

THE CANADIAN NAVY

CANADIAN public opinion is turning towards the establishing of some form of a distinctively Canadian naval force. The process is slow, but the proposal is so thoroughly in line with our past development and our present aspirations that it seems only a question of time when it will be realized. Indeed, it now seems to be time to divert our discussion from the question—Shall we have a naval force of our own? to—What sort of naval force shall we have? This latter question I propose to discuss.

One thing I shall take for granted. It must be a naval force of our own. The proposal that we pay a cash contribution to the Royal Navy—let our defence out to contract, hire Englishmen to do our maritime fighting for us—has been discussed; and I think that the sense of the nation has turned decisively against it.

First, we must decide at what to aim. If we look at Canada from the standpoint of the Empire as a whole, we perceive that she is one of its food-supply countries, and that her principal military function is to help to feed the United Kingdom. To use military terms, she is a base of supplies—of food supplies—and the Atlantic Ocean is an Imperial line of communication. Bases must be garrisoned, lines of communication must be protected. If we look at the situation from our own special point of view, the fact which draws our attention is that an interruption of our trade in food-stuffs with Great Britain would embarrass us, and that for hostile cruisers to beset our coast-line would be to stop that trade altogether, and that would mean ruin. Imperial and local considerations thus unite in prescribing the guarding of our trade with the Mother Country. So we must aim at protecting our maritime trade.