

They were upon the principle of preserving peace by being prepared for war. Many speeches of a jingo nature were made and one of the Lords of the Admiralty told the House of Commons that "bumboat expeditions and pinchbeck administrations would do no longer for Canada; that Englishmen must lay their account for fighting battles in fleets of three-deckers on the North American Lakes." Notwithstanding this adverse Parliamentary attitude, Lord Castlereagh seems to have carried his point, and on April 15th he informed Mr. Adams that the British Government was ready to meet the proposal of the United States, "So far as to avoid everything like a contention between the two parties which should have the strongest force" on the lakes, adding that they had no desire to have any ships in commission or active service except what might be needed to convey troops occasionally. At this time Adams did not feel like concluding the arrangement without further instructions, and it was agreed that the negotiations should be transferred to Washington and that authority be vested in Mr. Bagot, the British Minister to the United States, to act for Great Britain.

After his interview with Mr. Adams, Lord Castlereagh was prompt in notifying Mr. Bagot of his power to act in the matter of arranging naval forces, as well as the matter of fisheries. When the news reached America of the apparently sudden change in the attitude of the British Government there was some speculation as to the probable cause. Was the prosperity of England on the decline? Or was England acting from purely humanitarian motives? Or did she fear some new trouble?

Then began a series of interviews and an amount of correspondence between Mr. Bagot and the American authorities which ended in a letter from Secretary Munroe, dated August 2nd, 1816, in which he set forth a general proposal for disarmament and the maintenance of neutrality on the Great Lakes which was afterward included almost word for word in the Agreement. It was necessary for both sides to be perfectly assured of each other's bona fides. Further, Mr. Bagot wished to be absolutely certain that he had power to agree to a specific number of ships as a minimum. In the course of these negotiations inquiries were made by both sides, as to the respective strengths of the rival fleets. According to the report furnished to the American authorities by Mr. Bagot, the British force, on September 1st, 1816, was twenty-seven boats, capable of carrying over 300 guns. Some of these had been condemned as unfit for service, but two 74 gun ships were on the stocks, and one transport of 400 tons. According to the report from Secretary Munroe, the United States' force was about the same, viz.: 22 boats capable of carrying over 350 guns. Several of these ships were either laid by or dismantled, but two 74 gun ships were on the stocks.

Owing to the time taken in the transmission of instructions, and the necessity for consultation with the British authorities, the reciprocal and definite reduction of the naval force on the lakes did not occur until after Munroe had become President. H. R. H. the Prince Regent had agreed to Munroe's definite proposition of August 2nd, 1816, and Castlereagh so informed Mr. Bagot on Jan. 31st, 1817.