

# WHAT SHALL WE DO ABOUT THE NAVY

## THE POLICY OF A UNITED FLEET

THE present parliament of Canada is called upon to settle, if it can, the most important question that has come before the British people since the American Revolution of a century and a half ago. It is asked to find a form of imperial defence that is consistent at once with colonial liberty and imperial union, that combines economy and efficiency, and harmonizes the claims of naval strategy with a rational conception of Canadian autonomy. Behind it rises on the horizon the whole question of the future of the Empire.

The magnitude of the problem raises it above the narrow limits of party politics. It cannot, it must not, be solved by the cast-iron vote of a party majority in the legislature, or the artificial cohesion of party allegiance among the electorate. The man who votes for this or that solution of the navy question merely because he is a Liberal, or because he is a Conservative, or because he is neither, is false to his citizenship.

The present question is no new one. For a hundred and fifty years it has stood as the riddle of the Sphinx, defying all solution. The British settlements beyond the seas began as places of refuge, as ports of trade, and as agricultural plantations. Those in America served for certain unlicensed forms of religious worship, for the growth of tobacco, and the distillation of rum. In their infancy the colonies flourished on neglect. As they increased, they were safeguarded and protected from purely interested motives. The British people who sold 40,000 Africans every year to their own and other plantations could not afford that any other slave-raiding nations of Europe should interfere with their market. The London traders who were making colossal fortunes from the sale of hardware in Pennsylvania and Massachusetts could not tolerate the intrusion of the foreigner in their trade.