

Naval Aid Bill

Conservative policy on the question of Naval Defence differed from the Liberal. Laurier's idea had been that a distinct Royal Canadian Navy should be built. He felt that this program was consistent with his policy of Canadian nationalism. The Conservatives on the other hand felt that Canadian contributions to the Imperial Navy would be more suitable. The Conservative Prime Minister, Sir Robert Borden, in December 1912 introduced a Naval Aid Bill to provide \$35,000,000 to pay for three battleships for the British Navy. These ships were to be returned to Canada if she ever decided to build a navy of her own. After long debate, the Bill was forced through the House of Commons in April 1913 by closure, but was thrown out by the Liberal majority in the Senate.

Meanwhile the Niobe and the Rainbow were allowed to become inactive. Recruiting (with the ships in dock) ceased, and the Navy was pretty well forgotten.

The month of August, 1914, found the Royal Canadian Navy with the following personnel:

	<u>Officers</u>	<u>Naval Cadets</u>	<u>Ratings</u>	<u>TOTAL</u>
R.C.N.	71	21	203	295
R.N.	<u>21</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>20</u>	<u>41</u>
	92	21	223	336

Not a very impressive total, but immediately after the declaration of war the men of the Naval Service swung into action to do what they could.

The chief work of the Canadian Navy in the First Great War, as in the present conflict, was in convoy duty. Every vessel that could be of use was pressed into service. The Niobe and Rainbow, which had been inactive, were made ready for the fight again. And, indeed, they acquitted themselves very well.

The Niobe, in 30,000 miles of steaming during the first two years of war, captured numerous prize vessels, and the Rainbow, in 50,000 miles of patrolling took as prizes several German supply vessels.

Two submarines built for Chile were bought from a Seattle firm and spirited out of the United States past a blockade of U.S. warships, for the United States was still neutral. The submarines were inspected and paid for at sea, then put in service with the Royal Canadian Navy on the west coast.

Every type of fast motor launch, tug or yacht that could be secured was fitted up for war, and put on patrol duty. Halifax became an important naval centre for the Allies.

Men in the Navy

Recruiting began again and as fast as the ships could be found and outfitted, the men were there to man them. 1,700 Canadian reservists were sent overseas for service in the Royal Navy. 580 Probationary Flight-Lieutenants were enrolled in the Royal Naval Air Services. Forty-three Surgeon-Lieutenants took service in the Royal Navy.

The entire strength of the Royal Canadian Navy soon increased to 6,000.

But when the war was over the Canadian people wanted nothing but to forget it - to get back in civilian life and to dismantle the machines of war. Immediately after the Armistice the Royal Canadian Navy was demobilized. In 1918 there were 5,978 officers and men in the R.C.N.; by 1920 there were only 1,048.

Sir Charles Kingsmill retired in 1920, and was succeeded by Comodore (later Rear-Admiral) Walter Hose, who as commander of the Rainbow, had been with the Royal Canadian Navy from the beginning. He had retired from the Royal Navy in 1912 in order to allow him to become a Royal Canadian Navy man.

WORLD WAR
1914-1918

PEACE TIME
NAVY
1918-1939