

A tribute to the R.C.N. recently was paid in a United States periodical:

"There were many desperate months when Canada stood between us and disaster. If the trade convoys had not been kept running, the Allies doubtless would have lost the European war by this time."

It was pointed out that, after Japan struck, the burden of protecting merchant ships in the Atlantic fell largely on the United Kingdom and Canada. Escort vessels for the trade convoys were supplied in this percentage:

United Kingdom.....	51%
Canada.....	47%
United States.....	2%

The tribute then stated:

"We probably would have lost the war if the Canadian Navy hadn't come through in a spectacular and heroic way..... It is one of the marvels of this war that Canada, an agricultural nation of less than 12,000,000 people could have contributed 47% of the vast fleet of fighting ships necessary to get the freighters across."

Even to assemble a convoy requires work and caution undreamed of by the landlubber. Ships have to be routed from various ports to arrive at the assembly point at a certain time. The provisioning and fuelling of ships must be planned so that the ships will sail on time.

Naval Control Staffs have been set up at Halifax, Sydney, St. John, Montreal, Quebec, Vancouver, Esquimalt and Prince Rupert, composed principally of Naval Reserve officers who are familiar with merchant shipping. A system was instituted whereby every merchant ship sailing in convoy would be examined as to speed, manoeuvrability, fuel capacity and adequacy and loyalty of her crew and officers. Shipmasters were instructed in a brief, but adequate course of signalling, interpretation of orders, and regulations concerning sailing in convoy.

Besides serving on the ships of the R.C.N. in convoy, R.C.N. sailors serve in the merchant ships themselves. They man the guns with which the cargo ships have been armed, and look after communication between ships of the convoy. In the ships of convoy commodores they act as signalmen.

Convoy groups are arranged according to maximum speed. Escort vessels have to be assigned. Planes are supplied by the R.C.A.F. to protect the flotilla on the first leg of the trip. All these and other details must be looked after for each convoy.

Communications

An efficient wireless communications system is an indispensable part of the work of the Navy. Ships at sea must keep in touch with land bases; communication must be swift.

There are three principal Naval Shore Wireless Stations in Canada. These stations are equipped with the most up-to-date apparatus and are the equal of any naval station in the world. They are in operation 24 hours a day. As many as three lines of communication are often used at one time.

To prevent wireless communications being picked up by the enemy, every message must be cyphered. Since the outbreak of the war a certain Naval Wireless Telegraphy Station has handled an average of 180,000 cypher groups each month, or 6,000 groups every twenty-four hours. In order to handle this work, this particular station employs over fifty specially trained civil service clerks working day and night in eight-hour shifts.