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MEMORANDUM TO

THE WAR COMMITTEE OF THE CABINET:

Due to conditions brought about by the present war, shipping activity at certain ports in Canada and Newfoundland has developed to such an extent that the fire fighting appliances at these points are considered to be definitely inadequate. The responsibility for the provision of such facilities is shared among many authorities, but the Naval Service is the authority perhaps mainly concerned, and it is felt that it is the duty of this Department to make representations to the Government in order that this matter may be considered. In any case, once a fire has begun it constitutes a general threat, and questions of jurisdiction become irrelevant.

Three of the ports concerned - namely Halifax, N. S., St. John's, Nfld., and Sydney, N. S. - are convoy assembly points and as such have been built up to provide the facilities necessary for the operation and maintenance of both Naval and Merchant ships. Other ports such as Esquimalt, B. C., and Shelburne, N. S. are used primarily for the repair, refitting and maintenance of Naval vessels.

The fire hazard to the shore facilities at these ports and to Naval vessels, as well as to Merchant ships and their cargoes, has received serious consideration by the responsible officers of the Naval Service. It is the urgent recommendation of the Naval Staff, after having received the strongest representations from these officers, that the present protection against fire at these ports should be supplemented by the provision of specially designed steel tugs constructed and equipped as fire boats. An earlier recommendation was not made because until recently the congestion in the shipbuilding yards was such that the construction of these vessels could hardly have been undertaken, and because a number of studies were necessary to ascertain the most efficient and economical type of fire boat.

It has been discovered by experience, particularly in the case of the disastrous fire on the wharf at Sydney, N. S., as well as in the case of two lesser fires on the wharf at Shelburne, N. S., that it is only possible to fight a wharf fire efficiently from the sea, and that land facilities cannot fully protect the Naval wharves and the ships moored alongside. The cost of rebuilding the wharf at Sydney, N. S., was about \$570,000 plus \$20,000 for repairs to ships damaged by the fire, all of which could have been minimized had efficient fire boats been available. It is noted that the recent fire at the Imperial Oil installation at St. John's, Nfld., might well have developed into a holocaust had wind conditions been different, and might have disrupted the Atlantic Convoy system.

In addition to the warships and cargo ships at the convoy assembly ports, numerous valuable war ships are also moored alongside for refits, storing, etc., at all Naval repair bases. These ships cost many millions of dollars and, even apart from their money value, could not be replaced in time to be of use in the war effort should they be destroyed by fire.

Tremendous sums of money are also invested in essential facilities and equipment along the water-front at all the Naval bases, such as wharves, cranes, rectifier houses, boiler houses, steam and electrical lines, machine shops, fuel oil tankage and pipe line facilities, etc.,

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