

At the Colonial Conference of 1907, the Canadian delegates would not consider either a Navy for Canada or Canadian contributions to the British Navy, in ships or in money.

But in ensuing years, when the great German shipbuilding program seemed to threaten British supremacy afloat, the Canadian people began to think of Naval Defence. In March, 1909, a general resolution was moved in the Canadian House of Commons to approve an expenditure for a Canadian Naval Service to co-operate closely with the Imperial Navy. This resolution was passed.

Naval Service Bill

The Colonial Conference of 1907 had provided for a subsidiary defence conference. At the end of July, 1909, representatives of the English, Canadian, Australian and New Zealand Governments met in London to discuss naval defence and in January of 1910 as a result of the conference a Naval Service Bill was introduced into the Canadian House of Commons under the Government of Sir Wilfrid Laurier. This Bill followed the lines of agreements reached at the Imperial Conference of 1909. Five cruisers and six destroyers were to be built, if possible in Canada, (otherwise in England) within six years, and divided between the two coasts. Personnel was to be partly permanent, partly reserve, but all enlistments were to be voluntary. A Naval college and a Naval Board were to be set up. The Canadian Government would control its own Navy, but might place it at the disposal of the British Government in a crisis, subject to approval by Parliament. An initial appropriation of \$10,000,000 was proposed.

After a great deal of debate the bill was passed. Tenders for the construction of the proposed ships were called for. To serve until the new ships were built, two old cruisers were purchased from the British Government: the "Niobe" of 11,000 tons, commissioned in 1899, and the smaller "Rainbow," of 3,600 tons, commissioned in 1892. The dockyards at Halifax and Esquimalt were transferred from the British Government to the Canadian Government for use by the new Navy. Thus the Royal Canadian Navy first came into existence.

Appointment of Sir Charles Kingsmill

Rear-Admiral C.E. (Later Sir Charles) Kingsmill, R.N., who had been lent to Canada during preliminary negotiations with the British Government, became Director of Naval Service for Canada.

At the Imperial Conference of 1911 a three-way agreement on Naval Defence was reached between Great Britain, Canada and Australia. The Royal Navy agreed to provide the necessary personnel for administrative and instructional duties, including the staffing of a training establishment for officers. The Naval Services and forces of each country were to be under the control of their own government, but training and discipline were to be uniform with that of the fleet of the United Kingdom, and officers and men might be interchanged. Canadian and Australian navies were to have their own naval stations, the limits of which were defined. In time of war, naval services of a Dominion which had been put at the disposal of the Imperial Government were to form an integral part of the British fleet and to remain under the control of the Admiralty for the duration of the war.

The Royal Canadian Naval College was founded at Halifax, in 1911. It was shifted temporarily to the Royal Military College at Kingston in 1916, after the great explosion in Halifax, and the following year moved again to Esquimalt on the west coast.

In 1911 the Laurier Government went out of office on the issue of reciprocity, and Naval Defence was allowed again to sink into the background. The Naval Service Act remained on the statute books, but nothing was done to implement it.

Although a number of tenders had been received to build the new Canadian warships, no tender was taken up, and the naval shipbuilding program never began.