The End of the Big Ship Navy:
The Trudeau Government, the Defence Policy Review and the
Decommissioning of the HMCS *Bonaventure*

by

Hugh Avi Gordon
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We accept this thesis as conforming
to the required standard

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Dr. D.K. Zimmerman, Supervisor (Department of History)

_____
Dr. P.E. Roy, Departmental Member (Department of History)

_____
Dr. E.W. Sager, Departmental Member (Department of History)

_____
Dr. J.A. Boutilier, External Examiner (Department of National Defence)

Supervisor: Dr. David Zimmerman

ABSTRACT

As part of a major defence review meant to streamline and re-prioritize the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF), in 1969, the Trudeau government decommissioned Canada's last aircraft carrier, HMCS *Bonaventure*. The carrier represented a major part of Maritime Command's NATO oriented anti-submarine warfare (ASW) effort.

There were three main reasons for the government's decision. First, the carrier's yearly cost of $20 million was too much for the government to afford. Second, several defence experts challenged the ability of the *Bonaventure* to fulfill its ASW role. Third, members of the government and sections of the public believed that an aircraft carrier was a luxury that Canada did not require for its defence. There was a perception that the carrier was the wrong ship used for the wrong role. In sum, the decision to decommission the *Bonaventure* was politically attractive because of economic reasons, but was made based on strategic rationale.

Examiners:

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Dr. D.K. Zimmerman, Supervisor (Department of History)

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Dr. P.E. Roy, Departmental Member (Department of History)

_____

Dr. E.W. Sager, Departmental Member (Department of History)

_____

Dr. J.A. Boutilier, External Examiner (Department of National Defence)

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DEDICATION

To the memory of my late mother, Marlene Rafman-Gordon, who, with her love, at first in body, and later in spirit, helped me continue working on this project when life and savage reality interrupted.

To my father, David Gordon, for his love, support, and respect.

To Mrs. Lisa Wolfman, who said back in Grade 8 that one day I would be a published writer.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AA	Anti-Aircraft
ABM	Anti-Ballistic Missile
A/S	Anti-Submarine
ASW	Anti-Submarine Warfare
BOMARC	BOeing Michigan Aeronautical Research Center
CAF	Canadian Armed Forces
CEPD	Cabinet Committee on External Policy and Defence
CDS	Chief of Defence Staff
CNS	Chief of Naval Staff
DDE	Destroyer Escort
DDH	Destroyer with Helicopter
DEA	Department of External Affairs
DEW	Distant Early Warning
DND	Department of National Defence
HMCS	Her/His Majesty's Canadian Ship
ICBM	Intercontinental Ballistic Missile
MAD	Mutual Assured Destruction
MND	Minister of National Defence
NAC	National Archives of Canada
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NORAD	North American Air Defence
PAC	Public Accounts Committee
PCO	Privy Council Office
PMO	Prime Minister's Office
RCN	Royal Canadian Navy
RCNVR	Royal Canadian Naval Volunteer Reserve
RN	Royal Navy
SCEAND	House of Commons Standing Committee on External Affairs and National Defence
SDI	Strategic Defence Initiative
SLBM	Submarine Launched Ballistic Missile
SOSUS	Sound Surveillance System
SSBN	Submarine, Ballistic Missile, Nuclear
SSN	Submarine, Nuclear
SUBDIZ	Submarine Identification Zone
USN	United States Navy
VCDS	Vice-Chief Defence Staff

CHAPTER ONE:
Introduction and Background Historiography

> "…*Bonnie* remained too small, too slow, too unseaworthy to perform her assigned anti-submarine warfare role with any show of credibility." [1]
>
> "*Bonaventure's* Tracker/Seaking combination remains Canada's best means of concentrating anti-submarine force quickly at sea to pin down all types of submarines."[2]

On September 19, 1969, Minister of National Defence (MND) Léo Cadieux announced the retirement of HMCS *Bonaventure*, Canada's last aircraft carrier. This decision, made as part of the government's controversial overall defence review, was a drastic cut to Maritime Command of the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF). Critics, from ex-naval officers to Opposition MPs described the cuts as a dereliction of Canada's obligations to collective defence during the Cold War, saw no justification for them, and ascribed them to Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau's anti-militarism. In actuality, the decision to cut the *Bonaventure* had a strategic and economic rationale.

For twelve years, the *Bonaventure* had tracked Soviet submarines as part of Canada's NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization) commitment. At 22,000 tons, fully loaded, it was designated CVL-22 and classified as a light fleet carrier. The hull of the *Bonaventure* was laid down in 1945, but not completed. The Canadian government purchased the hull and commissioned the carrier in 1957 as HMCS *Bonaventure*. The carrier initially had an assemblage of McDonnell F2H-3 Banshees, Grumman CS2F Tracker anti-

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[1] James Eayrs, "*Bonaventure*'s Career: HMCS White Elephant," Montreal Star, 29 September, 1969.

[2] National Archives of Canada (NAC) RG 24 Department of National Defence (DND), 1983-84/232 Vol. 85 1351-CVL 22, Cmdr. A.E. Fox, "*Bonaventure*'s Career: HMCS Gung

submarine warfare (ASW) aircraft and Sikorsky HO4S helicopters. The helicopters were later replaced with Sikorsky CHSS-2 Sea Kings and in 1962, the Banshees were retired without replacement. While small for an aircraft carrier, the *Bonaventure* was the largest ship in the Canadian fleet and the pride of the Royal Canadian Navy (RCN) and later Maritime Command.[3] The navy's desire for the *Bonaventure* and other "big ships" had drained money and manpower since the Second World War. While some senior officers realized the dangers of maintaining such a relatively large ship, they wanted to maintain its ASW capacity.

In 1968, the new Trudeau government instructed the Department of External Affairs (DEA) and the Department of National Defence (DND) to undertake an extensive review of defence and foreign policy to give it a distinctively Canadian look. The review examined numerous ideas, including neutrality, as potential paths for Canada. It also dealt with specifics. One suggestion to streamline the CAF was to decommission of the *Bonaventure*.

The most obvious reason for the carrier's retirement was that it was just too expensive. Other branches of the CAF also suffered drastic cuts, but the decommissioning of the *Bonaventure* was the largest single cut to Maritime Command after the review of 1969. An annual operating cost of 20 million dollars, in a total defence budget of $1.8 billion, and a politically

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Ho," Maritime Command Headquarters copy of proposed magazine or newspaper article, 16 Oct. 69.

[3] W.G.D. Lund, "The Rise and Fall of the Royal Canadian Navy, 1945-1964: A Critical Study of the Senior Leadership, Policy and Manpower Management" (University of Victoria, Ph.D. Dissertation, 1999), 532.

embarrassing expensive refit in 1966-67 made the *Bonaventure* an obvious target for the cost cutters.

Moreover, the "*Bonnie"*, as the carrier was affectionately known, left much to be desired in an age of rapidly changing technology. It had no air defence cover after its Banshees were retired in 1962 and its anti-aircraft (AA) guns were removed in the refit. The *Bonaventure* was slower and smaller than carriers in other navies and used too much manpower—about enough to staff almost four destroyers—in a volunteer fleet that barely had enough people to keep its ships on active duty. How it would perform in an actual shooting war, rather than in yearly exercises, was questionable. That might have been tested in the Cuban Missile Crisis but the government and military failed to despatch the carrier to where it was needed in time for it to be of much use.

While the defence review questioned the roles of the CAF in general, some specific concerns related to Maritime Command. Many witnesses called on policy makers to change Canada's strategic maritime emphasis on ASW and concentrate on smaller roles or more general purpose ones. The commentators who questioned Canada's commitment ranged from Prime Minister Trudeau, civilian academics called to testify before a House of Commons Committee, and even the defence department's own experts. There were concerns that the *Bonaventure* and other current ASW technologies could not combat the increasing number, speed and stealth of Soviet fleet nuclear ballistic missile submarines (SSBNs).

Much progress has been made in recent years concerning the history of Canadian naval forces since the Second World War. It ranges from recollective history, for example, Stuart Soward's Hands to Flying Stations, to scholarly studies, such as Wilf Lund's "The Rise and Fall of the Royal Canadian Navy, 1945-1964".[4] Some studies relate to policy; others have examined technological development and leadership issues.

The *Bonaventure* has received tangential attention in a variety of texts on the Canadian navy. The only work solely on the carrier itself, J. Allan Snowie's The Bonnie, is a recollective history filled with photographs and drawings.[5] It records the thoughts of officers and men about their duties onboard the ship and provides frank opinions from officers in the higher levels of Maritime Command, such as Rear Admiral J.C. "Scruffy" O'Brien who expressed disgruntlement in 1969 at the government's silence over repairs to the *Bonaventure*'s engines.[6] Of course, the decision had already been made to decommission the *Bonnie*, but the announcement had not been made. Snowie argues that the *Bonaventure* was decommissioned to fund the navy's reduction to the CAF's budget, and to overcome the government's embarrassment over the cost of the refit.[7]

Stuart Soward's Hands to Flying Stations, a survey of Canadian naval aviation from the Royal Canadian Naval Air Service to the *Bonnie*'s

[4] Stuart E Soward, Hands to Flying Stations: A Recollective History of Canadian Naval Aviation (Victoria, BC: Neptune Developments. 1995); Lund, "The Rise and Fall of the Royal Canadian Navy".

[5] J. Allan Snowie, The Bonnie: HMCS *Bonaventure* (Erin, Ont: Boston Mills, 1987).

decommissioning, is also a good source of anecdotal evidence and reflection by Canadian naval officers about the aviation branch. However, as Shawn Cafferky notes, Soward has an "axe to grind" and viewed "the demise of carrier-borne aviation in 1970 as a miscalculation of the highest order."[8] Soward does not speculate on exactly why the *Bonaventure* was decommissioned, but believes it was still useful.

James Boutilier compares Canada's relatively unnoticed decision to decommission the *Bonaventure* with Australia's bitterly debated decision to scrap HMAS *Melbourne*, its sister ship.[9] He argues that nations either had to get larger carriers or get rid of them. While concentrating mainly on the Australian debate, Boutilier suggests that the scandal over the refit undercut any public support for the *Bonaventure*. In discussing the change in attitude towards defence policy after the election of the Trudeau government, he claims that the decision was political and probably not made by members of Maritime Command. Boutilier, however, did not use government documents, which may not have been available at the time, nor did he examine the *Bonaventure*'s ASW role.

Marc Milner's Canada's Navy: The First Century, the most recent history of Canadian naval forces, covers political, social and technological

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[6] Snowie, 252.
[7] Snowie, 253.
[8] M.S. Cafferky, "Uncharted Waters: The Development of the Helicopter Carrying Destroyer in the Post-War Royal Canadian Navy, 1943-1964" (Carleton University, Ph.D. Dissertation, 1996), 13.
[9] James Boutilier, "Get Big or Get Out", Reflections on the RAN, ed. T.R. Frame, .V.P. Goldrick and P.D. Jones (Kenthurst, NSW: Kangaroo Press, 1991).

changes within the RCN and later Maritime Command.[10] Milner is quite explicit in attributing the decommissioning of the *Bonaventure* to economic reasons as part of the Defence Policy Review of 1969 and not to the very public debacle over the refit.[11] Even though he claims that the decision was economic, Milner hints at strategic reasons. The ship may have been effective operationally at sea, but its existence ran against Prime Minister Trudeau's concept of a navy's role in the nuclear age. Using the example of the DDH 280 destroyers then being built, Milner shows how Trudeau believed that any action against enemy submarines prior to an outbreak of war would provoke attack while attacking them after a declaration of hostilities would be too late since any war would develop into a massive nuclear exchange which no Canadian action could stop. Trudeau concluded that the DDH 280 destroyers that Canada was building had no deterrent value, and were therefore, were unnecessary.[12] The nuances of nuclear deterrence and Canadian naval policy still need to be discussed in detail with regard to the *Bonaventure*.

While the best overall text is Milner's work, the first scholarly study on Canadian naval aviation was Shawn Cafferky's M.A. thesis, "Towards The Balanced Fleet: A History of the Royal Canadian Naval Air Service, 1943-1945."[13] Cafferky shows how the RCN helped the RN during the Second World War by manning two escort carriers, HMS *Nabob* and *Puncher* and used this experience to run Canadian carriers after the war. Cafferky argues

[10] Marc Milner, Canada's Navy: The First Century (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999).
[11] Milner, 265.
[12] Milner, 264.

that the RCN wanted carriers because of its belief in the “balanced fleet”. His thesis was the first to examine this desire, but others followed.

Several authors examine Canadian naval policy in the post-Second World War period. In “Beyond the Workable Little Fleet: Post-war Planning and Policy in the RCN 1945-1948,” Tyrone Pile examines Canadian naval policy as far as it concerned the introduction of ASW as the primary focus of the RCN. He argues that the RCN at the end of the Second World War kept striving for a large number of warships which was out of step with the anti-military policies of the Mackenzie King and later Liberal governments.[14] During the war, the RCN had operated frigates, destroyers and escort carriers and tried to convince the government after the war that Canada needed larger ships than frigates in order to be effective.[15] Pile quoted an officer who claimed that this desire for big ships was nothing more than an “emotional crusade”.[16] The priority for a balanced fleet, using surplus RN ships, prevented the RCN from adopting a less expensive avenue with more advanced ships.

Hanging on to RN ships also exacerbated manpower problems. The RCN leadership inflated the projected postwar levels of manpower due to faulty estimates. As a result, demobilization ruined the RCN’s chances to get the fleet it wanted.[17] Recruitment never met the expected targets. Then,

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[13] M.S. Cafferky, “Towards The Balanced Fleet: A History of the Royal Canadian Naval Air Service, 1943-1945,” (University of Victoria, M.A. Thesis, 1989).

[14] Tyrone Pile, “Beyond the Workable Little Fleet: Post-war Planning and Policy in the RCN 1945-1948”, M.A. Thesis (University of Victoria, 1998).

[15] Pile, 19.

[16] Pile, 90.

[17] Pile, 40-41.

between July and September 1946, the HMCS *Warrior*, the sole Canadian aircraft carrier, and only fully manned ship in the fleet, merely performed training duties.[18]

Immediately after the war the RCN was forced to rethink its fleet estimates due to cuts made by the MND, Brooke Claxton. This, however, was not the only influence on the future of the service. Fears of a new war with the Soviet Union gave the RCN new purpose and reasons for continued co-ordination with the United States and Great Britain. Coupled with the threat of Soviet tanks rolling across Europe were fears of long-range aircraft and submarine attacks against North America as early as 1945.[19] Initially, the RCN did little ASW planning and training. Pile singles out Commander A.H.G. Storrs, as the first person to promote ASW as a specialty for the RCN. Storrs discussed the need for a specific type of A/S warship, which Pile relates to the development of the revolutionary *St Laurent* class.[20] With the new goal of ASW in mind, the RCN tried to attain the best tools for the job, which meant acquiring American rather than British aircraft and turning away from the historic relationship with the RN.[21] However, this did not prevent the RCN from buying a British carrier, the *Bonaventure*, when American carriers were available. Whereas the RCN could have purchased a larger *Essex*-class carrier for a similar price, they purchased the *Bonaventure* because of leadership still retained its close ties to the RN.

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[18] Pile, 67.
[19] Pile, 88.
[20] Pile, 91-92.
[21] Pile, 109.

Like Pile, Wilf Lund explains the RCN's notion of postwar fleet as something originating from its relationship with the RN. The desire for a balanced fleet was purely an "emotional" desire, but represented a burgeoning Canadian nationalism within the RCN. The Navy would not be a part of the RN, but sought professional equality with its British antecedent. Lund examines the bipolar tendencies of immediate postwar Canadian politics with concern to the RCN and the Cold War. Anti-military policies came up against new fears of Soviet-bloc aggression. He points out that on the same day that the government announced it was reducing emphasis on defence policy, the reality of the Cold War made its presence known with the revelations of the Gouzenko affair.[22]

Lund discusses in-depth the massive changes that occurred when the RCN demobilized its wartime force and the politicians imposed a ceiling on postwar manpower. Like Pile, he notes the fixation on carriers affected the Navy's plans. Particularly serious was a shortage of trained officers, partially remedied by accepting degrees for accreditation, but even worse, was the shortage of ratings. Lund shows how manpower constraints existed no matter whether the fleet was expanded or reduced by budgets. In order to have enough men to use the *Bonaventure*, the RCN decommissioned one of its cruisers, the HMCS *Quebec*.[23]

The service's fortunes continued to fall when NATO adopted an approach preferring nuclear over conventional weapons. The Naval Board

[22] Lund, 47-52.
[23] Lund, 323.

finally re-organized the fleet, so that effectively, according to Lund, its west coast fleet became a squadron of the USN Pacific Fleet, with extensive combined joint operations, while the east coast fleet belonged to NATO, a situation that remained until the end of the Cold War.[24]

The composition of the fleet changed in addition to the alterations in the strategic focus. The commissioning of the *St. Laurent* in 1955 represented a new era for the RCN, but the ship was already behind the rapid pace of technology with the emergence of nuclear powered submarines.[25] When Vice-Admiral Harry DeWolf was appointed CNS in 1956, he recommended decommissioning the *Quebec* and retiring the *Magnificent* (the Canadian aircraft carrier prior to the *Bonaventure*) earlier than planned. Lund argues that DeWolf completed the RCN's transition to an ASW navy, the sole purpose of which was to support NATO. He reduced the RCN's financial and material commitment to naval aviation, and started converting DDE (destroyer escorts) to DDHs, (destroyers that carried helicopters).[26]

Lund argued that the RCN continued to focus its desires on the numbers and types of ships it wanted, not the numbers of personnel it needed to run an effective service. This point was especially true for the *Bonaventure*. If the Naval Staff had selected ships on the basis of numbers of personnel, they might have acquired a larger fleet of smaller ships that would not be continually undermanned.

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[24] Lund, 338.
[25] Lund, 345.
[26] Lund, 433-434.

Perhaps the most contentious issue for Canada's military in the 1960s was the unification of the three services into the Canadian Armed Forces and the conversion of the Royal Canadian Navy into Maritime Command. Lund details the forceful and determined attitude of Prime Minister Pearson's first Minister of National Defence, Paul Hellyer, as well as the resentment and reluctance of RCN officers towards the wholesale alterations of their much-beloved traditions. Lund argues that Hellyer's disdain for service traditions was evident from the start and he only listened to like-minded people.[27] Hellyer did not discuss his plans for reorganization and unification with the Naval Board, preferring to make his decision on his own. Vice-Admiral Rayner, the CNS, was unable or unwilling to stand up effectively to Hellyer's plans and resigned rather than disgrace the RCN.[28] When the *Bonaventure* was decommissioned at the end of the decade, there were few senior naval officers in the CAF hierarchy to defend the carrier. Though not his initial intention, Lund's thesis dispelled the myth that the reforms of Paul Hellyer dismantled the superb ASW capacity of the Navy that emerged in the postwar period.[29] He also outlines the constant problems of training enough men to fit even the most stringent manpower ceilings.

Lund concludes that the "RCN was in a perpetual state of over-extension where commitments always exceeded personnel resources."[30] He asserts that successive Canadian governments were unwilling to support a

[27] Lund, 498-499.
[28] Lund, 513-514.
[29] Lund, 2.
[30] Lund, 530.

continuing naval policy and barely gave the RCN enough sustenance to last through the first two postwar decades, but he notes, the RCN leadership compounded this problem by giving preferential treatment to a "prewar cohort" who had been indoctrinated in RN traditions and ideals. Lund warns that Maritime Command of the Canadian Armed Forces is still over-committed and under-manned.[31] The case of the *Bonaventure* definitely fits this pattern.

Peter Haydon's book about Canada and the Cuban Missile Crisis gives interesting insights about Canadian naval strategy and use of the *Bonaventure* in NATO operations.[32] While not on the navy, *per se*, Haydon's work looks at the political resolve (or lack of it) in using the Canadian military for such an international crisis and sheds light on Canadian civil-military relations during the crisis.

Joel Sokolsky argues that while the RCN kept up the pace and committed itself to aiding NATO prepare for war against the Soviet Union, Maritime Command, did not maintain Canadian naval forces properly for that possibility.[33] He suggests that the "unbalanced" fleet (the concentration on ASW) helped Canadian foreign policy by giving support to its closest allies and was in line with Canadian interests.[34] As NATO upgraded the importance of its naval forces as a means of countering a potential Soviet threat, Canada did not follow suit. Changing technology called for different strategies in ASW, but Canada limited its role in those operations. Like many historians studying

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[31] Lund, Conclusion.

[32] Peter Haydon, The 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis: Canadian Involvement Reconsidered (Toronto: The Canadian Institute of Strategic Studies, 1993).

the period, he points out that Canada's downshift to only maintaining surveillance was to the detriment of the NATO community. [35] As a final point, Sokolsky notes that while the Trudeau government did not remove itself from any of its commitments officially, the Canadian forces allotted to collective security were more symbolic than anything else.[36]

Studies on naval policy and Canadian defence policy in general range in opinion and objectivity, but their perceptions are important when considering the reasoning behind the decision to decommission the *Bonaventure*. Professor David Cox, a political scientist at Queen's University, discussed priorities for Canadian defence (Canadian sovereignty, North American defence, NATO commitments and peacekeeping). These were identical to the order of commitments Prime Minister Trudeau listed in a speech on April 3, 1969 a few months after the article was published.[37] While it could be argued that Cox had some foreknowledge of the government's decision, in actuality, the Cabinet only decided on those priorities the day the policy was announced.

In addition to examining Canadian commitments to anti-bomber defence and the reasons for its continued involvement in NATO, Cox studied Canada's maritime forces and their priorities. He noted that Canada had

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[33] Joel Sokolsky "Canada and the Cold War at Sea", in The RCN in Transition (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1988).
[34] Sokolsky, 222.
[35] Sokolsky, 226-232.
[36] Sokolsky, 226.
[37] David Cox, "Canadian Defence Policy: The Dilemmas of a Middle Power", in Behind the Headlines, Vol. XXVII, No. 5, Nov. 1968; Directorate of History and Heritage (DHH), Department of National Defence (DND), "Press Release, 3 April, 1969, Office of the Prime Minister," 77/615.

committed itself to ASW and spent most of its naval budget for that purpose, despite the lack of rationale for maintaining such an overwhelming commitment. Using former-U.S. Secretary of Defence Robert McNamara's statements to the American Congress, Cox pointed out that Canada was focusing on a minor Soviet threat compared to that of land-based ICBMs. He also wondered how ASW would affect "damage limiting". In other words, would ASW actually prevent nuclear destruction? Cox also posed questions about ABM systems and the effect on ASW when such systems became operational.[38]

Another work that examined Canadian defence policy during the 1960s was Jon B. McLin's Canada's Changing Defence Policy.[39] Published before the defence review of 1969, it only focused on the years 1957-1963. McLin also found no justification for the anti-submarine capability. He quotes a senior Canadian officer, General Foulkes, who questioned whether the Canadian anti-submarine equipment of aircraft and surface ships was the best means of carrying out the assignment.[40]

Written in 1978, before many documents became available, and while Trudeau was still in power, Gerald Porter's In Retreat is heavily biased, charging the Prime Minister and his government with leaving Canada defenceless in an age of Soviet aggression.[41] While sensational, it illustrates

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[38] Cox, 13-19.
[39] Jon B. McLin, Canada's Changing Defence Policy (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1967).
[40] McLin, 121.
[41] Gerald Porter, In Retreat: The Canadian Forces in the Trudeau Years, (Ottawa: Deneau and Greenberg, 1978).

the highly charged atmosphere surrounding defence cuts and the attitudes of the armed forces to the policy changes.

In Pirouette, a more recent study of Prime Minister Trudeau's foreign and defence policy, Jack Granatstein and Robert Bothwell used cabinet documents and extensive interviews with various cabinet members to outline the chronology of the defence review of 1969.[42] The interviews help reveal the realities behind the sanitized summaries of Cabinet minutes. Granatstein and Bothwell also try to explain the reasoning behind some of the Trudeau government's policies.[43]

The defence review itself drew on two works on naval strategy: Maritime Strategy by Vice Admiral Sir Peter Gretton (RN), published in 1965, and The Sea in Modern Strategy by L.W. Martin, a British military studies professor, from December 1966.[44] Vice-Admiral Gretton wrote from a British perspective, arguing that the nuclear age did not alter traditional maritime strategy. Strategic deterrence prevented a massive nuclear exchange, but maritime forces were still needed if economies depended on sea travel. Gretton listed the missions to be accomplished in wartime and the ships used to carry them out. He argued for the continued use of convoys in limited wars that did not involve nuclear weapons. While Gretton dealt with broad strategy,

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[42] J.L. Granatstein and Robert Bothwell, Pirouette: Pierre Trudeau and Canadian Foreign Policy, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990).

[43] From a different perspective, Ivan Head and Pierre Trudeau's book The Canadian Way discusses their foreign policy experiences and is enlightening about the period of the defence review. Unfortunately, this work only focuses on certain subjects and is thinly documented. Ivan Head and Pierre Elliott Trudeau, The Canadian Way: Shaping Canada's Foreign Policy 1968-1984, (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1995).

[44] Peter Gretton, Maritime Strategy, (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1965); L.W. Martin, The Sea in Modern Strategy, (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1968).

Martin examined the pros and cons of certain types of naval equipment, including carriers.[45] Like Cox, he believed that neither the Soviet Union nor the USN had particular faith in the ability of their ASW forces in finding the enemy submarines.[46] In addition, he noted that the more advanced ASW technology being developed, presumably the American Sound Surveillance System (SOSUS) nets, would depend on land-based facilities.[47]

Shawn Cafferky's Ph.D. dissertation on Canadian naval aviation discusses the development of the helicopter-carrying destroyer for ASW. While not centering on aircraft carriers, Cafferky does provide insight as to how Canada's development of the cost-effective "Beartrap" system of operating helicopters from flying platforms from the stern decks of small warships revolutionized naval aviation and naval warfare.[48] Cafferky shows that smaller vessels reduced the need for a large expensive aircraft platform such as the *Bonnie*, while continuing to perform helicopter ASW.[49]

Since many of these works were written, the National Archives of Canada has released cabinet documents on the *Bonaventure*, the defence review, and related policies. Unfortunately, after the dissolution of the Naval Board in 1964 until the mid 1970s, documents from the navy were not indexed efficiently, making document searches complicated. The Directorate of History and Heritage at the Department of National Defence also has

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[45] Martin, 61-65.
[46] Martin, 32.
[47] Martin, 41.
[48] M.S. Cafferky, "Uncharted Waters: The Development of the Helicopter Carrying Destroyer in the Post-War Royal Canadian Navy, 1943-1964" (Ottawa: Carleton University, Ph.D. Dissertation, 1996), 343.
[49] Cafferky, "Uncharted Waters", 346.

documents relating to maritime policies. Unfortunately, some of the documents listed as declassified at the Directorate could not be found. In addition to these sources, this thesis draws on contemporary newspaper reports and an interview with Léo Cadieux, the Minister of National Defence in 1969 during the defence review.

The primary sources show that the decision to decommission the *Bonaventure* needs to be examined from multiple angles. The political and strategic issues must be examined to answer the question with satisfaction. Any analysis of the decision must start earlier than the immediate months prior to the announcement in 1969. Chapter Two will examine the years before 1968 and study prior changes to the CAF and defence policy in general, including the controversial refit and other recorded criticisms of the *Bonaventure*. Chapter Three will outline the process undertaken by the government to reach the decision to decommission the carrier. Chapter Four will examine the military and political considerations behind that decision by examining a variety of opinions on the *Bonaventure*, aircraft carriers in general and ASW from the period. The chapter will conclude with the announcement to decommission the carrier and the public response to the decision.

CHAPTER TWO:
BACKGROUND TO THE DECISION

Criticism directed at the *Bonaventure* and the RCN began before the defence review of 1969, or even the Cuban Missile Crisis and the subsequent White Paper on Defence of 1964 which recommended continued specialization in ASW. Unfortunately, for the RCN, the White Paper also started the controversial process of the unification of the Canadian Forces. The scheduled mid-life refit of the *Bonaventure* in 1966-67, with its cost overruns, only brought more criticism on Maritime Command at a time when the service was seen as insubordinate by the government and out of touch with the Canadian population.

On February 27, 1960, the Star Weekly magazine published an article entitled “Canada Hasn’t Got the Right Kind of Navy” by its science editor, Leonard Bertin. He argued that Canadian naval officers were first rate, but questioned if the RCN had the right ships and equipment. For financial reasons, Canada had settled for second best and was spending “vast sums of money on a fleet which we know from the start is going to be no good to us.”[1] He pointed to the lack of anti-aircraft (AA) equipment and the likely inability of its ASW equipment to deal with the newer Soviet nuclear submarines that could go deeper and were starting to become a threat. Citing the advantages and disadvantages of ships, fixed-wing aircraft and helicopters, he argued that nuclear submarines (SSNs) were the best tool to fight Soviet SSNs,

[1] Leonard Bertin, “Canada Hasn’t Got the Right Kind of Navy,” The Star Weekly Magazine, 27 February 1960.

though recent advances with helicopters, including variable-depth sonar, were also a large help.

If Bertin was unsure whether the *Bonaventure* was the correct tool for Canada's navy, his was not the prevailing view. At the time, the carrier was only three years old and its submarine-hunting abilities were untested. The Cuban Missile Crisis gave the RCN and the *Bonaventure* an opportunity for such a test. The Crisis was not simply a test of Western and Soviet diplomacy, it was also a test of Canadian government defence policy and willingness to fulfil allied commitments. In October 1962, the Americans saw a threat to their national security when the Soviets began stationing ballistic missiles in Cuba. Prime Minister Diefenbaker did not cooperate politically or militarily with the ensuing American quarantine of Cuba. While Peter Haydon prefers not to speculate conclusively on Diefenbaker's motives, journalist Knowlton Nash argues that because of the Prime Minister's severe dislike and distrust of President Kennedy he did not commit Canada to a more cooperative path in the Crisis.[2] However, Diefenbaker's indecision was common knowledge and he also suggested a solution through the United Nations.

Haydon argued that the Crisis could have become a grave naval failure for Canada if the RCN had not intervened when the Canadian government refused or was unable to act. The RCN rose to the challenge, Canadian ships continued to fulfil their mission of seeking out Soviet submarines with their allies in the United States Navy (USN), despite the lack

[2] Knowlton Nash, Kennedy and Diefenbaker: Fear and Loathing Across the Undefended Border (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1990), 187.

of a naval continental defence agreement like NORAD (North American Air Defence). Nash points out that Diefenbaker's own MND, Douglas Harkness, acted without proper orders and the RCN acted without the authority of the MND during the Crisis.[3] This was a breakdown in the chain of command, but also a potential threat to the civil power. While the military leaderships coordinated well, the Diefenbaker government's inability or unwillingness to take action left Canada without a set defence policy and with a dangerous precedent of unauthorized military action. The United States failed its obligations under NORAD in not keeping Canada "in the loop" in terms of consultations during the Crisis:

> The true point was the sudden realization that whatever Canada had to contribute to a military confrontation between East and West was now fundamentally unimportant and would always be so in the future.[4]

With their strategic nuclear forces, the Americans would carry the weight of the Western military response. As soon as Canadian politicians understood this nuance, armed forces were more for show than anything else. Defence budgets were cut, forces were restructured and levels of manpower were allowed to drop, if not cut. "Very simply, the Canadian military was now perceived as relatively unimportant in the modern world."[5]

The RCN, despite these issues, was in a position to help the Americans. The *Bonaventure* was one of Haydon's examples of the government's hesitance or unwillingness to commit forces. Whereas the

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[3] Nash, 195.

[4] J.L. Granatstein and Robert Bothwell, Pirouette: Pierre Trudeau and Canadian Foreign Policy (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990), 8.

[5] Ibid, 9.

United States had many carriers to help in the ASW hunt, Canada's only carrier, the *Bonaventure*, was in Portsmouth harbour in England at the beginning of the crisis, outside of the area of the ASW operations. The carrier was ordered home at economical speed. It did not arrive on the east coast of North America until the Soviet Union announced it was dismantling the missiles in Cuba. To Haydon, this was incomprehensible. This was the only time the carrier would have been of definite use to the RCN in ASW operations and it was not used efficiently or effectively.[6]

Haydon points out that after Kennedy and Khrushchev had brokered a deal, and the world had presumably stepped away from the brink, the *Bonaventure* and the RCN continued to help the USN patrol the sea-lanes because Soviet submarines still operated on the North American coast. These joint operations "also re-established North American supremacy at sea and hopefully discouraged further Soviet opportunism."[7] However, the danger of the conflict had already passed.

Strategic deployment was not the RCN's only concern after the crisis. It faced such a severe "manning collapse" it is uncertain how long Canadian ships could have retained their efficiency. The *Bonaventure* required more men than any other ship in the Navy, but no one questioned this disparity. In 1963, the RCN, and the government, still considered the *Bonaventure* an important part of Canada's commitment to NATO.

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[6] Peter Haydon, The 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis: Canadian Involvement Reconsidered (Toronto: The Canadian Institute of Strategic Studies, 1993), 146.

[7] Haydon, 211.

Canada's allies and its own public needed to be reassured that the country would fulfil its treaty obligations. In June 1963 soon after the Liberal government of Lester B. Pearson was elected, Minister of National Defence (MND) Paul Hellyer made a statement to the Special Committee on Defence of the House of Commons outlining Canada's defence policy. The RCN was Canada's contribution to NATO forces in the Atlantic, its particular mission was to detect and destroy Soviet nuclear submarines which Hellyer noted represented an offensive threat that was becoming increasingly harder to counter. Hellyer also hinted that the *Bras d'Or* hydrofoil, a small fast warship under development, was the future of Canadian ASW.[8]

In March 1964, the Liberal government released a White Paper on Defence. The document was significant for several reasons. It spelled out Canadian defence objectives and indicated Canada's role in global military affairs. The architect behind this document was, of course, Paul Hellyer, perhaps the most controversial ever Minister of National Defence (MND). Best known for his drive for the unification of the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF), Hellyer got into many tussles with the three services, most notably the RCN.[9]

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[8] Directorate of History and Heritage, (DHH), 111.1.003 D4, Paul Hellyer, "Statement by the Honourable Paul T. Hellyer Minister of National Defence To The Special Committee on Defence June 27, 1963"; Mark McIntyre's M.A. thesis Unfulfilled Promise: The Failure of Canada's Hydrofoil Warship Project, is an in-depth account of the *Bras d'Or* from conception, to trial and finally to abandonment.

[9] An excellent account of the RCN's initial response to unification is: W.G.D. Lund, "The Rise and Fall of the Royal Canadian Navy, 1945-1964: A Critical Study of the Senior Leadership, Policy and Manpower Management" (University of Victoria, Ph.D. dissertation, 1999), "Chapter 11: Collapse".

While overshadowed by the unification controversy, Hellyer's White Paper also explained that Canada's role in collective defence, specifically its role in NATO missions, was of primary importance. The Trudeau government's defence review of 1969 was a response to the priorities set by the White Paper. Defence policy, which is inseparable from foreign policy, was centered on a range of conflict which suggested that not all conflicts were alike and responses should be varied and appropriate. This range started with political disturbance and insurrection and ended with thermonuclear war. Hellyer set for Canada a policy of graduated defence, modelled after that of the U.S. The idea was popularized in the United States by Secretary of Defence Robert McNamara, who pushed the concept of assured destruction and "mutual assured destruction" (MAD). The dictum theorized that if a nation launched a surprise nuclear attack, the other nation would respond in kind with its own nuclear weapons. Neither side would be able to survive. "Calculated all-out thermonuclear war", as stated by the White Paper, "would be irrational and is, therefore, improbable."[10] Whereas it had merely been policy for the United States not to strike first with nuclear weapons, Hiroshima and Nagasaki notwithstanding, now the strategy was one of fear. Neither side would start a nuclear war unless it was willing to destroy its own population.

Graduated response was a means of dealing with this strategic quandary. Conflicts would range in severity from regional brushfires, like the

[10] Hellyer, "White Paper on Defence 1964", in Canadian National Defence, Volume 1: Defence Policy, ed. Douglas L. Bland (Kingston: School of Policy Studies, Queen's University, 1997), 79.

war in Vietnam, to limited and massive nuclear exchanges. As a result, nations needed a variety of forces to deal with these conflicts.[11]

Canada, the White Paper explained, had modest resources to spend on defence which caused it to limit its commitments. In terms of maritime forces, Canada would continue focusing on ASW as its contribution to the nuclear deterrent. Even though Canada made a deliberate decision not to become part of the "nuclear club," its ASW concentration could help deter nuclear war by maintaining the capability to destroy enemy nuclear weapons.[12]

The White Paper, however, revealed the government's actual reason for continuing with ASW, its already large investment in developing specialized ASW forces. Successive governments had built the *St. Laurent*-class frigates and subsequent types and special projects like the *Bras d'Or*. The largest single investment was the *Bonaventure*, whose sole focus was ASW. RCN personnel had trained in ASW. A complete and abrupt about-face in terms of institutional focus would have been detrimental to morale and efficiency.[13]

The White Paper pledged the government to "determine as precisely as is possible the proportion of weapons systems which will provide the maximum intensity of surveillance and maximum defence potential for the least cost." It dangled the possibility of Canada later acquiring or building nuclear submarines for ASW work, but this was too large an issue to be

[11] Ibid., 79-83.
[12] Ibid., 85-86, 98-99.
[13] Ibid., 98-99.

decided immediately. The *Bonaventure* was useful, but it represented a substantial portion of the RCN's budget, but until something more cost-effective, such as nuclear submarines came along, the carrier would continue to be the main tool for ASW. [14]

Hellyer did not alter the mission of Canada's naval forces: ASW was still the primary focus. Supporting NATO was the primary mission of Maritime Command. The *Bonaventure* was still the crux of the Atlantic forces and the pride of Maritime Command. When the carrier's McDonnell F2H-3 Banshees, purchased second-hand from the USN in the 1950s, were retired in 1962, the sole focus of its weaponry was ASW.

After outlining defence roles, the White Paper discussed the unification of the CAF. Unification might not have affected the *Bonaventure*'s status directly, but the atmosphere in Maritime Command prior to its retirement was a direct result of Hellyer's reorganization. It can be argued that naval officers were distrustful of politicians and bureaucrats who tried to find ways of robbing them of even more traditions. The Royal Canadian Navy did not go to its death quietly before becoming Maritime Command. The Naval Board was dissolved in 1964, and without the central body the period between 1965 and 1966 was particularly rocky. Many senior naval staff who opposed unification retired rather than go through it, and a few, like Rear Admirals Jeffry Brock and William Landymore, who openly vocalized their

[14] Ibid., 99.

opposition, were retired forcibly, or fired, from their positions.[15] For his part, Paul Hellyer stressed the difference between "fired" and "premature retirement", but his attitude towards senior officers like Brock was clear. He was an "anachronism", whose "devotion to the outmoded class distinctions inherited from the Royal Navy was inappropriate to the modern Canadian navy after World War II".[16]

To the senior officers of what would become Maritime Command, unification was a farce draped in green polyester uniforms. Hellyer appeared to want a clean slate, and to erase Canada's naval identity. At a reception in Halifax, Louis-Philippe Brodeur, an officer with family ties to the navy, asked Hellyer several questions about the concerns of the senior staff officers and the "*esprit de corps*" that the White Paper had discussed. An angry Hellyer replied that the Navy believed its uniforms were of divine origin. This upset all the officers in the room and the senior officer present, Rear Admiral J.V. O'Brien, had to silence his men before they caused a riot.[17] Hellyer's change of the Maritime Command flag without telling the CDS, General Allard, or the men under him, highlighted a lack of communication and coordination, if not respect.

The unification fracas supported the myth behind the *Bonaventure*'s decommissioning. It was another move by the government to reconstitute the navy, but without the aviation branch. Unification had robbed the Navy of its

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[15] Marc Milner, Canada's Navy: The First Century (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999), 253.

[16] Hellyer, Damn the Torpedoes: My Fight to Unify Canada's Armed Forces (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1990), 92.

[17] Milner, 255.

"unique" traditions, now even as "Maritime Command" the government did not have the proper respect for the job the naval aviators did. It did not help that there was a dearth of naval officers on the Defence Staff.

During this turmoil, in April 1966, the *Bonaventure* docked at Davie Shipyards in Lauzon, Québec to undergo a scheduled mid-life refit. A hull that was laid down at the end of the Second World War required extensive maintenance and equipment updates to help keep it operational at least until 1975. However, the estimate of the refit at $8 million was entirely too low for the necessary repairs.[18] Later, after the decision was made to decommission the *Bonaventure*, the Public Accounts Committee of the House of Commons estimated the actual cost of the refit at $17 million, including ancillary costs.[19] The refit went over budget mainly because the Shipyard was able to renegotiate certain aspects of the contract, such as labour costs for "work arising" during the refit. Upon examining the interior of the *Bonaventure*'s hull, the Shipyard determined that the ship needed more work than had originally been estimated. In 1966, the hull was already over thirty years old. The extra work raised the overall cost of the refit.[20]

Marc Milner points out another reason for the high cost of the refit; the *Bonaventure* was kept in commission during its refit, an unusual measure for which the Public Accounts Committee chastised the government. Milner states that Captain J.M.A. Lynch, the supervising naval engineer of the refit,

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[18] National Archives of Canada (NAC) RG 24 Department of National Defence (DND), 1983-84/232 Vol. 85 1351-CVL 22, Interview with J.M. Lynch, n.d.

[19] House of Commons, Debates, June 8, 1970, 7853.

[20] House of Commons, Standing Committee on Public Accounts, Minutes of Proceedings, 28 April 1970, No. 20.

and a potential scapegoat of the mess, argued that the navy feared the air force would convince the government that if the navy could do without a carrier for an extended period of time, it did not need the carrier at all.[21] In a letter written almost twenty years after the refit, Lynch argued that the main cause of the *Bonaventure*'s refit problems was that the "naughty admirals, …decided to aver[*sic*] that an 18-month job could be carried out in 12."[22]

Opposition politicians soon seized on the purported waste of public money and the government's gall in ordering the ship removed from service before the Public Accounts Committee rendered its report. Enraged Opposition MPs cried "foul" across the Commons floor about the cost of furniture repair and lack of ministerial responsibility but no one considered how the refit affected the *Bonaventure* operationally.[23] The refit did not increase the ship's carrying capacity in terms of the hangar space nor extend its flight deck. Both these improvements could have allowed for newer, more advanced aircraft, including more jet fighters. However, it is possible that such changes could not be made to the carrier. As a result, the refit was more of an expensive repair job meant to keep the ship in operation for another ten years than to modernize it.

James Boutilier argues that public commotion over the refit was "central" to the demise of the *Bonaventure*, "a costly and irrelevant toy in an

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[21] Milner, Chapter 13, footnote 48, 260.

[22] DHH, PRF HMCS *Bonaventure*, "Copy for DHist of letter 4 Sept. 1986 to O/Cdt Marc Gendron of RMC who was writing a thesis on a "Bonventure Refit Cost Overrun".

[23] House of Commons, Debates, 8 June, 1970, 7846-7878.

age of increasing austerity and anti-military sentiment." [24] He discounts the argument that if the navy could do without the carrier during the refit, it did not need the carrier at all and argues that refitting the *Bonaventure* was cheaper than operating it![25] This was perhaps true, but Léo Cadieux believed that even twenty million dollars a year in operating costs was just too much for the government to afford. He also disagreed that the refit had any bearing on the decision to scrap the *Bonnie.*[26] One problem with Boutilier's argument that the refit "scandal" was an important factor in the carrier's demise, is the fact that the final report of the Public Accounts Committee investigation of the cost of the refit only came out at the same time that the *Bonaventure* was being sold for scrap and shipped to Taiwan, but the basic findings had been known earlier.

Boutilier characterized the *Bonaventure* as an "offensive" weapon, a label that can be debated. As a primarily ASW carrier, it would be easy to describe it as a defensive weapon. However, the media continues to focus on American strike fleet carriers launching bombing missions into enemy territory and conducting air superiority missions. The *Bonaventure* had no offensive weapons other than the ASW equipment since the Banshees with their Sidewinder missiles had been retired. If it was indeed a period of anti-militarism, then the lack of support for an "offensive" weapon, as he characterized the *Bonaventure*, seems reasonable.

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[24] James Boutilier, "Get Big or Get Out", Reflections on the RAN, ed. T.R. Frame, V.P. Goldrick and P.D. Jones, (Kenthurst, NSW: Kangaroo Press, 1991), 393.

[25] Boutilier, 393.

[26] Boutilier, 394; Interview with ex-Minister of National Defence Léo Cadieux, July 15, 2002.

In a communication to Boutilier, Captain Lynch also pointed a finger at General Allard, who, purportedly in a 1967 meeting claimed, “we’ve got to get rid of something, I’m going to get rid of that carrier.”[27] This would seem in line with comments from other senior army officers, such as former Chairman of the Chiefs of Staff General Charles Foulkes, who had questioned the carrier’s role and would do so again. However, for all the claims that the *Bonaventure* was the best ASW tool in the world, even some in the RCN had not been happy with the carrier. On the day the ship was commissioned on 17 January 1957, Vice Admiral Harry DeWolf wondered, “Here we are getting this bloody great thing and how are we going to pay for it? How are we going to keep it running?”[28] As Lund argues, these concerns had been nothing new in 1957. A lack of manpower and sufficient resources was compounded by government cuts in the 1960s. However, it was not until a full-fledged defence review that the *Bonaventure* was taken out of service.

In conclusion, blaming the demise on the bad press, costs and negative attitudes on the part of the army and air force is an easy answer. The 1960s began with at least one source questioning the Navy’s Cold War role. The Cuban Missile Crisis revealed a lack of direction in Canadian naval policy that was addressed in the 1964 White Paper. The same White Paper also started the torturous process of unification, creating divisions between the navy and the government and within the navy itself. Unification denied Maritime Command many of its outspoken leaders when they were needed to

[27] Boutilier, 395.
[28] Lund, 391.

protect the fleet. The *Bonaventure*'s refit left the carrier without many allies because some viewed it as a waste of tax dollars. In 1969, the government changed defence priorities again and found that the carrier was not needed. Boutilier hinted that the anti-military liberalism of Pierre Elliot Trudeau was partly to blame. In reality, this attitude would be a factor in the coming decision, as well as changes in ideals surrounding Canada's commitment to ASW.

CHAPTER THREE:
ALLIED OR NEUTRAL: THE DEFENCE POLICY REVIEW OF 1969

When Pierre Elliott Trudeau became Prime Minister in 1968, defence policy underwent a review in an attempt to make it more "Canadian". An abhorrence of nuclear warfare mixed with Trudeau's own ideals spelled even more upheavals for the Canadian military, Maritime Command and the *Bonaventure* in particular. The decision to decommission the *Bonaventure* was part of this larger defence review.

Before becoming Prime Minister, Trudeau had some preconceived notions of how Canada's defence policy should evolve. There is no doubt that he wanted to change Canadian foreign policy, but there is some debate as to whether his ideas and motives were correct. Granatstein and Bothwell argue that Trudeau saw Canadian foreign policy not in terms of Cold War rhetoric, or the need to combat Communism, but rather to serve Canada's specific national interests. When he was first elected, Trudeau's main concern for foreign policy was to keep English and French Canadians together in a united country. Indeed, the Official Languages Act came into effect twelve days before the MND announced the decommissioning of the *Bonaventure*. Trudeau's position was not always this domestically focused, and he later became more comfortable with the concept of collective defence.[1]

Gerald Porter takes a quite different view from Granatstein and Bothwell. In his book, In Retreat, Porter says Trudeau's attitudes on foreign

[1] J.L. Granatstein and Robert Bothwell, Pirouette: Pierre Trudeau and Canadian Foreign Policy (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990), 8.

and defence policy were based on mistaken assumptions that Soviet communism was becoming more "liberal", that the Soviet Union posed no aggressive threat to the West. He argues that Trudeau's views were naïve with the military occupation of Czechoslovakia and other Soviet threats. Porter's work is intensely anti-Communist and anti-Trudeau, but his points are important. The beliefs that Trudeau held, however "naïve" they might have been, drove his foreign and defence policy. It was a significant break from the past that he was not willing to paint all Soviet policy as Communist aggression.[2]

According to Granatstein and Bothwell, Trudeau was so angry over Lester Pearson's decision to have the Canadian military armed with nuclear weapons after the Cuban Missile Crisis, that he even declined a Liberal nomination in 1963.[3] No doubt, Trudeau's feelings about this issue led to the later decision to disband Canadian nuclear-equipped units, such as the "Honest John" surface-to-surface missiles.[4] The controversial Canadian BOMARC nuclear-tipped missiles used to intercept Soviet bombers were also taken out of service by 1972.[5]

In a sense, the arguments from the two accounts present a similar picture of Trudeau's foreign policy. At that stage in his government, Trudeau did not believe in the validity of a Soviet threat. Porter's value judgement,

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[2] Gerald Porter, In Retreat: The Canadian Forces in the Trudeau Years (Ottawa: Deneau and Greenberg, 1978), 2-5.

[3] Granatstein and Bothwell, 7.

[4] Directorate of History and Heritage, (DHH), CANFORGEN 169, File D1350-1901 (DIS), "Statement by the Honourable Léo Cadieux Minister of National Defence, 19 September 1969", 110.1 (D2).

[5] Canada Aviation Museum, "The Aircraft: Boeing MiM-10B Super Bomarc", n.d., <http://www.aviation.nmstc.ca/Eng/Collection/sd020e.htm>, (20 February 2003).

while colourful, is not necessarily out of line with Granatstein and Bothwell's assessment.

Trudeau wanted to reduce Canadian commitments, but not at a calamitous cost. He did not want to withdraw all forces from Europe in one manoeuvre, since this could set off a chain reaction resulting in an arms build-up. The Cabinet agreed to review defence policy. The review, which was due two months after May 15, 1968, would help the government explore new and different foreign policy options. On July 19, the Canadian Cabinet voted to create a more comprehensive review of defence policy than the one ordered in May. Earlier that month, the House of Commons Standing Committee on External Affairs and National Defence (SCEAND) had presented its smaller-scale review of defence policy. The Cabinet dismissed the initial review out of hand because it maintained the status quo.

To understand why this happened, one has to examine part of the debate going on inside the Cabinet. Perhaps one of Trudeau's more radical cabinet ministers was Donald Macdonald, who succeeded Léo Cadieux as Defence Minister in 1970. Macdonald was angry that the initial defence review made no mention of the possibility of complete neutrality. He wanted Canada to remove all forces from Europe and to play the same role as Iceland in the alliance. Unlike Macdonald, Trudeau's views were affected by the preliminary defence review. He made it clear to the Cabinet on July 19 that he understood that Canada needed to continue its contribution to NATO,

but that such a policy of continuation was not to be mentioned in the press. Instead, the ongoing review was to be highlighted.[6]

The Cabinet ordered a review of Canadian foreign policy along with the defence review. The idea was to bring departmental policies back to "first principles". When completed, according to Granatstein and Bothwell, both reviews had "shaken up the entrenched bureaucracies of External Affairs and National Defence."[7] This was a means of controlling the bureaucrats, but also, perhaps, an attempt to alter their ways of thinking.

In February 1969, the Cabinet received a copy of the prepared "Defence Policy Review". The document was important for several reasons. It addressed the questions of what path Canada should take in terms of defence policy. It explained the consequences of choosing different options and outlined the potential forces that Canada needed for each option, as well as the costs involved.

The most radical path was for Canada to become a neutral country, without defensive ties to other nations, essentially what Macdonald had argued for the previous July. The review did not dismiss this option out of hand, but stressed its dangers. The savings gained from reducing forces to minimal levels would be offset with the need to spend money on protecting Canadian sovereignty. The Americans would be seriously affronted by such an action, taking political and propaganda measures to ensure that Canada did not slip into the Communist sphere of influence. The United States

[6] The information in the previous two paragraphs is from: Granastein and Bothwell, 13-15.
[7] Granatstein and Bothwell, 35.

needed Canada to participate in the DEW (Distant Early Warning) Line. The Americans would reduce the flow of scientific and technological discoveries to Canada for fear of the information passing into Soviet hands. The Review also argued that the Soviets would use Canada's neutrality to their own advantage with tactics such as propaganda and political tampering. Neutrality was possible, but a greater headache, and perhaps a greater expenditure.[8]

The report argued: "Canada can satisfy the requirements of its national security only by military cooperation with other countries". Rather than merely suggesting that Canada follow the course and maintain its levels of defence expenditure, the Review examined Canada's existing forces and determined what could be dispensed with and what was the absolute minimum required to maintain national security. The Review further stated that a "desirable level of forces" could not be derived from "pure military analysis". The only important military threat to Canada was a nuclear attack, something that Canada alone could not deal with. The Review suggested that Canada take measures to ensure the "stability of opposing forces" and to prevent war rather than trying to win one. There was no exact equation to determine what Canada needed to ensure its survival.[9]

In other words, the exact force needed to maintain the strategic balance was subject to interpretation, and not necessarily a particular set of tanks, planes and ships. The report stated that Canada could continue

[8] National Archives of Canada (NAC), "Defence Policy Review", February 1969, RG24, Department of National Defence , Series B-2, Volume 21587 File: S-2-5040-14-1 (Copy # 3 at DHH), Chapters 3 and 4, 18-35.

[9] NAC, "Defence Policy Review", 79-80.

participation in maintaining the strategic balance to the limit of its resources or could leave the superpowers with the responsibility. The report advised that Canada faced four concerns if it continued to participate in collective security. Canada had to worry about what resources (presumably human, natural and other) it deemed willing to set aside for national security. Second, Canada had to determine how much influence it could and wanted to place on its allies concerning strategic policies. Related to this point was the comment that Canada had to assess how friendly governments would accept any change in posture and how they would view its role in carrying its burden for the alliance. Third, Canada had to decide what future roles it would assume and how to utilize its particular resources to fulfil them.[10] The fourth and final consideration was "the extent to which Canada is prepared to permit the USA access to Canada's territory needed for the purpose of assuring its and Canada's security."[11] That was a question of public perceptions and how Canada would control the American presence within the country.

The primary area of Canadian defence cooperation for the Review was air defence. In 1969, Canada still operated nuclear equipped CF101 Voodoo interceptors and two squadrons of nuclear tipped BOMARC missiles that would shoot down Soviet bombers in the event of an attack. The report suggested that any changes or improvements made to the system, including financial readjustments, should be made in conjunction with the Americans.[12] Related to air defence against bombers was the American decision to

[10] NAC, "Defence Policy Review", 80-81.
[11] NAC, "Defence Policy Review", 81.
[12] NAC, "Defence Policy Review", 92.

implement an ABM (Anti Ballistic Missile) system to counter Soviet ICBMs. This was prior to the ABM Treaty of 1972, which limited the USA and USSR to minor systems. In 1969, this technology was still under study, but the author viewed ABMs as the next step in collective defence. Other areas of allied cooperation involved bases and systems that were primarily used in conjunction with American forces under NORAD; in some cases the nuclear weapons for the BOMARCs and interceptors were in American custody.[13] In September 1969, Léo Cadieux announced that despite the cuts to the armed forces, in particular, the *Bonaventure,* the status quo would be maintained for air defence, while consultations were made with the United States.[14]

The Defence Policy Review included the *Bonaventure* in its discussion of options for cooperation in maritime defence. The carrier was a Canadian unit that participated in integrated NATO operations. The primary role for the *Bonaventure* and the rest of the Canadian naval forces was the detection, tracking and destruction of enemy ballistic missile submarines. The Review did not see any major changes in ASW technology until the mid-1970s, even though the Americans were working on increasing and improving underwater surveillance systems (SOSUS nets) and had introduced the Lockheed P3 Orion patrol aircraft, variants of which are still in use today. The US had also increased its fleet of hunter-killer submarines and was starting to replace old surface ships. While the Review examined American progress in attempting to track submarines, it did not consider the changes and improvements in

[13] NAC, “Defence Policy Review”, 85.
[14] DHH, “Statement by Léo Cadieux”, 6.

ballistic missile submarines, which might cause problems for American methods of detection.[15]

The Review frankly admitted that as several factors were involved in maritime warfare (including large areas of ocean to cover), Canada's share of the role was uncertain. The Americans already carried most of the burden for anti-submarine warfare, with a preponderance of submarines (including nuclear powered ones), destroyers (including those with helicopters), shore-based maritime patrol aircraft, and aircraft carriers. In calculating proposed Canadian contributions to North American maritime defence, the Review mentioned that the *Bonaventure*, and some of the helicopter-equipped destroyers would reach the end of their operational lives before 1980.[16]

Of the options discussed by the Review, a few, if implemented, concerned the navy. These options put the decision to decommission the *Bonaventure* in perspective because they show how the entire CAF was targeted. The first possibility, "Option A", called for an annual budget of $2.05 billion for the armed forces, which would maintain manpower at present levels and leave enough capital to maintain and upgrade capability after a few years. With the prevailing attitude of the Trudeau Cabinet against the status quo, this option was not accepted. "Option B" called for keeping manpower levels constant, but restricting capital expansion and maintenance to the minimum amount possible. This option suggested retiring four destroyers upon the completion of four new ones. The Review warned that combat units would

[15] NAC, "Defence Policy Review", 94-95.
[16] NAC, "Defence Policy Review", 94-96.

continue to be undermanned without increasing expenditures and manpower levels and it would be more difficult to respond to global contingencies, such as peacekeeping.[17]

The government finally decided on "Option D" for maritime defence.[18] Under this option, Canada would maintain naval forces solely for "surveillance and control." Canada would retain its commitments to NATO and the defence of North America but severely reduce its activities. Canada would patrol the surrounding oceans as per previous commitments using land-based patrol aircraft, its three submarines, a variety of destroyers and one support ship. The *Bonaventure* was not listed as one of the maritime components. The Canadians would detect the submarines and pass the information to the Americans. ASW, for the alliance, would become almost entirely the responsibility of the United States. The Review warned of increased tensions in relations with the United States, but this appears not to have been the case. It also warned of economic consequences in the Maritimes and on Vancouver Island, where the forces to be disbanded were based, but did not expand on this point.[19]

This was a change from Hellyer's statement in the 1964 White Paper, that Canada would continue its focus on ASW because of its investment on specialized equipment. "Option D" gave the largest savings in terms of equipment reductions. The report warned that regaining lost capacity would

[17] NAC, "Defence Policy Review", 111-113.
[18] "Option C" dealt solely with minimizing participation in the air defence network.
[19] NAC, "Defence Policy Review", 94-95.
[19] NAC, "Defence Policy Review", 117-118.

mean large additional capital expenditures in the future.[20] In selecting "Option D" and decommissioning (and later scrapping) the *Bonaventure*, the Trudeau government made a conscious political decision to alter Canada's previously established naval focus. The government was unwilling to maintain the current forces or to spend large sums to obtain newer equipment. This option allowed the government to reduce its forces, without completely abandoning its maritime focus. While the Defence Policy Review was used in formulating the final course of action taken by the government, more open debates were taking place over Canada's military role.

From the fall of 1968 and through the spring of 1969, the SCEAND conducted its hearings on the reviews. Most hearings were scheduled after the Cabinet received the proposed Defence Policy Review. Some highly influential Canadian experts testified on a variety of defence-related issues including ABMs, forces in Europe and NORAD.

As a major defence expenditure, the *Bonaventure* was a subject of the committee's hearings. The most in-depth discussion of the carrier took place on February 12, 1969 between the committee and Professor Charles Foulkes, retired Army General and Chairman of the Chiefs of Staff prior to unification. Foulkes was called to testify on the "Canadian Response to Collective Security". While most of his remarks concerned strategic concepts, Foulkes' notes also discussed the navy and the *Bonaventure*'s role. In a previous appearance before the Committee, Foulkes had questioned the assortment of

[20] NAC, "Defence Policy Review", 118.

ASW tools used by the military. In his position paper given to the committee, he repeated his statement from 1962, which had also been in evidence:

> I am not convinced that we really know what is the most efficient and economical anti submarine force for Canada. There has never been, as far as I know, an unbiased assessment of the relative value of carriers, tracker aircraft, frigates, submarines, helicopters, and long-range maritime aircraft in this antisubmarine role. What has happened is that we have replaced the Magnificent by another carrier.[?], the wartime frigates one for one with a $30 million (I understand that figure is out of date) relatively slow escort vessel. The Lancasters have been replaced with Argus maritime aircraft which need another replacement by 1970. But is this conglomeration of a carrier, tracker aircraft, frigates, helicopters and long-range maritime aircraft the most efficient, effective and economical grouping for this task? Or is this grouping just a collection of the plans and ambitions of the air force and navy planners? I suspect it is?[21]

It is worth noting that Foulkes' views, while persuasive, were those of a career officer in the Canadian Army. He freely admitted his biases. The strategic implications of his comments on the viability of aircraft carriers and other weapons in ASW will be discussed later.

In its preliminary report presented on March 26, 1969 the SCEAND recommended that Canada remain part of NATO and continue to pursue collective security rather than proceed on a neutral path because of a continuing threat from the Warsaw Pact nations. The committee rejected the other path that Canada allow the United States to assume responsibility for Canada's defence. The Committee, however, had not yet made enough study of Maritime Command to give proper recommendations for the navy.[22] The

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[21] House of Commons, Standing Committee on External Affairs and National Defence, Minutes of Proceedings, 12 February 1969, Evidence of Professor Charles Foulkes, 945.

[22] Canada, SCEAND, 26 March 1969, 35:7-15.

members only got to visit the *Bonaventure* on September 8, eleven days before the decision to decommission the carrier was announced. It is also worth noting that the Public Accounts Committee had visited the *Bonaventure* on 27 and 28 of March to investigate the refit cost overruns.

Meeting four times between March 29 and April 3, the Cabinet examined the Defence Policy Review with a view of formulating a set policy from the wide variety of ideas and suggestions. The Cabinet debated the SCEAND report and the separate reviews by the Department of External Affairs (DEA) and the Department of National Defence (DND). The Cabinet was deeply divided over several issues, particularly neutralism, and the desire to reduce Canadian forces in Europe.

Over the course of the three meetings, Cabinet members debated what position to take and how it was to be explained to the public.[23] Donald Macdonald continued to argue for neutrality.[24] Others, like Léo Cadieux, felt a reduction in Canadian forces would hurt morale severely.[25] Paul Hellyer, now Minister of Transport, argued that Canada should keep forces in Europe.[26] The Prime Minister thought it would reflect poorly on the government if it kept a substantial number of forces in Europe, but not enough at home to focus on domestic defence.[27] Canada's defence forces were meant "not to impress our

[23] Granatstein and Bothwell narrate the often heated arguments the members of the Cabinet.
[24] NAC, RG2, Privy Council Office (PCO), Series A-5-a, Volume 6340, "Cabinet Minutes", 30 March 1969, 4.
[25] NAC, "Cabinet Minutes", 30 March 1969, 5.
[26] NAC, "Cabinet Minutes", 1 April 1969, 5.
[27] NAC, "Cabinet Minutes", 29 March 1969, 7.

enemies, but to impress our friends."[28] Canada had defence forces to show it supported its allies, not threaten the Soviets. At one point, Cadieux offered his resignation because of his strong beliefs about Canada's NATO participation and his fear of the consequences of harsh force reductions. Trudeau agreed to put a phrase written by Cadieux in the policy statement that the changes would be "'a planned and phased reduction', not a withdrawal." The Cabinet finally reached a consensus: Canada would continue its commitments to NATO, but reduce the forces assigned to those commitments.[29]

The morning cabinet meeting on April 3 discussed the wording of the statement and whether NATO had to be informed prior to a public announcement. Cadieux suggested that Canada determine what force reductions it would make in Europe before the NATO Defence Planning Committee meeting in late May. Trudeau thought it impossible to make recommendations on Canadian forces in Europe without examining the forces as a whole. The Cabinet agreed to form a "work group" consisting of representatives from the Prime Minister's Office (PMO), DEA, DND, the Treasury Board and the Privy Council Office (PCO) that would report back to the Cabinet Committee on External Policy and Defence (CEPD) by April 30 "with recommendations as to forces, equipment, manpower and costs" necessary to carry out the four roles mentioned in the statement.[30]

At a press conference on April 3, 1969, Trudeau outlined the defence policy changes that had been researched during the previous year and

[28] NAC, "Cabinet Minutes", 29 March 1969, 4.
[29] Granatstein and Bothwell, 25.
[30] NAC, "Cabinet Minutes", 3 April 1969, 4-5.

debated by Cabinet in the preceding days. From the beginning, the Prime Minister emphasized that this new policy was uniquely Canadian, meant to instil Canadian values and pride in the Armed Forces. After the initial rhetoric, he immediately allayed the fears of NATO supporters and the United States by stating that Canada would continue to take part in collective security, "in the interests of Canada's national security and in defence of the values we share with our friends".[31] The speech emphasized that the changes would keep Canada's forces ready for any contingency at home or abroad. Trudeau mentioned several commitments, including NORAD, but particularly NATO. He justified reassessments of Canadian Forces Europe by explaining that Europeans were more able to contribute forces and arms to the defence of the continent than before. He also stated that Canada would discuss with the United States the existing mutual defence arrangements for the North American continent.[32] Consultations were to be made with allies concerning Canada's future role, but most had not been informed before Trudeau announced the new policy.

Only at the end of the speech did he outline the roles for the defence forces. They were listed as follows:

(a) the surveillance of our own territory and coast lines, i.e., the protection of our sovereignty;
(b) the defence of North America in co-operation with United States forces;
(c) the fulfilment of such NATO commitments as may be agreed upon; and

[31] DHH, "Press Release, 3 April 1969, Office of the Prime Minister," 77/615.
[32] DHH, "Press Release, 3 April 1969".

(d) the performance of such international peacekeeping roles as we may, from time to time, assume.[33]

Although it appeared to be nothing more than an affirmation of previous commitments and statements on defence, the document was important. The speech did not go into as much detail as previous policy documents, but the list of priorities was self-explanatory. Whereas the overarching focus of the 1964 White Paper had been collective defence and nuclear deterrence, surveillance and sovereignty was the prime focus of Trudeau's statement. The second role for Canadian defence was the defence of North America, primarily fulfilled by NORAD. Canada's contribution to NATO was the third role mentioned.

One could argue that this was simply semantics, that the speech did not actually alter Canadian priorities, but merely shifted the order in which they were listed. However, the Defence Policy Review document from February 1969 and the speech and later documents that outlined the force changes showed the way the wind was blowing. The Cabinet minutes show that while there was a consensus to support the allies, the government did not want to maintain the status quo. Radical changes, such as adopting a neutral stance, were dangerous; Trudeau himself had opposed neutrality. However, unlike the SCEAND's recommendation that Canada continue to focus on NATO, the government emphasized the defence of Canadian territory.

Granatstein and Bothwell point out that the response to the change in defence policy was "relatively restrained". [34] Opposition leader Robert

[33] DHH, "Press Release, 3 April 1969".

Stanfield called the speech "weasel-worded" and the policy review a "false pregnancy."[35] One academic observer, James Eayrs, who had been a witness in front of the SCEAND, suggested that the policy was a good idea, and was getting Canada out of a role that "was strategically useless."[36]

The American response, on the other hand, was mild. Trudeau had discussed the proposed defence changes with President Nixon.[37] According to the Montreal Star, the United States reacted cautiously because of Trudeau's fragile compromise within cabinet between Macdonald and Paul Hellyer who had opposite views of Canada's potential future path. Perhaps the Americans did not want to appear as interfering in their allies' politics. There were mixed reactions from other NATO allies. The French response suggested that the reduction did not matter; any future conflict would involve nuclear weapons. The West German reaction was low-key, but suggested that the timing of the policy change was not appropriate.[38] The British, particularly Defence Minister Denis Healy, were angry because of Canada's perceived withdrawal from NATO and Europe.[39]

The April 3 Cabinet meeting dealt with another important item. After speaking with Cadieux and A.D. Hales, the head of the Public Accounts Committee, the Minister of Supply and Services announced that he had ordered an audit of the *Bonaventure*'s refit by Davie Shipbuilding.[40] This

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[34] Granatstein and Bothwell, 26.
[35] The Globe and Mail, 4 April 1969, 1.
[36] The Montreal Star, 5 April 1969, 1.
[37] NAC, "Cabinet Minutes", 30 March 1969, 5.
[38] The Montreal Star, 5 April 1969, 1.
[39] Granatstein and Bothwell, 26.
[40] NAC, "Cabinet Minutes", 3 April 1969, 11.

announcement does seem to give credence to James Boutilier's belief that the refit was the reason why the government decommissioned the *Bonaventure*. However, the impression from the unemotional language of the Cabinet Minutes is that the Shipyard caused the problem and was being investigated for it. Nevertheless, an editorial in The Globe and Mail on April 8 questioned the need to audit the Shipyard when bureaucracy was also to blame.[41] No one can doubt, however, that such a spending fiasco was on the minds of Cabinet members while they considered what to cut from the DND's budget.

Once the policy was announced, the Cabinet set about determining how to carry it out. On April 30, 1969, the Interdepartmental Working Group submitted its report on "Phase II" of the Defence Policy Review to the Cabinet and the Committee on External Policy and Defence (CEPD).[42] It recommended cutting the Canadian Forces from a total of 98,000 to 81,000, mainly by reducing the number of Canadian forces in Europe and putting a ceiling on the defence budget of $1.8 billion, the number set for the fiscal year of 1969/70.[43] This would remain until the fiscal year of 1972/73. $250 million a year was allotted for capital acquisition. The report assumed these amounts would meet the Forces' minimum requirements. The forces in Europe would be designed to be air-transportable and ready to return to Canada to

[41] "How could they do it?", Globe and Mail, editorial, 9 April 1969.
[42] NAC, RG2, PCO, Series B-2, Volume 6346, Cabinet Document 430/69, 30 April 1969.
[43] NAC, Cabinet Document 430/69, 30 April 1969, 1.

participate in roles of national security and defence of North America if necessary.[44]

The report also outlined the roles of other Canadian forces, notably those of Maritime Command in a slightly more elaborated form than the statement of April 3, but the main focus on national security and North American defence remained. Significantly, the document listed the necessary equipment to carry out these roles. Land elements would be deployed regionally and air units would be decreased in type and in numbers.[45] Whereas the previous Defence Policy Review had omitted the *Bonaventure* from some of its estimates, now the Report recommended:

> For financial reasons, it will be necessary to take action to dispose of HMCS *Bonaventure*, HMCS *Cape Breton*, HMCS *Cape Scott*, HMCS *Algonquin*, HMCS *Crescent*, and a significant number of smaller ships.[46]

This is an explicit reason for the *Bonaventure*'s disposal. The document's terse language does not mention any of the considerations that went into the recommendation. It does not explain whether the money previously spent on the refit was a financial consideration. When Léo Cadieux announced the decommissioning of the *Bonaventure,* he did not give a reason. Answering questions later, he admitted the decision was made because of the carrier's annual cost.[47] More importantly, in response to those who might have believed that the government was short-changing the navy

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[44] NAC, Cabinet Document 430/69, 30 April 1969, 9-11.
[45] NAC, Cabinet Document 430/69, 30 April 1969, 13.
[46] NAC, Cabinet Document 430/69, 30 April 1969, 13.
[47] Globe and Mail, 20 September 1969, 6.

yet again, the carrier was but one of several units to be disbanded from the entire CAF.

The CEPD met four times between May 2 and 12 to discuss the proposals for Phase II and produced its own report and recommendations that generally agreed with the previous one, but recommended that Cadieux consult with NATO allies concerning the proposed force reductions and restructuring.[48] More importantly, it authorized Cadieux to "restructure the Canadian forces to carry out the priorities and tasks as outlined."[49] This included closing bases, disbanding units and getting rid of equipment listed in the Annexes at the end of the document.

The *Bonaventure* was listed in "Annex C" under the heading "Redundant Major Equipment". It certainly was the largest and most expensive item on the list, but if one factors in the disposal of 2 destroyers, 334 Centurion Battle Tanks, 190 Sherman Battle Tanks, 90 CF104s, plus other assorted artillery, ships, vehicles and aircraft, the cuts to Maritime Command are on par with the other services. Mobile Command would lose four battalions of infantry, one armoured regiment and one artillery regiment. The air force would rid itself of four squadrons of strike/attack aircraft.[50] Not all the men and equipment in these units would be disbanded, but most would be assigned to other areas of the service. The men in the *Bonaventure* would man destroyers under construction; the aircraft sent ashore for other duties.

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[48] NAC, RG2 , PCO, Series B-2, Volume 6347, Cabinet Document 496/69, 13 May 1969, 1.

[49] NAC, Cabinet Document 496/69, 13 May 1969, 1.

[50] NAC, Cabinet Document 496/69, 13 May 1969, "Annex B & C".

In the end, the Tracker aircraft in decreasing numbers would survive, at first on shore-based ASW patrols; later, through turboprop conversions, they served as water bombers, and in other functions, until the 1990s. The Sea Kings serve to the present day, waiting to be replaced.

Once the CEPD had tendered its recommendations, the full cabinet met on May 15 and 20, 1969 to discuss “Phase II” of the Defence Policy Review. The minutes from these meetings indicate that the Cabinet discussed the documents from the Interdepartmental Working Group and the CEPD at length, but make no specific mention of the authority given to Cadieux to carry out the recommendations. On May 15, the Cabinet decided to postpone discussing military base closures and changes in the regimental structure (for further study), to limit the Defence budget to $1.815 billion, and to decrease the military to 81,000 regulars and 15,000 reserves, suggesting that it approved of the recommended changes.[51] It did not mention “equipment”. Prior to the September 19 announcement of the *Bonaventure*’s decommissioning, no Cabinet minutes relating to Defence issues refer to equipment disposal, except for some base closures and regimental changes to Mobile Command, suggesting that the decision was made at that meeting or had been made previously and did not require discussion.

Léo Cadieux adds a little light to this area of debate. In an interview, he stated that the decision to decommission the *Bonaventure* was ultimately his as Minister of National Defence. He indicated that the Cabinet set the budget and he had to follow that. Presumably, this meant after May 15, when the

[51] NAC, RG2, PCO, Series A-5-a, Volume 6340, “Cabinet Minutes”, 15 May 1969.

Cabinet set the budget for each of the following three years at $1.815 billion. Ivan Head, in a book written with Pierre Trudeau, suggests that the decision to decommission the *Bonaventure* was made during the Pearson years, but gives no supporting documentation.[52]

Cadieux could not remember the exact date when the decision was made, but explained that the matter was discussed at a weekly meeting with the "general staff" and the deputy minister. In a particularly insightful phrase, Cadieux stated, "and in the case of the *Bonaventure*, nobody fought for it."[53] If by "general staff" he meant perhaps General Sharp or General Allard (who was on his way to retirement), it is very possible that he and his colleagues would not have supported keeping the *Bonaventure*, if evidence from Captain Lynch is true.[54]

Unfortunately for Maritime Command, there was no naval input at that level, with neither the CDS or the VCDS (Vice-Chief Defence Staff) being from the navy. Stuart Soward, in his recollective history, quoted one of *Bonnie's* former Commanding Officers (CO) Admiral R.H. Falls as saying that the Minister and the CDS made decisions without consulting the Defence Council:

> With no Navy input to object to the carrier's early withdrawal, it is very likely that Defence Minister Cadieux unilaterally made the decision and CDS General Sharp, a former senior RCAF

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[52] Ivan Head and Pierre Elliott Trudeau, The Canadian Way: Shaping Canada's Foreign Policy 1968-1984 (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1995), 76.

[53] Interview with Léo Cadieux, 15 July 2002.

[54] James Boutilier, "Get Big or Get Out", Reflections on the RAN, ed. T.R. Frame, V.P. Goldrick and P.D. Jones (Kenthurst, NSW: Kangaroo Press, 1991), 395.

> officer, if consulted, would have no compelling reason to disagree.[55]

With no argument against the disposal, Cadieux would have had a hard time convincing the Cabinet to retain the carrier. In any case, he did not understand the necessity of the *Bonaventure*. He freely admitted that he was not sure about what to do with the ship.[56] In other parts of the interview, Cadieux mentioned that even though Canada had owned the *Bonaventure* for some time, it had never used it to fulfil its intended roles.[57]

When asked about the reasons behind the disposal of the aircraft carrier, Cadieux could not have been more clear. The *Bonaventure* was decommissioned because of "economic reasons and the fact that we had no use for it. It is as simple as that."[58] Paul Hellyer explained it another way. He suggested that the *Bonaventure*:

> was just one of the first casualties of this inflationary trend and the budget freeze… You couldn't replace it today for many times that amount of money. If it hadn't been for inflation and that they couldn't afford to pay for the men or the fuel to run it… it would still be in operation today.[59]

Cadieux also mentioned something else of interest, that in the past, the *Bonaventure* had been used in peacekeeping operations off Cyprus. However, he pointed out that taking the *Bonaventure* to Cyprus would have been a

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[55] Stuart E Soward, Hands to Flying Stations: A Recollective History of Canadian Naval Aviation (Victoria, BC:. Neptune Developments, 1995), Vol. 2, 446.

[56] Interview with Léo Cadieux, 15 July 2002.

[57] This would coincide with Haydon's research that the *Bonaventure* was not used to search for Soviet submarines in 1962 until after the primary danger of the Cuban Missile Crisis had passed. See Chapter 2.

[58] Interview with Léo Cadieux, 15 July 2002.

[59] Porter, 43-44.

"provocation", when we were there to smooth things [over]."[60] This statement, as innocent as it sounds, represents his belief and that of other Cabinet Ministers that the *Bonaventure* was not just a piece of equipment used to fight submarines but an offensive weapon, that, in certain situations, could be seen as a provocation and lead to greater conflict. This was true even though the carrier did not have the strike capabilities of the American fleet carriers, such as the nuclear-powered USS *Enterprise*.

The Trudeau government conducted the defence review of 1968-1969 in order to create a distinctly "Canadian" policy. The bureaucracies of DND and DEA submitted their reports to the Cabinet which then debated the recommendations. After the Cabinet formulated its four general policy points, the subcommittees submitted their recommendations to streamline the CAF to fit the new policy. The *Bonaventure* would be decommissioned, ostensibly for financial reasons, as one of several cuts to the forces.

[60] Interview with Léo Cadieux, 15 July 2002.

CHAPTER FOUR:
CHANGE IN STRATEGY?—SLBMS, ABM, ASW AND THE "BONNIE"

While the Cabinet grappled with funding the CAF, the majority of its discussions were on Canada's strategic position. What was the path for a "middle power" such as Canada? The Cabinet discussed this as a prelude to the decision to reduce the CAF and to decommission the *Bonaventure*. Other considerations, military and political, specific to the late 1960s, influenced the decision to scrap the aircraft carrier. Both carriers and their roles underwent intense scrutiny in the late 1960s. The SCEAND received evidence on both the *Bonaventure* and ASW. This chapter discusses the attitudes of some witnesses as well as the members of the Committee. In addition, since the *Bonaventure*'s primary role was to hunt Soviet submarines, it will also deal with perceptions of anti-submarine warfare (ASW) in the late 1960s.

The White Paper of 1964 proclaimed that Canada's naval role would continue the specialization in ASW, a balance reminiscent of convoy warfare of World War II, and the detection and destruction of Soviet ballistic missile submarines. In 1969, however, DND and SCEAND heard several questionings of ASW, and the contribution of carriers to this role. This was not entirely new. In 1962, General Charles Foulkes had doubted the role of a carrier in ASW, or at least the combination of which it was part.[1] Hellyer's

[1] Canada, House of Commons, Standing Committee on External Affairs and National Defence, (SCEAND), 12 February, 1969, 945.

statement in the White Paper of 1964 had implied that nuclear submarines would be a good addition to Canada's ASW forces.[2]

Referring to reservations by American analysts who had published works discussing ASW strategy, James Eayrs and General Charles Foulkes, two well-known opponents of the *Bonaventure*, questioned ASW from a strategic point of view in front of the SCEAND. In addition, ASW was a role that Canada could downgrade without a large outcry from its allies. More significantly, DND researchers also questioned ASW. These voices gave the government support for cutting the *Bonaventure*.

At the time of the defence review, James Eayrs was a Professor of Political Science at the University of Toronto. Before becoming an academic, he had served briefly in the Royal Canadian Naval Volunteer Reserve (RCNVR) in the Second World War. In his testimony, Eayrs made some interesting points about the navy and ASW. In an essay, "Future Roles for the Armed Forces of Canada", written for the defence review, he discussed the defence roles that had been announced in the White Paper of 1964. He suggested that surveillance of territorial waters could presumably mean protection of fisheries and interdiction of smugglers, a role the navy could carry out relatively inexpensively. He mentioned that ASW was also part of surveillance and could cost the taxpayers anywhere between $50 and $100 million. Eayrs argued that Canada kept up the ASW role primarily for emotional reasons, that is, not to upset the Americans who would feel that

[2] Hellyer, "White Paper on Defence 1964", in Canadian National Defence, Volume 1: Defence Policy, ed. Douglas L. Bland, (Kingston: School of Policy Studies, Queen's University, 1997), 99.

their northern neighbour was not pulling its weight and not doing its part for collective defence. Eayrs stressed that such fears were more about pride than actual strategy and the military was not the only means of gaining national pride. Eayrs warned that if Canada retreated from performing the ASW role, the Americans might take it over and might infringe on national sovereignty but argued that such infringements would be minimal because "serious" ASW was performed by attack submarines. Because of their stealth, they were non-intrusive, even if they cruised in Hudson Bay.[3]

Eayrs is quite complimentary towards attack submarines. But what was his opinion of the *Bonaventure*, performing the same role for Canada? In an article in the Montreal Star, published on September 29, 1969, ten days after the announcement to dispose of the *Bonaventure* was made, Eayrs gave a short history of Canada's involvement with carriers, for which he had no sympathy. Despite its inflammatory comments out of context, Eayrs' article is useful as an example of the attitudes towards carriers. He unabashedly accused the Naval Staff of acquiring aircraft carriers in order to fulfill their dreams of a big ship navy and a balanced fleet.[4] Eayrs stated his opposition to aircraft carriers in general, explaining that only the Americans and the French used them; the British were determined to reduce their carrier roles, the Soviets had never had them.[5]

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[3] The information in the previous two paragraphs is from: SCEAND, 6 February, 1969, 921.

[4] This argument was supported by Tyrone Pile's research: Tyrone Pile, "Beyond the Workable Little Fleet: Post-war Planning and Policy in the RCN 1945-1948," (University of Victoria, M.A. Thesis, 1998).

[5] James Eayrs, Montreal Star, 29 September, 1969, "*Bonaventure*'s Career: HMCS White Elephant".

Eayrs made a great deal of how the first fully Canadian operated carrier, *Warrior*, spent its time in warm waters off Mexico, while American carriers practiced sub-Arctic manoeuvres. [6] What he failed to understand was that warm waters permitted more productive training, and that the *Warrior* was ill-suited for northern operations.[7]

Eayrs cited several quotations from Prime Minister Mackenzie King's diary to underline the government's displeasure with the carriers. However, in doing so, Eayrs lowers his credibility. As King noted on April 9, 1947:

> I cannot but shudder, each time I think of [t]his enormous aircraft carrier which we are having brought under the title of "Magnificent". What Canada wants with the largest aircraft carrier afloat under a title like that, I don't know. It is just to invite an enemy's attack. I venture to say should war come soon, it would be about the first of the large vessels to disappear.[8]

Unfortunately for Eayrs' argument, the *Magnificent,* Canada's second carrier on loan from Britain, was one of the smallest afloat.[9] King's claim was totally inaccurate, and Eayrs did not question it.

Even though the article is entitled "*Bonaventure*'s Career: HMCS White Elephant", Eayrs said little about the *Bonaventure* and only in a biased way. He described the carrier assuming only diplomatic roles, with endless parties and presentations to distinguished guests and did not mention its anti-submarine duties at all. His idea of a worthy role for the *Bonaventure* was

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[6] James Eayrs, Montreal Star, 29 September, 1969, "*Bonaventure*'s Career: HMCS White Elephant".

[7] Milner, Canada's Navy: The First Century, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999), 168.

[8] James Eayrs, Montreal Star, 29 September, 1969, "*Bonaventure*'s Career: HMCS White Elephant".

[9] NAC, RG 24, DND, 1983-84/232, Vol. 85 1351-CVL 22, Cmdr. A.E. Fox, "*Bonaventure*'s Career: HMCS Gung Ho," Maritime Command Headquarters copy of proposed magazine or newspaper article, 16 Oct. 69.

ferrying supplies for humanitarian aid, in line with Canada's "Samaritan" nature.

Eayrs' article spurred Commander A.E. Fox the *Bonaventure*'s Executive Officer (XO) from 1967 to 1969, to counter some of Eayrs' claims. There is no evidence that his response was ever published. As a counterpoint, Fox observed that the Royal Navy still used carriers and that the Soviets commissioned their first carrier the *Moskva* in 1968, specifically used for ASW.[10] Fox answered Eayrs' claims about the *Bonaventure* by discussing the carrier's operations.[11]

Fox's article is more in line with the facts, and not as sensational as Eayrs article. However, Fox does not write enough about the carrier's duties. When discussing the *Bonaventure*'s naval role, he goes into detail about the Banshees prior to their retirement, but says little about the carrier's ASW duties. Fox appeared to suggest that the carrier performed its duties well merely because it was able to keep its planes constantly in the air. Fox was more interested in setting the record straight over the refit. He mentioned that the ship received a new laundry plant and expanded living areas, but nothing that would have improved its fighting importance. However, some people had begun to question, not just the *Bonaventure*, but the role of ASW.[12]

In his evidence to SCEAND and notes read into the record, Charles Foulkes explained why he thought carriers were perhaps not the most efficient or economical means of carrying out ASW. He argued that defence

[10] NAC, "*Bonaventure*'s Career: HMCS Gung Ho."
[11] NAC, "*Bonaventure*'s Career: HMCS Gung Ho."
[12] NAC, "*Bonaventure*'s Career: HMCS Gung Ho."

against ballistic missile submarines (detecting, tracking and destroying them) was not covered by the doctrine of flexible response that Hellyer discussed in the 1964 White Paper. Foulkes stated the problem with ASW succinctly: “Anti-submarine warfare is an activity where Canada and the United States have cooperated very closely for many years, but it is also a problem which seems to defy adequate solution.” As proof, Foulkes quoted former U.S. Secretary of Defence Robert McNamara: “We know no way to destroy the enemy’s missile submarines at the same time. We do not anticipate that either the United States or the Soviet Union will acquire that capacity in the foreseeable future.”

Foulkes insisted that because future submarines would be silent, they could not be tracked with existing acoustically based underwater tracking methods. He argued that new significance should be placed on ABM systems to locate and destroy missiles while in flight. He did not suggest that current ASW methods were pointless, but argued for a comprehensive “systems-analysis study” to determine the most cost-effective hardware, citing the statement he had given to the Committee in 1962. He did not elaborate on what a “systems-analysis study” was, but presumably, it meant a study that determined the most effective ASW tool, something that had not yet been done.[13]

When challenged by a member of the committee, Foulkes denied suggesting that Canada should abandon its ASW equipment and stressed that he was not a maritime expert. Nonetheless, he wanted a review of the

[13] The information in the previous two paragraphs is from: SCEAND, 12 February, 1969, 945.

hardware, of which the *Bonaventure* was the most prominent piece. Foulkes argued, “We presently have one carrier and I do not believe one of anything is any good to anybody.” Noting that when the carrier was in refit, Maritime Command had not borrowed a replacement from the USN, he made the contentious statement that “we apparently for a whole year have been getting along without it.” This argument that Boutilier and the naval community attributed to the air force actually came from a former army general, someone who freely admitted he was “not a naval expert”.[14]

Despite the fact that his position paper suggested that current ASW methods might be soon obsolete, Foulkes argued that if Canada really wanted a carrier, the government should purchase a larger one to accommodate jet aircraft. However, he continued to insist that he was not suggesting Canada rid itself of the *Bonaventure*, but that, again, it should be subjected to a “systems-analysis” study to determine whether one carrier with multiple helicopters, or multiple destroyers with platforms and solitary helicopters was the best choice for ASW. When one member of the Committee admitted it appeared the air force contributed the most to ASW via the Argus patrol planes, Foulkes would not give a definite answer, but insisted on a re-evaluation because the Arguses would have to be replaced in the coming years at a large cost.[15]

One apparently minor exchange between the Committee and Foulkes was actually significant, insofar that it shows the perceptions about the carrier

[14] SCEAND, 12 February, 1969, 937.
[15] SCEAND, 12 February, 1969, 938.

held by members of the committee, and perhaps other decision makers who would decide the *Bonaventure*'s fate. Ralph Stewart, (Lib., Cochrane), mentioned that during the Committee's visit to the *Bonaventure* while it was in the Caribbean, frogmen had gone beneath the ship. In a particularly loaded question, Stewart asked Foulkes what that operation had to do with the defence role (meaning ASW). Foulkes could only respond that he did not know unless it was for repairs or possibly to check for sabotage. At this point a fellow Committee member, Harold Winch (NDP, Vancouver East), interjected and explained that the frogmen had indeed been repairing a propeller leak. While this might show ignorance on the part of a Committee member, perhaps it was an attempt to question the *Bonaventure*'s role in the navy. Winch's response is credible, because frogmen could definitely effect repairs. The question, however, unintentionally sidetracked the Committee from more important issues about the *Bonaventure*'s role and capacity. Unfortunately, because of such issues, the Committee was unable to investigate the maritime defence question more thoroughly before the government announced the decision to decommission the *Bonaventure*.[16] Witnesses at hearings conducted by the SCEAND's Subcommittee on Maritime Forces in late October 1969, after the announcement had been made, revealed that the USN was reducing its number of ASW carriers, placing ASW aircraft on strike carriers, but mainly using submarines for ASW duties.[17]

[16] SCEAND, 12 February, 1969, 938.
[17] SCEAND, 29 October, 1969, 34:66-67.

Not only were Foulkes and Eayrs unsure of the usefulness of carriers but so too was Léo Cadieux.[18] What must be stressed is that these reactions do not focus just on the *Bonaventure*, but on carriers in general. The *Bonaventure* was a symbol of a naval policy that was disliked as "offensive" (rather than defensive) and a waste of taxpayers' money. Whether ASW was offensive or defensive was also on the minds of government leaders like Pierre Trudeau.

While the Cabinet minutes do not mention the *Bonaventure* during discussions of the defence review of 1968-69, Prime Minister Trudeau made some revealing comments about Canadian naval destroyers and their role in ASW. On May 20, the Cabinet received a briefing on the Maritime component of Phase II of the Review. Trudeau wondered what was the point of locating and tracking Soviet submarines if action was to be taken against them only if they attacked. The officer giving the briefing, Commodore P.F.X. Russell, responded that the point of detecting, locating and tracking Soviet submarines was to get a general idea for NATO forces of the location of enemy ships so allied forces could take action if necessary. If the Soviets believed they could not be located, they would become more confident of taking action without repercussions.[19]

Trudeau then questioned the entire maritime role. He observed that destroyers performing ASW could not attack pre-emptively against submarines for fear of causing a nuclear holocaust. If destroyers had orders

[18] In discussing his opinion of the *Bonaventure* with the author, Léo Cadieux found a copy of Eayrs' article in his scrapbook.

[19] NAC, RG2, PCO, Series A-5-a, Volume 6340, "Cabinet Minutes", 20 May 1969.

to attack the missile submarines, it was understood that a nuclear exchange had already begun. He asked if destroyers were the correct ships to conduct ASW patrols in large areas of the Atlantic? Did Canada need a total of 24 destroyers? The briefing officer responded that the destroyers were used because of the investment in building and outfitting them and that until faster and lighter ships, such as the *Bras d'Or* came into service in a few years, removing the destroyers would create a gap in the defence perimeter and require more American involvement in ASW.[20] Granatstein and Bothwell speculate that Trudeau's words about the need for the destroyers "must have cast a chill over the navy."[21]

If Trudeau was questioning the need for those ships, no doubt the *Bonaventure* would also be a target since it could only cover a certain amount of area with its set number of aircraft. If newer, faster, smaller ships were due within a few years, it is possible that the idea was to get rid of larger, slower ships, like the *Bonaventure*, as soon as possible. The Cabinet did not have any further discussions on maritime forces during its debates on the defence review. As we have seen, the government did not wait for the next fiscal year to reconfigure the maritime forces.

Strategic reasoning did not always support Maritime Command's position about ASW and its warships. Reports released in 1968 and 1969 questioned the viability of ASW as a specialization. One report, written for the DND in 1968, suggested altering the specialization from one of detection and

[20] NAC, "Cabinet Minutes", 20 May 1969.
[21] J.L. Granatstein and Robert Bothwell, Pirouette: Pierre Trudeau and Canadian Foreign Policy (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990), 252.

destruction to one of merely surveillance. The second report, written in July 1969, and later given to the SCEAND, questioned the entire area of specialization depending on Canada's changing defence roles. At the same time, the Americans were having their own concerns about ASW and the vulnerability of their own submarines.

The first report written for the DND, entitled "Future Trends of Canadian Maritime Forces 1975-1979" was released in April 1968, prior to the first mention of a defence review. Its anonymous author accepted that changing Canada's ASW role would be difficult due to treaty obligations and the large investment in equipment. The report argued that attempting to perform all areas of ASW:

> could lead to the continual sinking of resources in areas of current marginal capacity where there may be little likelihood of realizing a worthwhile return for the investment. Conversely, there may be other facets of this mission where, with an allocation of resources within our budget limitations, we could at least maintain our present, significant capability and, conceivably, realize a marked improvement.[22]

In other words, if Canada continued on its present course, a lot of money would be wasted on some areas of ASW. On the other hand, Canada could focus on a smaller area of specialization, within its present budget, and continue to work effectively, and possibly achieve even greater efficiency.

The report went into the details of Canada's ASW role by delineating the threat it was meant to counter. It assumed that Canada would not deploy an ABM system nor use nuclear ASW weapons. The report recommended

[22] Directorate of History and Heritage (DHH), "Future Trends of Canadian Maritime Forces 1975-1979", 76/514c, 1.

determining if a specific defence against SLBMs was required since the only real defence against SLBMs and ICBMs was the strategic deterrent. If one nation launched a nuclear attack, the other nation would retaliate with its own nuclear weapons. The purpose of ASW was to monitor hostile submarines, prevent them from having ease of movement, and deter them from launching an attack.[23]

The report asked if Canada's balanced force, i.e. planes, ships and submarines, was the proper equipment to carry out ASW tasks. The balanced force was good for hunting attack submarines, but not necessarily SSBNs. Canada only had a minimal chance to destroy missile submarines prior to their launching an attack because its conventional forces could only cover a limited area. The cost of expanding the forces to make them effective was prohibitive and no imminent technological improvements would alter the reality. In addition, Canada did not possess nuclear ASW weapons or nuclear submarines to destroy the Soviet SSBNs. The report acknowledged that SSNs were one of the best weapons to counter SSBNs and could replace "air and surface" sensors, meaning aerial surveillance and ship-based detection systems. Nuclear ASW weapons did not require the exactitude of conventional weapons. The report discounted the possibility of obtaining either item because of the cost and Canadian policy not to have nuclear weapons.[24]

[23] DHH, "Future Trends of Canadian Maritime Forces 1975-1979", 2-4.
[24] DHH, "Future Trends of Canadian Maritime Forces 1975-1979", 5-6.

Since obtaining SSNs or nuclear weapons was unlikely and finding other means of making up for such equipment was equally implausible, the report said that the CAF could not afford to continue trying to carry out all facets of ASW, but must attempt to focus on something within budget limitations. The suggestion offered was surveillance. Canada had the equipment and was performing this duty. By focusing on it alone, capability could even be improved. The report argued that the basic task of surveillance would grow more difficult with improvements in submarines and an increase in their numbers. Because SOSUS nets and shore-based aircraft were the primary tools for surveillance, the destroyers were of little use for ASW.

The report viewed the carrier with less efficacy than the destroyers. The *Bonaventure* was not adequate for a strategic surveillance role, but more suited for a small-scale focused search. This begs the question: was it appropriate to devote such a large proportion of naval personnel and financial resources on the carrier, if it was not overly important for the strategic surveillance role, and was only good for a smaller focused search? Of course, the report left the exact breakdown of forces required for surveillance to an unidentified future study.[25]

The report recommended concentrating on surveillance, maintaining an anti-attack submarine capability and placing more emphasis on general purpose forces within Maritime Command. It is important to note that this was

[25] DHH, “Future Trends of Canadian Maritime Forces 1975-1979”, 6-8.

conducted prior to the Defence Policy Review; later the report's suggestions would be examined in greater detail.[26]

The United States was also questioning the validity of the ASW role. The American Senate Subcommittee on International Organization and Disarmament Affairs of the Committee of Foreign Relations had hearings on "Strategic and Foreign Policy Implications of ABM Systems." A portion of them concerned ASW. This hearing in particular was meant to determine whether the American SSBN fleet was vulnerable to attack, not on tracking Soviet submarines. While many specifics in the hearing were censored for reasons of national security, the hearings revealed that neither the Soviets nor the Americans had sufficient submarines to track and destroy all of the other's SSBNs in case of a nuclear war.[27]

Two months after Cabinet decided to proceed with Phase II of the Defence Policy Review, in July 1969, the Defence Research Analysis Establishment (DRAE) circulated a report written by its head, George R. Lindsey, entitled "Canadian Maritime Strategy: Should the Emphasis Be Changed?". This paper discussed the continuing role of ASW for Maritime Command. Even though it was most likely circulated after Léo Cadieux decided to decommission the *Bonaventure*, the report shows the prevailing attitudes among defence experts that the MND would have consulted as part

[26] DHH, "Future Trends of Canadian Maritime Forces 1975-1979", 11.

[27] U.S., Senate, Subcommittee on International Organization and Disarmament Affairs of the Committee of Foreign Relations, "Strategic and Foreign Policy Implications of ABM Systems Part III Anti-Submarine Warfare, Multiple Independently Targeted Re-Entry Vehicles (MIRV)", 628.

of the review. Lindsey's later submission of the report to the SCEAND during the review of Maritime Command reaffirmed its importance.

Lindsey cited Jon McLin and Professor Lawrence Martin, British military expert, among others who called for a review of ASW. Lindsey began the report with a review of ASW and submarines in both World Wars and their new role in the Cold War with the introduction of SSBNs.[28] Lindsey then discussed current methods of submarine detection and ballistic missile interdiction. He argued that it was extremely hard to locate modern submarines, which unlike their Second World War counterparts did not need to run on the surface to replenish air and batteries and to use periscopes to fire on targets. Cold War nuclear weapon-equipped submarines did not have to be in vicinity of their targets when launching an attack.[29] Lindsey cited an American submarine scientist who stressed that:

> With respect to area surveillance, the long-term prospect appears dim… none of the mechanisms postulated has a detection range potential which is significant when compared with the vast areas available in the ocean. The ultimate test in this regard is the ability of the submersible to blend with and be masked by the environment… deployment areas as large as ten million square miles would be available. If it is not now evident that it is manifestly impossible to monitor areas of such size in order to ferret out a system whose detectable influence is less than one square mile, it will be evident to a frustrated posterity.[30]

Lindsey asserted the problem was not as bad as stated, but emphasized a second problem with tracking submarines. If the ASW forces

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[28] DHH, George R. Lindsey, "DRAE Report #5: Canadian Maritime Strategy-Should the Emphasis Be Changed?" July 1969, 74/174, 1-7.

[29] DHH, "Canadian Maritime Strategy-Should the Emphasis Be Changed?", 8.

[30] DHH, "Canadian Maritime Strategy-Should the Emphasis Be Changed?", 8.

actually managed to detect and track an enemy submarine, they could not necessarily take action against it. If the SSBN was used as a first strike weapon that launched all its weapons pre-emptively, there would be no time to destroy it before it launched its attack. After the initial strike had taken place, however, ASW forces could try to destroy it.

Lindsey expressed more optimism about countering the SLBMs themselves. He argued that ABM systems were making progress and could possibly counter ICBMs as well as SLBMs.[31] There were some exceptions where submarines could launch their missiles close to land; Lindsey felt a SUBDIZ (Submarine Identification Zone) where unidentified submarines would be fired upon could prevent such an attack.[32]

In his final section on the problems of countering submarines, Lindsey dealt with strategic issues. He summarized four arguments in favour of reducing the priority SLBM defence and ASW. The first argument remains true to this day in the context of the recent American desire to build an extended ABM system to counter “rogue” states. Mutual strategic deterrence prevented nuclear war by implying that any devastating first strike would be rendered useless with a total nuclear response from the other side. Creating weapons to destroy the nuclear missiles would destabilize the global situation to the extent that the superpowers would saturate the ABM system by building even more nuclear weapons to get through the “shields”.

[31] In the spring of 1969, Lindsey made a presentation on ABM systems to the SCEAND after Eayrs, Foulkes and others made their presentations. In October 1969 and January 1970 he appeared before the Subcommittee on Maritime Forces of the SCEAND.

[32] DHH, “Canadian Maritime Strategy-Should the Emphasis Be Changed?”, 10.

Alternatively, the installation of the system would create conflict if the other superpower tried to prevent it from becoming operational, by either force or threats. This was the rationale behind the original ABM Treaty of 1972 and the arguments against the unilateral American withdrawal from the Treaty in 2002.

Another argument suggested that submarines could be identified as second-strike weapons, not necessarily as offensive first-strike weapons. While ICBMs could be vulnerable in their silos, nuclear retaliation could not necessarily destroy dispersed submarines. This would suggest that countries needed to focus on the ICBM threat, rather than that of the SLBMs.

A final argument for lowering the priority of ASW was the relatively small number of SLBMs. Lindsey offered estimates from 1968 and 1969 of 45 to 125 SLBMs versus 900 to 1000 Soviet ICBMs. This must have been an attractive argument to analysts involved with bottom lines. Canada had concentrated a third of its naval manpower and substantial portion of its military budget on one large, yet inadequate, ship whose sole purpose was to counter something that was merely a fraction of the total Soviet threat. Any strategic benefit for Canada or its allies by concentrating on submarines would be outweighed by the danger from ICBMs.

As Lindsey himself pointed out, these arguments could be debated another way as well. SLBMs could be used as first-strike weapons in order to attack coastal targets and their number was expected to increase in the coming years. An additional counter-argument would be that a ship such as

the *Bonaventure* represented Canada's contribution to the NATO nuclear deterrent.[33]

Lindsey examined other ASW roles and listed specific Canadian involvement in ASW. He explained that in the 1950s, Canada built up its ASW forces to be some of the best in the world with its combination of ships, planes and helicopters. He mentioned Canadian involvement in research including variable depth sonar and ASW helicopters on destroyers, as well as the *Bras d'Or* hydrofoil. Lindsey did not question Canadian involvement in ASW but did note that Canadian ships were too slow to take part in defence of American strike fleets. This point could apply specifically to the *Bonaventure* which was consistently labelled as being too slow, but the implication in Lindsey's statement appeared to refer to Canadian escorts. In addition, Lindsey continued, Canadian ships lacked sufficient anti-aircraft (AA) defence.[34] This, of course, was a well-known fact especially after the Banshees, the only marginally credible AA defence for the *Bonaventure*, were taken out of service in 1962.

Lindsey also observed that ASW could not necessarily destroy submarines before they launched their missiles, but could detect relatively large numbers of SSBNs and thus enable the implementation of added security measures to disperse targeted military units from coastlines and vulnerable areas protecting a potential second-strike capability. Lindsey pointed out that existing Canadian equipment was capable of hunting

[33] DHH, "Canadian Maritime Strategy-Should the Emphasis Be Changed?", 11.
[34] DHH, "Canadian Maritime Strategy-Should the Emphasis Be Changed?", 16.

submarines and that if Canada curtailed its ASW involvement, the Soviets could station more submarines closer to the coastline without fear of being detected.[35] This point might tend to support an argument to retain the *Bonaventure*, but it can be argued that the government had decided to retain other ASW equipment and that the helicopters and the Trackers that had been onboard the carrier could still be used for coastal ASW surveillance. Lindsey asked:

> Is it vitally important for the deterrence of nuclear war to defend against the BM (ballistic missile) submarine? If it is highly desirable, is it in fact possible with the resources that can be made available? If effective defence is possible, is it against the missiles in flight or the submarine itself?[36]

With such hard-hitting questions about Canada's well-established strategic policies, it is easy to see how a large target such as the *Bonaventure* could be affected. The carrier's *raison d'être* was being called into question. That made it an easy decision for politicians to remove it from the budget, and create space for much needed budget flexibility.

Lindsey also discussed naval roles for Canada other than ASW. He quoted a USN study that recommended that the U.S. focus its naval resources on SSBNs, limit "offensive" surface and air ASW forces to research purposes only and use other forces, such as aircraft carriers for limited war purposes, not for the nuclear strike role. The author of the study also argued for increased stress on AA defence. Lindsey placed the USN argument in Canadian terms to say that if non-nuclear limited wars were going to be

[35] DHH, "Canadian Maritime Strategy-Should the Emphasis Be Changed?", 21-22.
[36] DHH, "Canadian Maritime Strategy-Should the Emphasis Be Changed?", 22.

fought, Canada should abandon its ASW specialization and concentrate on equipment, including carriers and other ships for that purpose. If Canada stressed sovereignty protection rather than a primary role of alliance participation, maritime patrol aircraft were important, but might require armaments other than those for ASW.[37] In a purely surveillance role where only coasts were being watched, land-based aircraft such as the Argus, and Trackers, could perform the ASW role.

Lindsey also dealt with the four defence priorities of Trudeau's speech of April 3, 1969 in the context of maritime defence. Maritime forces could participate in all four roles of sovereignty, North American defence, NATO participation and international peacekeeping. Lindsey made several points against specialization even though Canada had earned recognition for such a path. Specialization was good for a smaller country taking part in a larger alliance, but might prove detrimental if it decided to pursue an independent path. He also pointed out that changes in technology and strategy could leave a country's specialization obsolete. With the changing strategic thinking, and the implication that the *Bonaventure* was the wrong tool for the wrong job, this argument definitely applied. Lindsey observed that maritime forces, including light aircraft and helicopter carriers, are versatile and can adapt to general-purpose roles. While this may have been true for other carriers, the *Bonaventure*'s inability to carry most jet aircraft reduced its potential usage. Moreover, the cost in running the carrier would not have changed, possibly even increased.

[37] DHH, "Canadian Maritime Strategy-Should the Emphasis Be Changed?", 26-27.

Whereas Lindsey treated the four defence roles from Trudeau's speech as all equally viable and necessary, the roles did not necessarily carry the same weight with the government. He did not take into account the potential cost involved to refit existing forces to carry out new roles.

In order to support the argument that Canada might want to undertake a more general purpose naval role, Lindsey made the following argument concerning ASW, and thus the inference about a continued specialization in ASW:

> ASW can be supported as a really important contribution to strategic deterrence only if the Soviet Union builds a large force of FBM (SSBN) submarines, together with other strategic offensive and defence forces with a total strength and balance sufficient to enable them to contemplate a counterforce first strike. Even then, it would be necessary to demonstrate that whatever ABM system was installed was not able to counter the SLBMs without the assistance of ASW.[38]

In his conclusion, Lindsey stressed five arguments that decreased the significance of ASW. First, there was no certainty about how effective SSBNs were in a first-strike role. Second, there was a large problem in detecting submarines that could remain far from their targets and would become even quieter in coming years. Third, a submarine might not even be detected until it launched its first missile. Fourth, if no ABM system was put in place, the number of ICBMs launched would make the threat from the SLBMs insignificant. Fifth, and finally, ABM systems might prove to be successful against SLBMs and then would be more cost-effective than ASW.[39]

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[38] DHH, "Canadian Maritime Strategy-Should the Emphasis Be Changed?", 36.
[39] DHH, "Canadian Maritime Strategy-Should the Emphasis Be Changed?", 37.

Lindsey suggested that Canada retain its specialization in ASW only if most of its naval forces were serving with allied forces because of the niche that was already filled. If Canada wanted to pursue maritime roles outside of alliances, then this specialization was detrimental to force effectiveness and should be allowed to lapse to some degree so concentration could be spread out among other areas.[40]

Lindsey's study represented the first in-depth study of the ASW role for Canadian purposes that had been called for from several areas, including commentators like Martin and McLin, as well as non-naval experts like General Foulkes and James Eayrs. Unlike the previous report, Lindsey did question the validity of the ASW role but did not mention the *Bonaventure*, or challenge the effectiveness of carrier-based ASW. It did call into question the importance of ASW itself during a period when the government was seriously questioning the roles of its maritime forces.

The report from April 1968, and Lindsey's report from July 1969, did not necessarily say the same things, but agreed that Canada's commitment to ASW could not continue to go unchallenged. Changes had to be made either through focusing on surveillance or abandoning the role altogether in favour of a more general purpose one. Canada's maritime forces did not have the resources to carry out ASW effectively. There was even question of whether SSBNs could be found in time to prevent a nuclear exchange. Even more potent, was the question whether it was even worth expending the resources to find the missile submarines and destroy them in light of a preponderance of

[40] DHH, "Canadian Maritime Strategy-Should the Emphasis Be Changed?", 38.

ICBMs, or if it would alter the balance of strategic deterrence. These serious questions shook Canada's naval policy to its core.

The *Bonaventure* was caught in the middle. It was a ship that had served Canada for twelve years, but its presence was challenged from several corners. The decision to decommission the carrier was undoubtedly political, but not wholly so. There were valid strategic concerns over the usefulness of a carrier that was too small, too slow and out of date with the maritime requirements of a new Canadian defence policy. One does not need to know actually how effective the *Bonaventure* was as an ASW weapon, but what opinion was held of the carrier as such a weapon. Did the politicians making the decision believe that the carrier was doing its job or even if that job was necessary? We must conclude that the government did not agree that the *Bonaventure* was necessary, and the array of political, academic and strategic opinions of the time appeared to bear out the politicians on this decision.

On September 19, 1969, Léo Cadieux announced in the House of Commons the changes that were part of the government's Defence Policy Review. Canadian Forces Europe would be cut to 5 000 men; the nuclear role would be discontinued, Mobile Command in Canada remained at the same levels, but three infantry regiments, the Queen's Own Rifles, the Canadian Guards and the Black Watch would be disbanded and their personnel folded into the Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry, the Royal Canadian Regiment and the Royal 22e Regiment. The artillery and armoured regiments

previously listed by the CEPD would be disbanded as well. And, of course, Maritime Command would lose the *Bonaventure*; its Trackers would be based from shore to continue their ASW duties.[41] Answering questions, Cadieux admitted that the carrier was being decommissioned due to its annual cost of twenty million dollars.[42]

Some officers in Maritime Command considered the announcement of the decommissioning tantamount to a stab in the back. According to Snowie, the crew of the *Bonaventure* took the announcement very hard, but continued to do their jobs cheerfully and without complaint until the carrier was officially decommissioned in December 1969.[43] They complained that the government did not give them enough warning of the decision, but they should not have been surprised. Newspapers in the summer of 1969 published rumours about its future. On May 13, while the Interdepartmental Group was preparing its report, DND announced the cancellation of the *Bonaventure*'s scheduled overhaul at Saint John Shipbuilding in New Brunswick because of the government's austerity program.[44] This was before the full Cabinet saw the recommendation to dispose of the *Bonaventure*, but many observers concluded that something was taking place. On May 14, Cadieux announced that a "mini" overhaul for the *Bonaventure*, a standard refit without scraping the bottom of the hull, would take place while she was in Halifax as a more

[41] DHH, CANFORGEN 169, File D1350-1901 (DIS), "Statement by the Honourable Leo Cadieux Minister of National Defence, 19 September 1969", 110.1 (D2).
[42] Globe and Mail, 20 September 1969, 6.
[43] J. Allan Snowie, The Bonnie: HMCS *Bonaventure*, (Erin, Ont: Boston Mills, 1987), 252-253.
[44] Telegraph Journal (Saint John), 14 May 1969.

economical measure. Cadieux referred to such measures as “Austerity—capital A”. When it was suggested in Parliament that by cancelling the overhaul the government had caused economic problems for Saint John Shipbuilding and its community, Cadieux answered that he had to look after the *Bonaventure.*[45] The Opposition then charged that he looked after the *Bonaventure*, but not after the workmen. He asserted that his responsibility was the navy, its equipment and its personnel. Cadieux denied that this was a prelude to decommissioning the carrier. He insisted that the *Bonaventure* still had work to do.[46]

On May 21, one day after the Cabinet gave Cadieux the authority to dispose of the carrier, the Opposition asked again in Question Period about the fate of the carrier. Cadieux was going to meet his NATO colleagues about Canada’s reductions and the Opposition wished to know what decisions the Cabinet had made about the defence cuts. When J.M. Forrestall (P.C., Halifax-Dartmouth) asked about the *Bonaventure*’s fate, Cadieux initially refused to give a definite answer but suggested that disposal might be a possibility:

> Mister Speaker, we are considering all sorts of options and that may be one of them, but we have not decided on what form the new posture will be. The given role has been changed to a degree, as a matter of fact has been augmented, and we still have to determine how we are going to apply this policy.[47]

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[45] Mail-Star (Halifax), 15 May 1969.
[46] Telegraph Journal (Saint John), 15 May 1969.
[47] House of Commons, Debates, 21 May, 1969, 8900-8901; Globe and Mail, 22 May 1969, 7.

Retired naval officers such as Rear Admirals Jeffry Brock and Hugh Pullen immediately suggested the decommissioning of the *Bonaventure* would be the first step to abolishing the navy altogether. They argued that scrapping the carrier would ruin the navy's effectiveness and create problems for Canada's defence.[48] One Halifax editorial charged that Canada was going to leave its navy in the same position as it had after World War One (i.e.: unprepared for World War Two) and urged the government to get better vessels, not give up the ones it already possessed.[49]

Rumours persisted throughout the summer that the carrier was going to be scrapped, but the *Bonaventure*'s commanding officer insisted he had received no such information. Some observers thought that the Cabinet did not keep Cadieux informed about defence policy decisions, but this was not true.[50] One particularly odd rumour was that the carrier would be moored indefinitely in Bedford Basin in Halifax in a "temporary" measure that would actually not see it return to active service. Reports that the Navy would be increased were deemed inaccurate in the same account.[51] In an interview with the Toronto Star, a week before the announcement, Cadieux still did not confirm or deny that the carrier was going to be scrapped, but suggested that the *Bonaventure* was a natural target for cuts. About the rumours, he said they were, "speculation—but may eventually turn out to be true."[52]

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[48] Mail-Star (Halifax), 22 May 1969.
[49] Mail-Star (Halifax), 23 May 1969, editorial.
[50] Dartmouth Free Press, 26 June, 1969.
[51] The 4th Estate (Halifax), 26 June, 1969.
[52] Toronto Star, 12 September, 1969.

The response to the actual announcement varied. The *Bonaventure* was definitely the most prominent cut to the armed forces. Along with the list of other cuts, The Globe and Mail and the Toronto Star discussed the *Bonaventure* and its history in several columns. Editors concerned themselves with the government's call for more surveillance in the Arctic. There were renewed desires to protect Canadian sovereignty there because of the recent journey of the American tanker S.S. *Manhattan* through the Northwest Passage.[53] A Canadian Press article noted the navy's confidence in the carrier but also Parliament's opposition to it, reminding readers of labels such as "Misadventure", "budget killer" and "North Atlantic Hilton."[54] In the Maritimes, where the *Bonaventure* was based, citizens were most upset.

Boutilier argues that the *Bonaventure* always suffered from negative media and that the public outside of Nova Scotia largely ignored the *Bonaventure*'s demise. There was certainly an outcry from that area of the country when the decommissioning was announced in September 1969.[55] From a survey of newspapers outside of Nova Scotia, there appears to be no anger at the decision. The West Coast was the only other area to voice concern, because of the Pacific Fleet stationed there.

Indeed, most critics of the decision were former naval officers, such as Rear Admiral William Landymore. Calling the idea that destroyers could replace the *Bonaventure* "monkey business", Landymore argued that people did not know enough about the carrier which was a very effective unit. Others,

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[53] Globe and Mail, 20 September, 1969, 6.
[54] Vancouver Sun, 20 September,1969, 3; Victoria Daily Colonist, 20 September, 1969.
[55] Chronicle Herald (Halifax), editorial, September 19, 1969.

including the *Bonaventure*'s first commander James Groos, made similar comments.[56]

The other group upset with the government's decision was the Opposition in the House of Commons. Robert Stanfield (a former premier of Nova Scotia) believed that the cuts would weaken Canada militarily, referring to the government's commitment to NATO as "tokenism".[57] Others were angry because they felt the government ignored parliamentary procedure in announcing the cuts just after the SCEAND returned from its Maritime Command research trip to Halifax and before it could make any recommendations. Some were more realistic, upset not about the carrier itself, but about the capability it was supposed to represent. Arguing that Canada should try to improve ASW capabilities, despite the problems raised by the experts, one member of the SCEAND, J.M. Forrestall, suggested replacing the carrier by more attack submarines, the only means believed effective to counter missile submarines.[58] The report of the subcommittee of the SCEAND dealing with Maritime Command, issued in June 1970, reaffirmed this belief in the attack submarine, but judged nuclear powered submarines to be well beyond Canada's coffers.[59]

The government finally announced its decision and the *Bonaventure* was decommissioned as an aircraft carrier on December 12, 1969. In a final irony, it was used as a supply ship and transport in early 1970 when the

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[56] Toronto Star, 19 September 1969, 3.
[57] David Crane, "It's Just Tokenism, Stanfield Says", Globe and Mail, 20 September 1969, 12.
[58] House of Commons, Debates, 30 October, 1969, 301-303; 4 November, 1969, 504-505.
[59] SCEAND, Tenth Report, June 1970, 32:78.

government was in a quandary over logistics. The carrier was finally “Paid-Off” as a naval vessel on July 3, 1970. In March 1971, its hulk, without its screws, arrived in Taiwan to be broken up. It was an ignominious end for a warship. Rumours that the Indian Navy hijacked the hull of the *Bonaventure* to turn it into the INS *Vikrant* still circulate, representing the belief that such a “proud and happy” ship should not be submitted to such an end.[60]

In sum, the Trudeau government decided to decommission the *Bonaventure* at a time when experts challenged carriers and ASW. Eayrs, Foulkes and Lindsey, among others, believed that future submarines could avoid detection and questioned the validity of attempts to locate them. A small, slow and vulnerable carrier like the *Bonaventure* was in a worse position than other ASW weapons. These opinions were not universal, as many naval officers disagreed with the decision. However, the government made its decision based on political, economic and strategic reasons.

[60] Snowie, 302-303.

CONCLUSION:
A CASUALTY OF PEACE

The decision to decommission the *Bonaventure* was made by politicians on strategic grounds, though it was politically attractive because of cost savings. The government was not “out to get” the *Bonaventure*, though some members of the government and some branches of the armed forces certainly believed that a carrier was unnecessary and voiced their opinions openly.

The Cabinet was responsible for the decision. It made the decision to have the review. It debated the recommendations of the review to make new policy. Finally, it made the cuts to the CAF. The SCEAND and other House of Commons Committees performed fact-finding functions, but the Cabinet did not follow, or did not even wait, for their recommendations. It was decided that the carrier would be simply disposed of. No effort was taken to see if the carrier could fulfil other roles for the navy. Because of a dearth of senior naval officers in the DND at this time, the navy’s case for keeping the carrier was not heard by the Cabinet. For these reasons, the method by which the decision was reached is open to question.

The simple answer is that the *Bonaventure* was decommissioned for financial reasons. This was what Léo Cadieux told reporters on the day he made the announcement and the reason cited by the Interdepartmental Working Group in its report to the Cabinet. At twenty million dollars a year, the government considered that the carrier was simply too expensive to run. As Vice-Admiral DeWolf mused on the day the *Bonaventure* was commissioned,

"Here we are getting this bloody great thing and how are we going to pay for it? How are we going to keep it running?"[1] In 1969, the government finally decided the cost was too great, despite the money that had already been spent to purchase, maintain, refit and operate it.

Yet, the financial explanation is not sufficient by itself. One could fall for the argument that Canada was leaving its NATO allies to fend for themselves in order to balance its budget. This was not necessarily the case. In 1970, ABMs were considered to be the next step in the defence and prevention of nuclear war. No one knew that ABM development would stop as a result of the Oslo Treaty in 1972. Military and civilian researchers alike were challenging the carrier's ASW role. More important was the fact that no one was certain whether specializing on ASW to the detriment of other roles was a valid option for Canadian naval operations. Related to that quandary, was the belief held by the government, Prime Minister Trudeau in particular, that Canada had to pursue its own policy path, while maintaining its commitment to its allies. This dichotomy led to some hard decisions about what could be cut without too much of a danger or causing too much of a fuss. The government had to ensure that the country was safe, and more importantly, that the electorate believed the country was safe. By focusing on the surveillance role, the government was able to fulfill its naval commitments without abandoning the ASW role altogether. The *Bonaventure* was too expensive to fulfill a surveillance role that experts believed could be

[1]W.G.D. Lund, "The Rise and Fall of the Royal Canadian Navy, 1945-1964: A Critical Study of the Senior Leadership, Policy and Manpower Management", (University of Victoria, 1999, unpublished), 391.

performed by shore-based aircraft at a much reduced cost. If the carrier was obsolete, then there was no point spending money to keep it in commission.

There is an argument that Canada never needed the *Bonaventure*. Léo Cadieux certainly feels that way and it is a position that James Eayrs shares. Pile and Lund both argue that the "big ship" carrier was the bane of Canadian naval existence and the government was long overdue in decommissioning it. The officers and men who served on the *Bonaventure* would disagree, having served their country faithfully, occasionally at the cost of their lives.[2] They believed their jobs as submarine hunters were of value, making the continued assertions that the *Bonaventure* was the best ASW tool in existence, despite changes in submarine technology, the age and size limitations of the carrier and the need to carry out other naval roles. The government justified the disposal for economic reasons and the public generally accepted that. However, nothing was done to explain to the officers and men of Maritime Command why their role was no longer a priority. All weapons systems eventually become obsolete. A country like Canada, a so-called "middle power", could not afford the luxury of a carrier with its price tag, nor could it afford to "trade up" for something of more value or of greater use.

In any case, it went against the anti-military views of Pierre Trudeau and his government to have a carrier viewed as an "offensive" weapon that could provoke rather than deter a nuclear attack. Money from such equipment

[2] While the carrier never saw combat, numerous Canadian naval aviators and sailors died in tragic accidents while serving aboard the *Bonaventure*. J. Allan Snowie, The Bonnie: HMCS *Bonaventure*, (Erin, Ont: Boston Mills, 1987), 319-320.

was better spent elsewhere, perhaps on social programs rather than on a role whose value to Canadian security was questionable.

The story of the *Bonaventure*'s disposal leaves several legacies for modern Canadian society. For one, it offers an insight into how government policy is determined and how it is carried out. A lack of public interaction with the government, and a lack of frankness on the part of politicians, can lead to misunderstanding and anger, especially on the part of those people affected by the policy changes, despite logical reasoning behind the changes. At the time, the Liberals continued to alienate Maritime Command after the unification debacle. The story also shows the continuing problem of aging equipment and judging the cost of purchasing replacements. The Sea King helicopters, first used on the *Bonaventure*, are still a public relations problem for the current Liberal government! The public realizes that changes are needed, but the government is afraid of what the electorate will think of the cost. Finally, the tale of the *Bonaventure* shows that perception is a powerful thing. It can blind people to defend something when it may be no further use, or attack something that might still have some redeeming value.

The *Bonaventure* was decommissioned because of a political decision to change policy and cut costs. This was a hard decision made when allies viewed retreat and troop withdrawals as weakness during the Cold War struggle. Now, as Canada faces pressure from its allies to stretch out its military even more thinly, the country faces a similar choice. The government must decide how much support to give to foreign allies and where to direct it.

These decisions are political, with long-term ramifications for the country. Whatever policy the government sets for the military, the armed forces need the right tools for the job.

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VITA

Surname: Gordon Given Names: Hugh Avi

Place of Birth: Montréal, Québec, Canada

Educational Institutions Intended:

Queen's University at Kingston	1997 to 2001
University of Victoria	2001 to 2003

Degrees Awarded:

B.A. (Honours)	Queen's University	2001

Honours and Awards:

Queen's University, Faculty of Arts and Science, Dean's List:	2001
Queen's University Classics Department, Honour Roll:	2001

Title of Thesis:

The End of the Big Ship Navy: The Trudeau Government, the Defence Policy Review and the Decommissioning of the HMCS *Bonaventure*

Author: _____

Hugh Avi Gordon