

# REFLECTIONS

By THE EDITOR

## Mr. Bourassa and the Navy.

**M**R. BOURASSA is quite mistaken if he thinks I could be so ungracious as to analyze and criticize his pamphlet without giving it a thorough reading. Yet that is the accusation which he makes in the letter which appears below. I can assure him that I read every page of the pamphlet and that I did not reach my conclusion without much study and thought. Whether that conclusion was right or wrong, fair or unfair, it was honestly made.

My conclusion was that his arguments should have led him to favour a Canadian navy as against a contribution to the British navy. As the policy of the *COURIER* was also that of a Canadian navy, I inferentially admitted that I agreed with most of what he had to say on the subject. Apparently he is not flattered by this partial agreement with him. He would rather I had disagreed with him entirely.

Here is his letter:

Montreal, March 27th.

Editor CANADIAN COURIER:

Sir: Allow me to turn back on you one of your sentences. You have evidently come to a conclusion, with regard to my late pamphlet on the naval question, before you have read the pamphlet itself.

What I have not argued, you make me adjudicate upon; and the main argument I have used—I should say the gist of the whole work—you suggest I should have argued.

The newly-expressed foreign policy of the British Government I have not appreciated and still less "condemned." I have simply marked its importance, with a slight indication that were I a full-fledged British citizen, i.e., entitled to vote for or against the Asquith Government, I would rather be inclined to approve of Sir Edward Grey's speech and policy. Neither have I "condemned" the British Government for not having consulted the colonies with regard to that policy; but I have called the attention of the Canadian public to the state of absolute irresponsibility in which Canada lies with regard to such matters of Imperial and international policy. This I have done in no spirit of bitterness, but simply to show how far we are from that state of "Imperial association" of which we have heard so frequently since the South African war; and what a subordinate position the self-governing colonies occupy in that "galaxy of nations" which has served so frequently as a theme for after-dinner grandiloquent orations.

Neither have I stated that Canada could expect nothing from the British navy, nor that Lord Beresford's charges and denunciations should be accepted as gospel truth.

But having studied and analyzed all those facts and circumstances, I have come to the following conclusions:

1st—The British people keep their fleet for their sole need and benefit, and the protection which the self-governing colonies receive therefrom is a pure incident, adding in no way to the burden of the British people.

2nd—Before we accept any programme of naval defence from the British Admiralty, or before we hand over to the British Admiralty the control of Canadian ships or Canadian contributions to Imperial defence, we should know whether or not the Admiralty is as

rotten and incapable as described by Lord Beresford.

3rd—Not through any "lofty, philosophical outlook" do I say that Canada needs no warships to defend her harbours and shores; but precisely because I do not consider myself an authority on those matters—as evidently you, in common with a great number of Canadian journalists and politicians, think you are—I humbly stick to the opinion of the best technical authorities of Great Britain, who believe that a local navy is no good for shore defence, and that a country like Canada should first look after the essential elements of her territorial defence, before ridiculously endeavouring to become a maritime nation.

4th—The gist of my argument is precisely what you suggest I could have argued with logic: that whatever mode of naval organization is chosen, as long as Canada remains a part of the British Empire, it means a direct or indirect contribution to the Imperial Exchequer and to Imperial defence; and, therefore, that the basic principle of representation should be considered and settled before we pledge ourselves to any such contribution.

5th—To talk of a "Canadian navy" is to deceive the people of Canada. Unless Canada declares her independence, there can be, in war time, no such thing as a Canadian navy. And the late Government so clearly understood it, that they fully agreed with the British Government that, in time of war, the Canadian navy should be merged into the Imperial fleet, and remain, for the whole duration of the war, under the absolute command of the British Admiralty.

6th—Therefore, whether we have a Canadian navy or whether we make a gift of ships or money to the British Government, we practically bind ourselves to share in wars over which we have no control whatever; and, therefore, my conclusion is: *no contribution and no navy without representation.*

Had you taken the trouble to read the pamphlet before drawing your conclusions; and to read also the documents and extracts annexed to it, you certainly would have remained free to differ, *in toto* or in part, from my conclusions; but you would not have gone to the point of making me responsible for the absurdities which you affect to have discovered in that modest pamphlet.

Yours truly,

HENRI BOURASSA.

**I** FREELY admit that Mr. Bourassa in this letter makes his position much clearer than in his pamphlet. His opposition to the "contribution" plan is equally clear in both documents, but his reasons for objecting to a Canadian navy are much better stated. He opposes a Canadian navy for two reasons: (1) The British experts do not approve of a local navy; and (2) a Canadian or local navy cannot exist without being in time of war part of the British navy.

Take the first objection. So far as my understanding goes, the British experts are not opposed to a local navy. Lord Charles Beresford believes that local or colonial navies would be very useful in helping to guard the trade routes of the Empire. There are a number of others who agree with him. Moreover, the principle was approved at the Imperial Conference of 1911, and Australia and New Zealand are now creating local navies. Therefore

I disagree with Mr. Bourassa that the naval experts are opposed to local navies.

Now as to the point that a Canadian or local navy cannot exist without being in time of war part of the British navy, I again disagree. It is for the colony that owns the fleet to say whether its navy shall join the British fleet. If the war were caused by a dispute which was as vital to Canada's national existence as to Great Britain's, I imagine our navy would be placed at once under the orders of the British Admiralty. That, however, being a voluntary action, does not rob us of our independence nor of our autonomy. The agreement of two nations to act together under certain circumstances does not affect the independence of either.

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**C**ANADA sent her troops to South Africa, but that did not affect her autonomy nor menace her independence. It was a voluntary act. If Canada had a navy, it would be subject to Canadian opinions and Canadian control no matter what the laws or agreements were. It is so with our army. Theoretically, it is part of the British force with His Majesty the King as Commander-in-chief; but the army will not engage in any war which the people of Canada think is utterly wrong.

If Mr. Bourassa condemned the militia, a standing army, fortifications and a navy, his position would be tenable. The Quakers take that view. The people who believe war is never justifiable hold that view. But Mr. Bourassa admits that he believes in a Canadian army and in Canadian defence of our shores, our harbours and our shipping. Therefore, he cannot consistently oppose a Canadian navy. He may say it should be small or that it should be large, that it should go to Britain's assistance only when the country says so or that it shall never go, but he cannot logically oppose its creation.

Mr. Bourassa says no contribution without representation. Will Mr. Bourassa add that he will favour either a Canadian navy or a naval contribution should Great Britain give us representation in London? Would Mr. Bourassa be willing to stand up among his Nationalist followers and say, "Gentlemen, if Great Britain grants Canada some satisfactory form of representation at Westminster, my chief objection to a Canadian navy or to a naval contribution will be overcome?"

If Mr. Bourassa is prepared to stand up in Quebec and say that, then one would be more inclined to feel that his opposition to a Canadian navy is to be attributed to something deeper than mere captiousness.

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## Canada and West Indies.

**W**HILE some people are still feeling disappointed over the defeat of reciprocity with the United States, the Borden Administration is endeavouring to find new avenues for reciprocity within the Empire. Last week a number of trade delegates from the West Indies arrived in this country and an attempt is being made to find a basis for improved trade relations between these two British groups—Canada and the West Indies. Canada wants a market for her flour; the West Indies desire to sell us more sugar. These are the chief items. Capping all and corollary to such an arrangement would be a decided expansion in steamship connection between the two countries.

## AS TO EXTENDING CANADIAN TRADE WITH THE WEST INDIA ISLANDS—WHAT?

Fifteen trade delegates from the West Indies on a visit to Canada in the interests of practical Empire. They seek an improved steamship service and a measure of reciprocity in trade. The delegates are: Hon. W. D. Auchinleck, Auditor of the Windward Islands; Hon. John J. Carmacho, Commercial Adviser for Antigua; Hons. W. K. Chandler and F. A. Coltime, for the Barbadoes; Collector of Customs J. M. Reid and Hon. C. G. A. Wyatt, British Guiana; Hon. Wm. Porter, Treasurer of the Island, and Hon. J. Colin MacIntyre, Dominica; Lt.-Col. W. B. Davidson Houston, Commissioner of Montserrat; Hon. Thos. L. Roxburgh, Administrator of St. Kitts-Nevis; Hon. F. W. Griffin, Collector of Customs, and Hon. G. W. Hazel, St. Vincent; Hon. H. B. Walsot, Collector of Customs, and Hon. Adam Smith, Trinidad. Hon. J. Edward Cameron, Administrator of St. Lucia, is leader of the delegation. Mesdames Carmacho and Coltime also accompanied the party to get a taste of the difference between the weather in the West Indies and the winter climate in Canada. The photograph was taken at Montreal.

