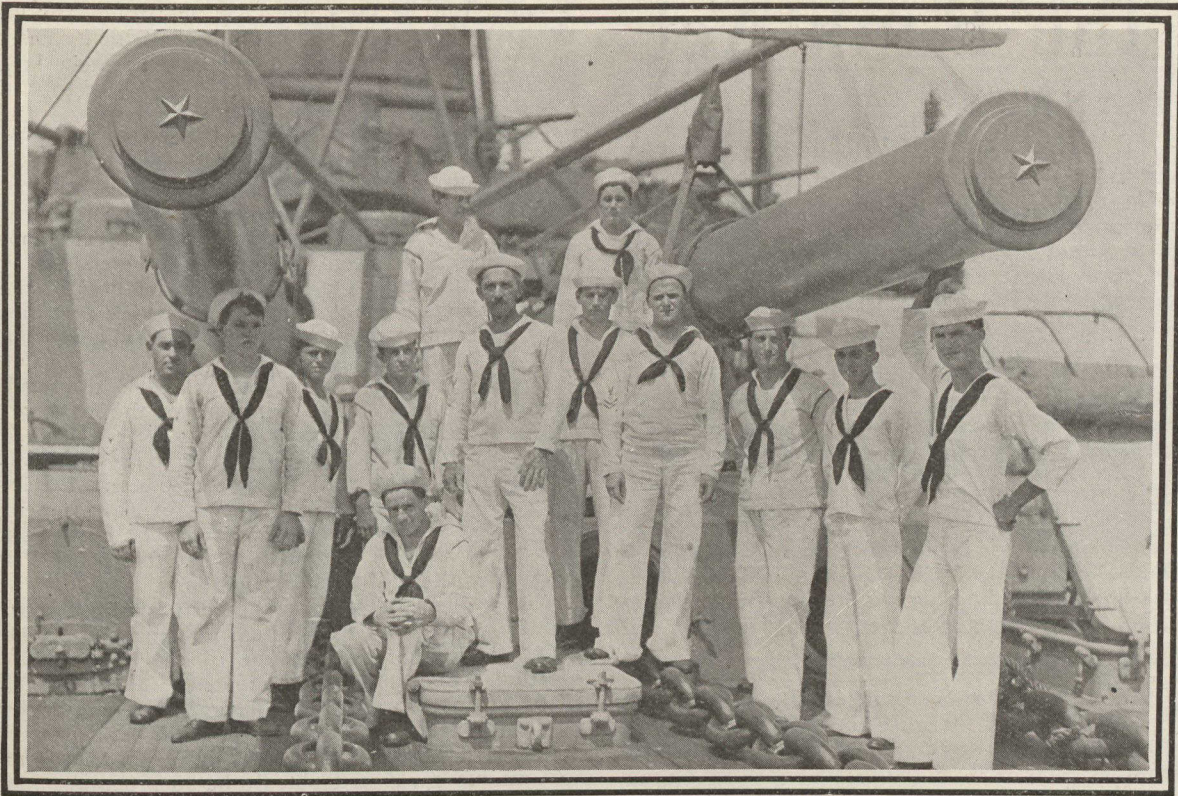




The Electricians on a First-class United States Battleship (Enlisted Personnel).

A Navy Slander Nailed

Washington's Reply to Ottawa Critics

By WALDON FAWCETT

IN naval and other official circles at Washington no small amount of interest has been provoked by the attack by Major Sharpe in the Canadian House of Commons on the character of the enlisted force of the United States navy. However, the prevailing feeling in the matter has been one of blank astonishment at the nature of the charges rather than intense indignation, as has been represented in some of the Canadian press dispatches. This surprise is explained by the fact that all leading American naval officials have in recent years been congratulating themselves heartily upon the very high standard of character to be found in the enlisted personnel.

Time was when there was just this much foundation for the charges made by Major Sharpe—that the enlisted strength of the U. S. navy was made up largely of foreign-born sailors—professional seamen, if they might be so called, who possessed many of the shortcomings which are to be observed in their kind in the merchant marine. However, this state of affairs has long since passed, and to-day, on the contrary, more than 95 per cent. of the total enlisted force of the Yankee navy is made up of citizens of the United States. *Incidentally it may be of interest to Canadian readers to know that a large proportion of Uncle Sam's naval tars—and admittedly the best class of recruits in the service—come from the districts bordering on the Great Lakes.* It was in recognition of this fact that the U. S. government spent a large sum in the establishment of its new naval training station near Chicago, Ill.

Coincident with the increase in the proportion of Americans in the U. S. navy—89 per cent. of the total are native-born Americans and only 7 per cent. are naturalized citizens—has come a rise in the standards of character. As a matter of fact the U. S. Navy Department has been constantly stiffening the regulations governing enlistment until now they are accounted ideal. Not only must an applicant for enlistment swear that he has never been convicted of a felony or been guilty of other offenses that would render him "undesirable," but he must be vouched for by the mayor of his native city or other responsible persons. Some idea of how rigid are Uncle Sam's requirements in various respects may be surmised from the fact that during the past year 73,364 young men applied for enlistment in the U. S. navy, but of this number only 17,743 were accepted for enrollment. Of those who were rejected nearly 37,000 were found to be disqualified because of physical disability, whereas upward of 15,000 applicants were rejected for other causes. Of the comparatively limited number of foreign-born lads who were allowed to enlist nearly 700 came from England and Ireland, and almost as many more from Germany.

The correspondent of the CANADIAN COURIER sought an expression on the subject of Major Sharpe's attack from Rear Admiral Philip Andrews, Aide to the Secretary of the U. S. Navy, and who, by virtue of his position as Chief of the Bureau of Navigation (which has jurisdiction over the personnel) is the best-posted man in the United States on this subject. Said Admiral Andrews, "I see that I am represented as very indignant over the statements made in Canada whereas I have given no attention to the matter. I do not intend to make any formal statement on the subject because the charges made are too preposterous and too utterly ridiculous to be dignified by a reply." Admiral Andrews did, however, supply the figures above given, and he took occasion to emphasize that during the past six years the percentage of desertions in the U. S. navy has steadily declined from about 9 per cent. in 1906 until in 1912 it totaled only a little more than 3 per cent. of the entire enlisted strength. Furthermore, he pointed out that the new law, recently passed, which lengthens the term of enlistment of men in the U. S. navy is

perceptibly increasing the number of applications for enlistment, and, better yet, is attracting to the service a superior class of men who desire to enter naval work as a serious career.

The United States Navy Department has never made it a policy to conceal from prospective recruits or others the full facts regarding life in the sea service, and Canadians who are at all curious as to details affecting the enlisted personnel will have no difficulty in obtaining exhaustive data on the subject. The annual report of the Secretary of the U. S. Navy and the last annual report of the Chief of the Bureau of Navigation—which may be obtained free upon application to Washington so long as the supply lasts—devote much space to the subject, and so likewise does a booklet that covers all phases of life aboard American war-ships and which has been prepared (at a cost of about 17 cents each) for free distribution to all young men who are considering enlistment.

WITH a view to further perfecting the enlisted organization and maintaining a high standard in the service the Navy Department has issued specific instructions to recruiting officers that under no circumstances must they accept for enlistment any men who are not of a high standard mentally, morally and physically, or who cannot give evidence of good character before enlistment. Appeals are also made to the parents and guardians of all newly-enlisted men to encourage them to remain in the service. Admiral Andrews believes that many of the desertions from the navy which took place years ago were due to the fact that men had family troubles or distress and were not able to secure a release. Accordingly it is the present policy to grant discharges to all men who have good cause for desiring discharge, and there is likewise no hesitancy in discharging recruits who prove undesirable or inapt. In pursuance of this policy about 500 men were last year discharged as undesirable, and more than 100 others were separated from the service because of unfitness and inaptitude. A very significant feature of the figures furnished by Admiral Andrews is found in the fact that of the 17,000 men who were enrolled last year upward of 6,000 were men who were re-enlisting in the service.

A factor that has made for content in the U. S. navy in recent years is found in the circumstance that nearly all of the petty officers are now of American birth or are naturalized citizens. In the old days, when alien petty officers were in authority over American-born seamen, the situation was prolific of trouble and dissatisfaction. The plan of awarding good conduct medals and of giving cash prizes for efficiency in gunnery are helping to the same end. About 3,400 enlisted men now wear Uncle Sam's good conduct medals, and some of these honour men boast the possession of as many as seven different medals of such significance. There have even been inaugurated on the various U. S. warships competitions among the men to reduce the amount of leave-breaking and desertions, that in some instances have accomplished remarkable results.



On a United States Battleship—Typical Enlisted Men.