

Churchill and the Canadian Navy

By THE EDITOR

POLITICAL topics, or public questions which are more or less in politics, are usually handled gently by editors of non-political journals. The question of a Canadian navy is, however, one which is so broadly national that the CANADIAN COURIER has felt justified in "taking sides." We have never concealed our belief in a purely Canadian navy—a navy built largely and manned mainly by Canadians. Even when our adherence to this belief threatened to throw upon us the odium of being partisan, we stood firm in favour of what we thought was the best public policy. For five years now we have steadily adhered to this position.



Rt. Hon. Winston Churchill.

Naturally, therefore, it was with some satisfaction that we read the statement that the Rt. Hon. Winston Spencer Churchill, First Lord of the Admiralty, had declared for a Canadian navy. His opinion was given at the banquet of the Shipwrights' Company in London on the evening of the 15th, and reported in the Canadian newspapers on the 16th. He expresses himself so clearly and so incisively,

and with special reference to Canada, that there can be no mistake as to his meaning. He has intimated in advance the official answer which will be given to the Hon. Mr. Hazen when he reaches Downing Street.

Why This Is Important.

ORDINARILY the opinion of the First Lord of the Admiralty would not settle a question of this kind. But Winston Churchill is no ordinary First Lord. He was called to this position suddenly last year, because it was discovered that a strong organizer was needed to put the naval department in better shape. The admirals and vice-admirals and rear-admirals and other naval experts had been warring among themselves for years over a number of questions. The result was inaction and inefficiency. There was a midnight call to arms, so to speak, and in the hour of danger Winston Spencer Churchill was given supreme authority and a free hand. Since he took charge there has been scarcely a squeak from the most self-opinionated critic, and yet the naval plans have been almost turned upside down. The naval stations have been changed, the composition of the different squadrons have been altered, and other equally important decisions reached. Mr. Churchill seems to have infused life and spirit and unity into the whole naval service.

This, then, is the man who comes forward to decide, before he is asked, as to whether or not there shall be a Canadian navy. Tempestuous, ambitious and daring Winston Churchill may be, but he is also capable and single-minded. What he does he does with all his might. Therefore, his utterance on the colonial navy question savours little of the obscurantism of Balfour or Rosebery. It is clear, incisive and definite. It cannot be misunderstood.

What Mr. Churchill Said.

MR. CHURCHILL began by saying: "We shall soon receive representatives of the new Canadian administration who are coming over to consult the Government and the Admiralty." He thus explains that he has been thinking over the answer which he shall give to Mr. Borden's ambassadors. He is fully aware that upon himself rests a great responsibility.

Then he goes on: "If the main naval developments of the last ten years have been a concentration of British fleets in decisive theatres, it is not unlikely that the main naval developments of the next ten years will be the growth of effective naval forces in the great dominions overseas." He thus explains why the outlying squadrons and vessels have been called home, and the outlying stations left bare, and also the means by which the old order of things will be restored. The home fleet to defend the centre; the colonial fleets to defend the outlying portions of the Empire.

And finally: "Then we shall be able to make a

true division of labour between the Mother Country and the daughter states, which is, that we shall maintain sea supremacy against all comers at decisive points, and they shall guard and patrol all the rest of the Empire."

Down With the Tin-Potters.

THUS does Mr. Winston Churchill deal with those who have raised the cry of "tinpot navies" when Australia and New Zealand and Canada proposed to have navies of their own. He shows these feeble-minded patriots no quarter. He yields not a jot to all their childish murmurings. The men in the "daughter states" are to him the equal of the men in the "mother country." He realizes that the outer portions of these great imperial federations will be best defended and patrolled when they have their own fleets.

Of course, his answer could scarcely have been otherwise. He could not say to Canada, "You would be foolish to have a navy of your own," when Australia and New Zealand have already decided upon such a course with the full knowledge and approval of the leading public men and naval experts of the United Kingdom. The whole logic of the situation was against such an answer. This question was really decided at the Colonial Conference of 1909, though a large number of Canadians refused to accept it.

Winston Churchill has affirmed that answer, has justified and set the seal of his approval on the

WINSTON CHURCHILL'S VIEWS

"We are soon to receive a representative of the new Canadian Administration, who is coming here to consult with the Admiralty upon the course of policy which shall be adopted in the future. If the main naval developments of the last ten years have been the concentration of the British fleets in decisive theatres it seems to me not unlikely that the main naval developments of the next ten years will be the growth of effective naval forces in the great dominions overseas."

colonial navy idea, but he has done so in language which shows a deep sympathy and a broad appreciation thereof. He is not half-hearted nor equivocal about it. He does not speak haltingly, but gives his reply before it is sought.

No Quibbling to Occur.

NOR is Mr. Churchill to quibble over details. He says so plainly. There is a purpose to be served, and the statesmen of the daughter states may decide for themselves how it shall be served.

"The important thing is that the gaps shall be filled so that while we in the Old Country guard the decisive centres, our comrades and brothers across the sea shall keep the flag flying on the oceans of the world."

The Dominions are to have "a full measure of control" in time of peace so long as they see that "the gaps shall be filled." These are the main points. All others are subsidiary.

This should be satisfactory. The Central Authority says to the Outlying Authority, "We shall do our part in our own way; you do your part in your own way." If you want us to build vessels for you, we will do it. If you want to build your own vessels, do so, and we will help you. This is autonomy and equality and freedom.

History of the Discussion.

FULL and free discussion of the Canadian navy question did not begin in Canada until about June, 1909. There had been some desultory articles and speeches previous to that time, but the general public were not interested.

At the Imperial Conference of 1902 it was quite evident that the self-governing Dominions had

acquired a new attitude, and that they were not looking entirely to Great Britain for direction and protection. Three years later Mr. Richard Jebb, a member of the *Morning Post* staff, who had made special investigations in Australia and Canada, published a book entitled, "Studies in Colonial Nationalism." On the opening page he says:

"In Canada, Australia and New Zealand the national idea is discernible in different degrees of development, depending upon conditions which vary in each case. Generally speaking, the popular attitude towards the Mother Country is becoming different in kind to that which prevailed a generation ago. Colonial loyalty, rooted in the past, is slowly giving way before colonial patriotism, reaching to the future."

He deals directly with the idea of naval defence, and states his belief that the possibility of colonial contributions has passed away forever. He speaks thus:

"The notion that opportunities for naval service under the British Government would suffice to give Australians or Canadians a sense of personal possession in the British navy is radically wrong. The mere fact that so futile an expedient should have been adopted seriously is a symptom of vital weakness in the theory which prompted it. . . . It appears that the Dominion shares the Australian sentiment, that naval enterprise directed to local purposes is the best method of cultivating the maritime spirit and the sense of national responsibility."

It will be noted that this was published in 1905, or four years before the Imperial Conference of 1909, at which the matter was officially settled. In other words a shrewd British journalist discovered the sentiment of the Overseas Dominions, and translated it into words for his book several years before the colonial naval policy was definitely decided upon by the official representatives of the different colonies. It is therefore clear that what the Imperial Conference did in 1909 was not to create something new, but simply to embody in an imperial understanding what shrewd observers regarded as the sentiment of the general public.

The Courier's Record.

SO far as the CANADIAN COURIER is concerned it has always taken the view which was expressed by Mr. Jebb in his book in 1905, and reviewed at that time. In June, 1909, just before the Imperial Conference of that year, the editor summarized his views in this journal under the heading, "The Inevitable Navy." From that article the following quotations may be taken:

"The Imperial Conference in July, though not a full conference, will be important. The Motherland thinks the defence of the Empire should have its great nerve-centre in London, and that the Imperial forces shall be directed from that point. They have not hitherto been anxious to see local colonial fleets. On the other hand, the colonies have been loath to admit that they thought the brains of the Empire are centred in London. They have been loath to put their military forces at the free and absolute disposal of the monocoed and frock-coated administrators of the War Office. They prefer that colonial armies and colonial fleets be directed in time of peace by the local authorities and in time of war by an Imperial staff on which they would be represented."

"It is quite evident, however, that a Canadian fleet is in sight. The pressure on the Government to begin construction has been tremendous. The leaders of every shade of public opinion are in favour of definite action. Before the year is out, perhaps at an early date, there will be a definite announcement. Only some unforeseen disagreement at the July Conference can cause further delay."

"The vessels will undoubtedly be built partly in Great Britain and partly in Canada. The better ships could most economically be built in Great Britain; the lesser will be built here. This will mean the establishment of a new shipyard in Canada which will sooner or later be able to repair or to construct almost any size of war-vessel."

In the next issue, July 3rd, the writer pointed out that "three months of steady discussion seems to have brought the whole nation" to favour a Canadian navy rather than a present of battleships or a cash contribution to the British Exchequer. Added to this was a quotation from the *Toronto News* from which the following sentences are taken:

"Our settled policy must be to prepare for the long years which await us, for the day when Canada will be a country, not of seven but of twenty—thirty—forty millions. For the whole future and not for one crisis two or three years ahead. Our Canadian navy will take at the very least twenty years to develop so that we should lose no time in commencing."

Two issues later, July 17th, the CANADIAN COURIER quoted some remarks by Sir Charles Tupper, showing that he was taking the same view of this subject as Sir Wilfrid Laurier, "Both favour a