coincidental timing of these reports and the subsequent incidents in 1949, it is evident that general dissatisfaction within the navy was widespread by 1947 and, judging by the reaction of this senior officer, it is likely other incidents of lower deck malcontent were either not reported or were overlooked by higher authority.

Under constant pressure to achieve their post-war goals and resolve serious manning and training problems with only limited funds, the RCN's senior officers had to choose between ships and infrastructure and the extras which boosted quality of life in the fleet. Their unwillingness to accept greater responsibility for the welfare of ratings and to pay more attention to Canadian social values inevitably led to crisis. The artificial barriers, resentment and potential for mutinous action were already very much in

²⁰ Haydon, "Sailors, Admirals and Politicians," p. 233.

²¹ Waldo E.L. Smith, "The Navy Chaplain and his Parish," (Ottawa, 1967), as quoted in James Eayrs, *In Defence of Canada*, Vol. III, p. 125.

place in 1947 as a result of attempting to do too much with too little. Their greatest failure was not to take action early when it was obvious that problems existed and there were opportunities to initiate corrective measures.

Nevertheless, fallout from the *ONTARIO* incident did succeed in drawing attention to the direct relationship between attrition and increased demand for basic and non-substantive training. During 1947, the RCN suffered a loss of approximately 400 men, most of whom were trained and would not be replaced by new entries under the joint-Services recruiting programme.²² As a result, the navy faced a backlog of 800 men who required non-substantive training. Given the unsatisfactory manning situation in the fleet, the same men required for training were also needed to run the ships. Therefore, apart from shutting down fleet operations entirely, NSHQ was at a stalemate.

After a series of meetings between October and December 1947, Captain Lay (DNPI) proposed a tentative employment programme in which training vessels on both coasts would be maximized in order to return non-substantive training and fleet units to steady-state operations. Lay recommended that:

- a. all ships, with the exception of HMCS *MAGNIFICENT*, be reduced to training complement between 15th April and 15th September, 1948, or for the duration of the summer training period; and
- b. complement of the Reserve Fleet on both coasts (a total of approximately 397 officers and men for 6 destroyers, 4 frigates and 8 algerines), be reduced by 60% for this period.²³

On 19 January 1948, the Naval Board approved DNPI's plan and added that although "the reduction to training complement will place a heavier burden on the

²² Memorandum, NSHQ to COAC and COPC, 23 January 1948, D Hist, Extracts from NSS 1650-26, Vol. II.

²³ Appendix I to DNPI Memorandum to VCNS, 10 December 1947, D Hist, Extracts from NSS 1650-26, Vol. II. Based on the unsatisfactory manning situation, Lay's proposals were the subject of an ad hoc sub-committee meeting involving representatives from CNP, DNPI and DWT. Minutes of this meeting indicate that serious personnel shortages were being experienced in the Stoker, Mechanic, Cook and Electrical branches. See Minutes of the 395th Meeting of the Naval Staff, 15 December 1947, NSS 1650-26, Vol. II, D Hist, 1000-100.

individual...this will have to be accepted."²⁴ It is interesting to observe at this juncture the Naval Board's confidence in the fleet's ability to deal with the significant added pressures of the 1948 summer training period, as almost all complaints emanating from the *ONTARIO* incident had yet to be addressed. By coincidence, the next meeting of the Naval Board approved formation of a committee to investigate and make recommendations on ways to improve RCN pay and trade structure.²⁵ At this point, however, NSHQ had no choice but to proceed with the intensified training proposal as a means to salvage the 1948-49 employment programme regardless of what changes the aforementioned welfare committee or others may have recommended. With Lay's plan in place, it was now possible for the RCN to commence non-substantive training and "to man the Fleet, plus an extra frigate and HMCS *PORTAGE* for...increased Reserve training."²⁶

NSHQ's renewed focus on the RCNR was a matter of necessity and convenience. As part of Claxton's initiative to streamline the forces, high standards were set for a revitalized reserve to "provide the active and reserve forces with...adequate numbers of highly qualified officers" and to achieve "educational and physical standards and training approximating those of the active forces competent to go to sea, take the field or fly in action."²⁷ Realizing these goals meant that, for the first time, summer training for reservists would be compulsory and that an extraordinary effort and commitment would be required to succeed in training the estimated 2,500 RCNR personnel in only five months.

²⁴ Minutes of the 235th Meeting of the Naval Board, 19 January 1948, D Hist, NS 2170-65.

²⁵ Minutes of the 236th Meeting of the Naval Board, 23 January 1948, D Hist, NS 2170-65. At the commencement of the meeting, the CNS referred to two reports: one by Commodore Hope on *Morale, Welfare and Trade Grouping in the Royal Canadian Navy* (12 January 1948), and the *Denny Report* which dealt with similar conditions in the Royal Navy. The Naval Board also discussed the merits of adopting a pay system similar to that used by the USN "where all substantive pay was equal for all branches, i.e. general service or specialist."

²⁶ Minutes of the 235th Naval Meeting of the Naval Board, 19 January 1948, D Hist, NS 2170-65.

²⁷ Debates, 9 July 1947, p. 5272.

During the lead up to the summer training period, manning and training problems and a scarcity of funds did not deter NSHQ from moving ahead with plans for the conversion of destroyers to convoy A/S escorts. Senior staff meetings in September 1947 re-affirmed the RCN's primary commitment to A/S warfare and training as a high priority. All agreed that "the hunting and attacking of fast U-boats was well known to be unsatisfactory in the RN, USN and RCN."²⁸ Although the Naval Board conceded that further investigation of the conversion process was required, funds were allocated to the 1948-49 implementation programme in order to start the project as soon as possible. In the interim, a proposal from DWT to fit the *TRIBAL*-class destroyer, HMCS *MICMAC*, with Squid was approved to take place during the ship's extended re-building period.²⁹ Badly damaged in a collision in July 1947, *MICMAC*'s temporary loss gave the RCN an early opportunity to acquire a test and training platform for the weapon and to work out any bugs in preparation for the *TRIBAL*-class Squid fitting programme.³⁰

Along these lines, the recognition of HMCS *MAGNIFICENT*'s central role in the RCN's A/S Task Force prompted the Director Naval Air Division (DNAD), RN Acting Captain G.A. Rotheram, to point out that the long lead times which preceded the ordering of any new aircraft made it necessary to plan now for the upgrade or

²⁸ Minutes of the 229th Meeting of the Naval Board, 23 October 1947, D Hist, NS 2170-65.

²⁹ Minutes of the 389th Meeting of the Naval Staff, 27 October 1947, NSC 5300-355/14 Vol. I, D Hist, 1000-100.

³⁰ All seven *TRIBAL*-class destroyers were fitted with Squid over a lengthy conversion period that was fraught with delays due to refit work, operational requirements and a necessity to swap crews from ship to ship. *MICMAC* ended up as the third *TRIBAL* to complete the conversion and did not re-commission with Squid until 15 September 1949 due to a shortage of electrical cable. In concert with the above programme, the Naval Board also implemented the first measures to improve habitability on board ships by converting one *V*-class destroyer, HMCS *SIOUX*, with the installation of central cafeteria messing and bunks in addition to Squid. *SIOUX* re-commissioned with the improvements and a new crew in November 1949. See "Brief on the Proposed Employment of HMC Ships for Fiscal Year 1949-50," undated (November 1948); Memoranda, "Employment of HMC Ships and Carrier Air Groups," for 19 July 1948, 26 January 1949, and 4 August 1949, D Hist, NSS 1650-26, Vol. II; and Minutes of the 229th Naval Board, 23 October 1947, D Hist, NS 2170-65.

replacement of the current fleet.³¹ As was the case in the surface community, the Royal Canadian Naval Air Service (RCNAS) was stressed by limited resources and had its share of problems with aging and problematic British equipment not particularly well suited to the A/S role.

Stuart Soward's examination of Canadian naval aviation in the post-war period shows that British-built aircraft had not matured as quickly as their American counterparts during hostilities.³² Efforts by NSHQ to work with the Admiralty in replacing troublesome ex-RN Fleet Air Arm (FAA) aircraft succeeded only in assuring the delivery of equally troublesome new British products to the RCNAS. Ironically, in a move to relieve financial pressure after the war, the RN disposed of all of its reliable, top-performing US aircraft - CORSAIRs, AVENGERs and HELLCATs - "somewhat condescendingly regarded by the Admiralty in London as stopgaps," only to suffer through numerous technical development problems with domestically-produced replacements.³³ Of the five RN aircraft selected to shape the future of British naval aviation, the RCNAS would become intimately familiar with three: the SEAFIRE, FIREFLY and SEA FURY. All aircraft and their maintenance parts were consistently short in supply and all possessed their own unique disadvantages.

The SEAFIRE, a marine version of the Battle of Britain SPITFIRE, was "never a satisfactory carrier aircraft" and was used primarily as a trainer in the RCNAS.³⁴

³¹ Minutes of the 395th Meeting of the Naval Staff, 15 December 1947, NS 7820-1, Vol. 2, D Hist, 100-100. Acting-Captain Rotheram served on loan from the RN in the capacity of Director of Naval Air Division from January 1947 to May 1948, and under a new title but same job as Director of Naval Aviation from May 1948 to January 1949. See Soward, Hands to Flying Stations, Appendix B, p. 315.

³² Soward, "Canadian Naval Aviation," p. 277. See also Stuart E. Soward, Hands to Flying Stations: A Recollective History of Canadian Naval Aviation 1945-1954, Vol. 1, (Victoria: Neptune Developments, 1993).

³³ Grove, pp. 14-15. The RN disposed of hundreds of surplus U.S. combat aircraft through mass ditchings at sea. Grove relates one occasion on 1 January 1946, when "orders were issued to ditch some 1,262 AVENGERs, CORSAIRs, HELLCATs, and WILDCATs.

³⁴ Ibid. p. 15. In August 1946, the only single-seat fighters available in the Royal Navy FAA, the SEAFIRE 15 and 18 models, were temporarily grounded because of supercharger problems. Soward confirms that similar problems were experienced by the RCN. See Grove, p. 17 and Soward, Hands to

Introduced at the same time was the FIREFLY, an aircraft difficult to maintain...and ill-suited to all-weather anti-submarine warfare carrier flying."³⁵ In early 1947, aircraft wastage and the slow arrival of maintenance spares from Great Britain left only 5 SEAFIRE training aircraft serviceable in the RCNAS. The resultant pilot training crisis led to an attempt to supplement the RCN's 28 SEAFIREs with 20 USN HELLCATs for a bargain price of only \$5,000 per aircraft.³⁶

As noted by Second World War RCN veteran Commander Tony German, the highly regarded HELLCATs never made it to a Canadian carrier because of intervention by the RCN's naval aviation expert, the Director of Naval Air Division. German has suggested that Rotheram, a Royal Navy officer on loan to the RCN from 1947 to 1949, scuttled the USN deal because "he was afraid accepting the U.S. offer over the SEAFIREs would prejudice the Canadian order for the new RN SEA FURY."³⁷ Rotheram's success at convincing the Naval Board to go for the British airplane consequently provided the RCN with another aircraft, complete with developmental flaws. Furthermore, because of the SEA FURY's "high landing speed it also required modifications to the arrester gear and barriers of *COLOSSUS*-class carriers."³⁸ As noted by German, this proved to be a dangerous combination for the inexperienced Canadians and the relatively small flight deck and slower speed of *MAGNIFICENT*. The SEA FURY, he laments, "had serious problems and good men died."³⁹ Mixed with personal emotion and experience, Soward also mourned the fate of the SEA FURY as equipment

Flying Stations, p. 302.

³⁵ Soward, "Canadian Naval Aviation," p. 277.

³⁶ Minutes of the 213th Meeting of the Naval Board, 16 April 1947, D Hist, NS 1270-65. For a personal perspective on the HELLCAT issue, see the account by Soward in Hands to Flying Stations, pp. 62-66, 85-86, 90-91 and 302.

³⁷ Tony German, The Sea is at Our Gates, p. 213.

³⁸ Grove, p. 57.

³⁹ German, p. 213.

that was "put in RCN service before either the aircraft and [sic] the Air Branch were ready."⁴⁰

By December 1947, the high wastage in existing SEA FURY and FIREFLY IV squadrons and the obsolescent and worn out condition of FIREFLY I aircraft prompted Rotheram to seek approval for replacements. He presented the Naval Staff with three alternatives:

- a. to re-equip in 1949-50 with FIREFLY IV;
- b. to re-equip in 1949-50 with USN AVENGERS; or
- c. to keep the FIREFLY I in service until a new A/S aircraft can be obtained in 1950. There will then be the choice of the best type of the two U.K. aircraft or of the U.S. Gruman, or possibly of a Canadian design if work were started now.

The Naval Staff, still waiting on Claxton's decision to approve the purchase of 2 squadrons of reserve aircraft for the carrier, delayed action on long-term procurement until the earlier matter was resolved.⁴¹ In April 1950, well after the SEA FURY had fallen out of favour, the RCN finally replaced the FIREFLY IV with 75 USN AVENGERS. Soward notes with some relief, that with this decision the "RCN turned away from the RN and the FIREFLY and became oriented, operationally and logistically, toward the highly developed naval aviation of the United States."⁴²

Notwithstanding NSHQ's apparent success at putting out a continuous barrage of small fires, warning signs of an impending crisis were breaking through the veneer of an organization stretched to its limit in the spring of 1948. While the RCN prepared the fleet for its most ambitious and comprehensive post-war summer

⁴⁰ Soward lauded the aircraft as a first-rate interceptor-fighter and fighter-bomber by 1952 once the major engine problems and deck landing difficulties were overcome. A striking role, however, was not in keeping with the RCN's new focus on A/S warfare. Soward, Hands to Flying Stations, pp. 105 and 302-03.

⁴¹ Minutes of the 395th Meeting of the Naval Staff, 15 December 1947, NS 7820-1, Vol. 2, D Hist, 1000-100.

⁴² Soward, "Canadian Naval Aviation," p. 277.

programme, the effects of continuous manning difficulties and finite resources resulted in concerns being voiced about over-commitment in the navy. As early as mid-1947, the Deputy Chief of Naval Personnel (DCNP) and also Chairman of the Complement Committee, Captain K.F. Adams, reported difficulty in filling lesser naval commitments of a non-continuing nature which had not been provided for in the government approved complements.⁴³ DCNP's recommendation to drop the commitments set off a series of events in which the government acknowledged the concerns raised by Adams and agreed that obligations such as LORAN site maintenance, Search and Rescue, and Wireless Telegraphy Radio Stations should be either suspended, taken over by civilians, or satisfied by a specially approved manning commitment. In the end, RCN personnel identified as *above ceiling* were selected to fill the supplementary commitments and on 6 August 1947 an Order-in-Council approved their immediate employment.⁴⁴

In October 1947, the coincidental timing of RCN recruiting failures and the summer manning crisis forced a meeting of the Naval Staff to determine where *above ceiling* commitments fit into the greater scheme of fleet manning priorities. Personnel shortages throughout the active fleet made it necessary for CNP to purge Reserve Fleet ships for trained replacements and delayed the commissioning of yet another destroyer, this time HMCS *IROQUOIS*. After considerable debate the Naval Staff agreed that basic and non-substantive training would remain as the RCN's highest manning priority; followed in descending order of importance by reserve training, *above ceiling* commitments and, at the bottom, the maintenance of Reserve Fleet ships.⁴⁵ The Reserve

⁴³ Memorandum, DNCP to CNP (Commdore G.R. Miles), 19 May 1947, D Hist, NSC 4100-1 (Complements, General), Personnel-Policy 4000-100/14, Vol. II.

⁴⁴ Order-in-Council P.C. 3/3144, 6 August 1947 as amended by Order-in-Council P.C. 122/5111, 12 December 1947, approved a maximum of 10,375 all ranks for the Royal Canadian Navy, subject to the strength of the said force not exceeding 1,201 officers and 6,674 men. Thus, a provision for 375 *above ceiling* RCN personnel in addition to the approved 7,500 complement equated to a total strength of 7,875. D Hist, NSC 4100-1 (Complements, General), Personnel-Policy 4000-100/14, Vol. II. After receiving the go ahead, the RCN prepared to man the Weather Frigate, HMCS *ST STEPHEN*, and a number of LORAN and radio stations located on each coast.

⁴⁵ Minutes of the 388th Meeting of the Naval Staff, 13 October 1947, D Hist, 1000-100.

Fleet, long considered a sacred domain and carefully protected by the senior staff for wartime expansion, was readied for disposal with surprising speed and little regret.

In an address to the Royal United Services Institution in Montreal in February 1948, the CNS, Vice Admiral Grant, referred to the Reserve Fleet as "financially out of the question" due to costs of "no less than \$100,000 each per year for the minimum of caretaking," and as a force having "absolutely no relation to our requirements in the event of a war."⁴⁶ The same logic, when applied to the obsolescent and expensive cruisers *ONTARIO* and *UGANDA* (later re-named *QUEBEC*), should have seen these two ships added to the Reserve Fleet retirement list. However, their role as training ships was justification enough for the senior staff to keep them on. Other roles cited by the CNS were somewhat more dubious. In a pattern of discourse remarkably similar to the First Sea Lord's defence of the battleship as an indispensable element of the RN, Grant justified keeping the cruisers so that senior officers could acquire seagoing experience and because they were the only class of ship in the RCN "with the necessary concentration of armament and magazines" to patrol and maintain the freedom of international sea lanes.⁴⁷ In the final analysis, it was the training role and a stubborn sentimentality that kept the cruisers in the fleet and enabled the RCN to emulate the Royal Navy's capital ship training system until the final paying off of *QUEBEC* and *ONTARIO* in 1956 and 1958 respectively.⁴⁸ As for the carrier, its high level manning priority would be safeguarded in all situations. In reference to HMCS *MAGNIFICENT*'s future, the CNS emphasized that her "cost is high in both manpower and dollars, but a nucleus for the inevitable expansion is worth the price."⁴⁹

⁴⁶ Extracts of an address by the Chief of the Naval Staff, Vice Admiral H.T.W. Grant, to the Montreal United Services Institution, 16 February 1948, as quoted in Eayrs, *In Defence of Canada*, Vol. III, p. 398.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.* p. 400.

⁴⁸ Sharon Hobson, *The Composition of Canada's Naval Fleet, 1946-85*, (Halifax: Centre for Foreign Policy Studies, Dalhousie, 1986), Appendix II, p. 119.

⁴⁹ Vice Admiral H.T.W. Grant, as quoted in Eayrs, *In Defence of Canada*, Vol. III, p. 398.

A month after Grant's Montreal address, the RCN's manning crisis reached its peak. Poor enlistment figures and a severe backlog in training led to a flood of applications to the Complements Committee for increases in manning establishments fleet-wide. In desperation, the Committee Chairman submitted a report to CNP stating that offsetting reductions were now meaningless as the juggling of personnel to provide an increase in one area of high priority meant a decrease in an essential field somewhere else. Captain Adams informed Commodore Miles that essentially there were no longer any personnel in lower priority jobs from which to rob in order to satisfy higher priority shortages. It was now apparent to him that the 75 per cent ceiling on recruitment was too restrictive and therefore no longer satisfactory in meeting navy commitments. Adams concluded his report by declaring that the RCN had two alternatives:

- a. raise the complement ceiling to 80 per cent of authorized complement; or
- b. reduce present commitments.⁵⁰

Both alternatives gained the sympathetic ear of the VCNS, Rear Admiral F.L. Houghton. After reviewing the situation, Houghton was determined to resolve not only the RCN's complement and commitment problems, but set out to establish exactly what course the navy was steering in the post-war era.

Like Storrs' earlier work on policy and future planning, Houghton stepped forward to tackle a difficult issue with the intention of protecting the long-term health of the navy. Using Adams' paper as a reference, he outlined for the CNS the RCN's over-commitment problems and took great exception to the navy's apparent lack of strategic direction. Houghton desired a war plan from which the RCN could work backwards to determine its commitments and judge whether or not the Service was on track. Although the Cold War would eventually provide the type of bi-polar scenario requiring clearly-defined war plans, it was evident to Houghton at this point in time that the indeterminate

⁵⁰ Memorandum, DCNP to CNP, 9 April 1948, Extracts from NSC 4100-1, Vol. 2 (Complements, General), D Hist, Personnel Policy, Vol. I, 4000-100/14.

policies of the West gave the RCN an objective that was "unfortunately rather hazy."

Notwithstanding Houghton's dismay at the absence of a more definitive war-fighting policy, he was more concerned that the size of the RCN was "far too small even for its modest role as a nucleus for expansion in an emergency." "In simple fact," he surmised, "we have bitten off more than we chew,...*shaving down* across the board until we have apparently reached a point where any further reductions are impossible." Accordingly, Houghton recommended a survey of all RCN obligations to ensure that over-commitment was indeed the problem, and that this be followed up with an assessment of naval policy or, in his opinion, the lack of one.

Houghton concluded his paper by cautioning Grant that the RCN had arrived at what he considered a crucial period of decision-making:

we have reached the point where the road forks, and we must make up our minds which turn we will take: the removal of one or more commitments completely in order that we can continue with the rest; or an increase in complement.⁵¹

With the navy at a crossroads, Houghton placed his faith in the latter and suggested "that the Royal Canadian Navy should be authorized to recruit *certain categories of personnel* on the basis of a 10,000 ceiling."⁵² Grant took the matter up at the next meeting of the Naval Board and it was quickly resolved that although the navy would continue to meet existing commitments within the 75 per cent manpower ceiling, no further commitments would be undertaken, and no submission for an increase in the overall complement would be made until the 75 per cent ceiling was reached.⁵³

The results of follow-on discussion between Admiral Grant and the * Minister of National Defence regarding the RCN's bold new proposals were accelerated by events of the Cold War. On 25 February, a Soviet-backed communist coup d'etat in

⁵¹ Memorandum, "Revision of Complement," VCNS to CNS, 17 April 1948, NS 4100-2, D Hist, Personnel-Policy, 4000-100/14, Vol. 2.

⁵² Memorandum, "Revision of Complement," 17 April 1948. Emphasis provided.

⁵³ Minutes of the 247th Meeting of the Naval Board, 4 May 1948, D Hist, NS 2170-65.

Czechoslovakia sparked a resurgence of concern and fear over Stalin's intentions against the West. A few months later, Claxton accused the Soviets of flouting their war-won friendships, obstinately obstructing every move to arrive at understanding, and for promoting "chaos and disorder and the darkness of the iron curtain as the only conditions in which communism can exist and spread."⁵⁴ Fittingly, as he made these comments in the House of Commons, an atmosphere of imminent crisis prevailed over Western Europe as Stalin initiated the Berlin blockade, sealing off all rail, water and highway routes through East Germany to West Berlin. As a result, the Western democracies were finally convinced that a firm stand would have to be taken against the perceived Soviet threat to world peace.

On 5 August 1948, a submission was made by the Minister of National Defence to the Governor-General-in-Council for approval of an increase in strength of the RCN to reflect 1,399 officers and 7,648 men for a total complement of 9,047.⁵⁵ On 30 October 1948, the increase was approved, thus marking the first serious step towards revitalization of the post-war navy.

⁵⁴ "Canadian Defence Planning," Speech Delivered in the House of Commons, Ottawa, 24 June 1948, by Hon. Brooke Claxton, Minister of National Defence, D Hist, Copy 72/918, p. 2.

⁵⁵ Order-in-Council, MND to His Excellency, the Governor-General-in-Council, 5 August 1948, D Hist, Personnel-Policy, 4000-100/14, Vol. 2.

Conclusion

After three years of constant struggle for recognition, guidance and most importantly self-direction, the navy's healing process had begun. Approval of the increase in naval complements in 1948 initiated a period of rearmament that, for most Western nations, would last until the early 1960s. Shortly after the outbreak of war in Korea, "the strength of the Armed Forces tripled to 105,000 while the defence expenditures rose geometrically reaching a highpoint of \$1.85 billion."¹ Before its next period of decline, the post-war RCN would reach a peak of 129 warships in 1958 and a maximum complement of 21,720 in 1962 - the year of the Cuban Missile Crisis and the height of the Cold War.² Notwithstanding the improved fiscal climate, however, wounds had yet to be tended to in the RCN and would eventually manifest themselves throughout the latter part of the decade. Most notably, the mutinies of 1949 and the continuous challenge presented by naval aviation and the retention of a single carrier would have a profound effect on the future direction of the navy.

Operationally, the RCN's lowest ebb had passed. The Squid conversion programme for *TRIBAL*-class destroyers was nearing completion and by the spring of 1950 nearly a dozen ships would be active in the fleet employment programme.³ Standardization with the United States reached new heights with the preparation of a "common doctrine for the conduct of Anti-submarine operations," the re-organization of the Naval Stores and Logistic Branch along USN lines, the adoption of USN equipment

¹ Lawrence R. Aronsen, "Canada's Postwar Re-armament: Another Look at American Theories of the Military-Industrial Complex," Canadian Historical Association, Historical Papers/Communications Historique(1981), p. 175.

² Warship total as quoted in Dan W. Middlemiss, "Economic Considerations in the Development of the Canadian Navy Since 1945," in The RCN in Transition, ed., W.A.B. Douglas, (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1988), p. 261. Personnel strength as quoted in J.D.F. Kealy, "The Development of the Canadian Navy, 1945-1967," D Hist (RCN History General), 1440-5, Vol. III, p. 14.

³ Memorandum, "Employment of HMC Ships and Carrier Air Groups 1st October 1949 - 31st March 1950," Naval Secretary to General Distribution, 4 August 1949, D Hist, NSS 1650-26, Vol. II.

and standards in RCN ship construction and the integration of naval training.⁴ Canada's joining the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) in April 1949 accelerated the RCN's transition away from RN standards and influence and moved the fleet further and further towards a lasting continental relationship with the USN.

Formation of the Canada-United States Regional Planning Group for example “necessitated planning with the United States for the preparation of military formations to reinforce any [NATO] region.” As for the RCN's contribution, Admiral Grant stated unequivocally:

the Canadian Navy was designed to fulfill an anti-submarine role and Naval aircraft was [sic] an essential tactical weapon....A further consideration was that the commander of an anti-submarine force was in future likely to be in the carrier, and without such a ship the Canadian Navy would be likely to serve in a subsidiary role.⁵

Hence, based on the premise that the Canadian government would insist on retaining control over the employment of Canadian forces within a larger multi-lateral force, the RCN believed that the carrier was the only combatant capable of providing higher level autonomy in A/S operations. This role was markedly different from the one that the Canadian Task Force was initially designed to provide. NSHQ's earlier plans called for a peacetime fleet composition that emphasized the anti-air and anti-surface capabilities of cruiser and destroyer escorts and the intended secondary use of the limited strike capability of carrier aircraft. When it became apparent that the non-A/S configuration of the *balanced fleet* was neither affordable nor justifiable, senior naval authorities were forced to abandon their dream of a balanced big-ship fleet in order to adapt the role which had been considered only good enough for reservists and small ships during the war.

The inability of senior staff to adapt naval policy to the Soviet post-war

⁴ Permanent Joint Board on Defence, Journal of Discussions and Decisions at the 66th Meeting of the Board, West Point, New York, 17-18 March 1949, D Hist, Copy No. 17 and Permanent Joint Board on Defence, “Canada-United States, Royal Canadian Navy Progress Report - RCN-USN Standardization,” Appendix No. 2 (Para No. 4), Undated, D Hist, NSS 1400-30, Vol. 2.

⁵ Minutes of the Sixty-first Meeting of the Cabinet Defence Committee, 22 December 1949, D Hist, Copy No. 10.

submarine threat was the result of many factors, not the least of which was their own disinterest in small-ship A/S escorts and government indifference towards the military. From Admiral Nelles to Admiral Grant, indoctrination and training by the Royal Navy shaped their perspective and perceptions of what comprised fleet standards for a nation's navy. Given attractive lease opportunities during and after the war and encouragement from the RN, the balanced fleet model was pursued with such dogged determination and focus that alternative options for a post-war fleet were not considered until well after post-war crises in recruiting, training and funding had forced senior staff to make changes. How NSHQ survived as long as it did without more serious incidents or loss of life is testimony to the dedication and professionalism of the very few who did the work of many.

In retrospect, the navy's decline during this period should not overshadow the visionary work conducted by Commander Storrs and others in Plans Division. Their ability to foresee the viability of a smaller more specialized force in the context of post-war collective security was ahead of its time. It permitted the navy to concentrate on a role "for which Canada was best suited and in which the greatest possible contribution could be made with the least cost in the shortest possible time."⁶ More importantly, it was a catalyst for innovation, change and individual initiatives in the RCN which led to future successes in ship design, A/S warfare technology and the adaptation of helicopters to small warships.

Balance in the form of a two-carrier navy and the hope of coastal parity would not be realized in the RCN. Through perseverance and the continuous juggling of resources, the navy only ever managed to operate a single carrier. Reduced defence spending in the 1960s finally caught up with the navy's expensive carrier-based aviation programme and brought about the demise of the last of Canada's flat-top warships, HMCS *BONAVENTURE*, in 1969.

One of the more positive events during the early post-war period was the

⁶ loc. cit.

arrival of Brooke Claxton in late 1946. His legendary work ethic and willingness to stand up against King and Abbott benefitted all three services, but was especially fortuitous for the navy. He stripped the forces of wartime fat, re-focused efforts on efficiency, and improved communication between all levels of bureaucracy to deal with the menace of the Cold War. It was good medicine for the RCN and proved to be critical in improving fleet readiness and accelerating internal efforts to improve naval capabilities to meet the threat. Having re-organized the Chiefs of Staff Committee, he also provided a forum in which the critical concerns of each service were heard and if necessary, he ensured that the issues were subsequently raised in Cabinet. Claxton brought meaning and policy to the armed services and drew attention to a department that had a critical role to play in Canada's foreign affairs and middle-power statesmanship.

Finally, what of the leadership in the RCN? Had the senior naval staff and their successors accepted the hard lessons of 1945-48, and had they applied new solutions and ideas to benefit future generations in the navy? Citing a negative report on the naval establishment that was written by Commodore James Plomer in 1963, John Harbron infers that the Admirals did not. Meaningful lessons of the "Mainguy Report" he suggests, may have been conveniently forgotten by a group of Admirals who "had come to believe in themselves as a social institution" and had "come to see the navy as their own private property."⁷ Greater distance from the time Harbron situated Plomer's grievances, however, has allowed history to illustrate the evolution of an effective and distinctly Canadian divisional system for the welfare of sailors, a high standard of shipboard life, and for the most part an operationally viable fleet.

Although Canadian Navy pay and benefits have recently fallen behind the standards of their Allied partners, the quality of life aboard ships and the training provided to Canadian naval tradesman improved significantly over the course of the 1950s, 60s and 70s. Most of these changes can be traced back to the "Mainguy Report" recommendations initiated in 1949 to equate social conditions of the sailor with those of

⁷ Harbron, "The Uncertain Heritage," p. 330.

the average Canadian. Ultimately, however, resolution of greater problems in the Service remain rooted in the level of interest shown by the public and the government.

Along these lines, interest in Canada's armed forces peaked with significant events of the Cold War. In August 1949, the Soviets successfully tested their first Atomic bomb and a month later Mao Tse-tung's communist army defeated Chiang Kai-shek's United States-supported forces in China's civil war. Immediately, the Cabinet Defence Committee took steps to introduce a properly funded five-year defence programme similar to one that had been initiated by Australia in 1947.⁸ Shortly after hostilities broke out in Korea in June 1950, the five-year plan was augmented by an "acceleration of the Canadian defence programme."⁹ This led to a significant increase in funding and a notable improvement in readiness and training in the RCN. Aside from the continued focus on naval aviation and its nearly 25 per cent share of the navy's budget, greater attention was finally paid to the operational status of smaller ships in commission and their conversion to A/S escorts, while purpose-built A/S ships were being considered.

In the final analysis, the RCN made great strides less than two years after the fallout of the 1948 manning crisis. By the early summer of 1950, operational activity on both coasts showed a remarkable recovery. Unprepared as a nation, both politically and militarily, to respond to the Korean crisis, it quickly became apparent to Prime Minister Louis St Laurent and his Cabinet that the navy provided the only viable option capable of addressing the pressure applied by the United States and the United Nations to take military action. Without a land or air-based counterpart, operational warships gave the government a response that was virtually instantaneous - "the sort of force that can be so situated that it will respond, instantly and effectively, from positions which do not require prior negotiations and from bases which do not violate the sovereign soil or air

⁸ Minutes of the Sixtieth Meeting of the Cabinet Defence Committee, 23 November 1949, D Hist.

⁹ Minutes of the Sixty-fifth Meeting of the Cabinet Defence Committee, 19 July 1950, D Hist.

space rights of countries adjacent to the scene of conflict.”¹⁰ Accordingly, once the anticipated orders were received at the headquarters of Flag Officer Pacific Coast, three RCN destroyers, *CAYUGA*, *SIOUX*, and *ATHABASKAN*, departed Esquimalt without delay and engaged in operational missions almost immediately after arriving in the Korean theatre. The legacy of a ready navy, capable of integrating and operating with larger multi-national forces, served Canada well during the Cold War and continues in this role today.

¹⁰ Jeffrey V. Brock, *Memoirs of a Sailor: The Thunder and the Sunshine*, Volume II, (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1983), p. 364.

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