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Our Navy

If, as the world was often told, the great war was fought to end war, the world must be sadly disappointed, for at the very moment when the great peace instrument, the League of Nations, is getting fully into operation, preparations for war are everywhere prominent. Not only is there no sign of disarmament—for that we might be asked to wait patiently—but the principal nations are preparing new instruments of war. France is in her most warlike mood. There is much excuse for France, for she is next door neighbor to a nation which she believes will seize the first opportunity to attack again. Great Britain is making large appropriations for her naval service, yet not large enough to suit some influential sections of her people, who clamor for the construction of what are called "capital ships," even while her Admiralty question the value of such expensive vessels. Japan is spending much on the expansion of her navy. The United States has a large naval programme. When it is suggested that Great Britain and the United States should take a naval holiday, the American Secretary of the Navy answers that such a policy would be all right if the whole world would adopt it, well knowing, as he does, that in the present state of affairs there is nothing upon which the whole world can be brought to agree. Canada, too, has in some degree caught the naval fever. A small fleet of warships donated by the British Government—a couple of cruisers, a couple of destroyers and a couple of submarines—has arrived at Halifax and has been received with considerable ceremony.

The navy in all countries is usually a popular service. The blue jacket of the sailor seems to appeal to the imagination even more than the khaki of the soldier. We are all proud of the history and of the recent achievements of the British Navy. Canada is a maritime country, facing the ocean on both East and West sides, and consequently there are large sections of our people who are sure to feel a keen interest in naval affairs. Even in the inland districts our Navy Leagues have been laboring, not without success, for the creation of a naval spirit. The British Government's offer of these six ships as a free gift proved a temptation that our Government could not resist. A number of the officers of the ships are young Canadians, graduates of our naval college. All these circumstances serve to make the arrival of the fleet at Halifax an occasion for the manifestation of much interest in our Canadian Navy. And all these things are very gratifying—if Canada can afford them. The ships, as stated, cost us nothing. But their upkeep will be quite costly, and there will be more than a few people to ask whether this is not one of the luxury taxes of the time that might well have been postponed.

There is one striking feature of the situation that is not likely to be overlooked. It is now an accepted principle that whatever Canada is to do in naval affairs must be done along the lines of the policy laid down a few years ago by the former Government. The essence of that policy was that Canada should begin the creation of a small fleet, to be organized in co-operation with the British Admiralty, to be owned by Canada, to be controlled by the Canadian Government in peace time, and in war-time merged into the Imperial Navy. When that policy was devised it was bitterly attacked, and in one province the attacks played a considerable part in bringing about the defeat of the Government which had proposed the policy. When the Niobe and Rainbow were bought as training ships, and steps were taken to build several cruisers in Canada, these were contemptuously described as a "tinpot navy" by writers and speakers who are to-day gushing over the adoption of the same policy, which is being carried out under the very law that was then so broadly condemned.

Just how far Canada needs a navy now will be a question for debate, but there will be agreement that whatever is to be done must of necessity follow the lines of the much abused policy of 1910.

We have this little fleet as a free gift of the British Government and we are in honor bound to keep it up. But many thoughtful Canadians who appreciate the financial situation of the Dominion will feel that this line of outlay is one on which a close watch should be kept. The tendency of such operations is to expand; the tendency of such expenditure is to increase. Just now, in a period of business disturbance

that gives much ground for anxiety, when revenues are failing and taxes are increasing, when many works of urgency are denied the grants that they need, there will be an increasingly critical examination of our public expenditure, which will often lead to regret that Great Britain did not postpone her generous gift of ships until Canada was more in need of them and better able to provide for their maintenance.

Methods of Tariff Making

In the United States the process of tariff revision is usually a slow one. In Canada it is faster—or so much of it is as comes under the public eye. Here the Government—or, to be more exact, the Finance Minister representing the Government—does the preliminary work, announces the conclusions in the Budget Speech, and the new rates of duty take effect immediately. The duties are not at the moment legally enforceable, for the law has not been passed. But as, at the final stage of the movement, the law is made retroactive to the date of the Budget, nobody attempts to resist the immediate coming into operation of the duties when announced by the Minister.

In the United States the method of handling the tariff is entirely different. It is a boast of the American system of government that there is a distinct separation of the legislative and executive functions. The President and his cabinet have no part in tariff making. They may, by message or departmental report, make general recommendations as to any part of the nation's policy. But the work of preparing and promoting measures for tariff revision is undertaken primarily by the House Committee of Ways and Means. Individual members may introduce bills relating to the tariff, which are referred to the Committee, and unless approved by the Committee they get no further. There are usually long hearings before the Committee and much debate in Congress before the end is reached. In the final stage a future date is fixed upon which the new law shall come into effect. There is thus ample warning to the public who are placed in a position to adjust their business to the coming change.

The political revolution of the November election naturally opened the way to an early re-consideration of tariff policy. The present tariff, moderate in some respects and with a large free list, is the work of the Democratic party who have just been defeated. It was reasonable to expect that after the inauguration of a Republican President in March and the meeting of a new Congress in which the Republicans would be in control of both Houses, there would be a revival of the movement for protectionist legislation, and the slow process of tariff making would begin. No earlier movement was looked for. The old Congress, however, is still doing business and,