

Canada and Imperial Defence

By Hugh Mackay, M.D., Winnipeg.

We have so long taken British protection by land and by sea as a matter of course, that we are not fully alive to its momentous significance. At the outbreak of this devastating war, when it became known that the high seas were unsafe for ocean traffic, when passenger ships with lights extinguished were racing wildly, they scarce knew whither, in the inky blackness of the starless night across the ocean lanes, pursued hot foot by German cruisers, and when

the question of our ability to transport our food products to the world's markets overseas was in doubt, then there was borne in upon us in a very real fashion the true inwardness of Britain's protecting care.

A few years ago, under the Laurier regime, a measure of naval defence was inaugurated in Canada. This was the immediate outcome of an agitation throughout the country looking toward an easement of our compatriots in Great

Britain who had generation after generation borne alone and unaided from this great colony the ever-increasing burden of naval defence.

It was felt throughout all classes in the community that common decency, not to mention patriotic fervor, demanded something worth while, something in accord with our growing national importance and steadily increasing financial prosperity. The average Canadian did not know, neither did he care, what form our contribution might take in this important matter so long as it was adequate and commensurate with the national needs.

With the advent of the Borden administration a reversal of policy ensued. It was announced that after long consultation with the Imperial authorities,

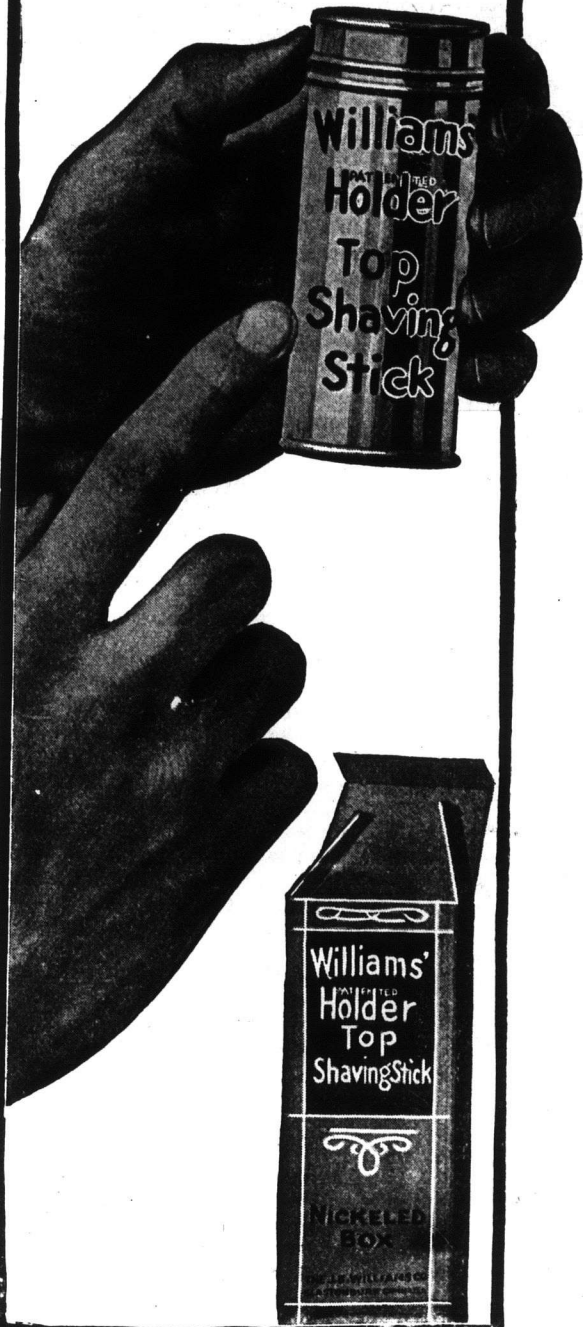
a conclusion had been reached that direct contribution to the British navy was the immediate and pressing need, and for the present the sole avenue through which the country's aspirations might find fitting expression.

If our representatives at Ottawa had been big enough to take the matter out of the realm of party politics, an arrangement agreeable to the people could have been reached forthwith. As it was, we made ourselves superlatively ridiculous in the eyes of the world in the political deadlock that followed. Day after day and week after week the titanic battle of words and policies went on, each party proclaiming in flamboyant and grandiloquent phraseology their unswerving loyalty to Great Britain and their consuming desire to

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