

# AN OPEN LETTER TO THE RIGHT HONOURABLE WINSTON CHURCHILL

*A Statement as to Canada's Position on the Navy Question*

HONOURABLE SIR,—At a time when the Empire is passing through a period of stress and struggle, it may be that you will deem this an unfitting time for Canadians to discuss their relations to the question of naval defence. It may be that you feel that Canada should not take any further action in this respect until the war is over. If this is the feeling of the Premier of Great Britain, of Sir Edward Grey, of your naval advisers and yourself, then the people of Canada would no doubt be willing to meet your wishes and refrain from such discussion. It will be necessary, however, for you to intimate to the Canadian political leaders that such is the case, or the discussion will proceed whether you wish it or not. In the absence of any expressed wish on the part of the British Government, Canadians are proceeding with a discussion of this subject. It is generally understood that the Government of the Right Honourable Sir Robert Borden has the matter under advisement. The London correspondent of the Montreal "Gazette" has announced that Sir Richard McBride has been consulting with you and others in London as to what steps may be advisable at this time. This correspondent states that Sir Richard is on his way back to Canada with special information for the Canadian Government and intimates that upon such information the Borden Government will frame a new policy to be announced at the forthcoming session of Parliament. If this be true, then Canada must discuss the situation even more fully and freely.

\*\*\*

MOREOVER, Sir, Mr. Richard Jebb had a letter last week in a London paper reiterating his oft-expressed view that Dominion navies are an essential feature of the general naval policy of the Empire. He takes the Emden incident as the basis of his contention that Dominion navies may well be relied upon to protect the trade routes, in the southern hemisphere particularly. He thinks that the Sydney's victory and the general usefulness of His Majesty's Royal Australian Fleet have added any proofs that were necessary to sustain the position of those who have opposed naval centralization.

Without going further into his argument, or without ranging ourselves on his side or on the side of the centralists, one may point out that if Englishmen like Mr. Richard Jebb deem it opportune to press home a naval argument at this particular time, then a Canadian discussion cannot be out of place or the time ill chosen. Mr. Jebb is but an example, of course. Many of the London journals have passed comments on the exploits of the Australian navy and pointed the moral. None of them, however, have recalled the historic words of Premier Cook, now ex-premier and leader of the Opposition, at the time the Australian fleet arrived at Sydney, when he said:

"The Australian fleet is no less Australian because it is His Majesty's and no less His Majesty's because it is Australian."

The events of the past three months have given these words a new significance which a statesman like yourself can not and will not miss.

It is quite true that on the opening of the war, the Australian fleet passed automatically under your control. Nevertheless it must be with great feelings of pride and pleasure that the Australian people see how useful their fleet has been in the defence of the Empire. Not only has it kept the Australian and New Zealand shores free of invasion, but it has been an active instrument in adding the German colonies of the South Pacific to the all-red Empire. The Australian and New Zealand contingents have gone forth to do service several thousand miles away guarded by its floating guns. Moreover, though the Royal Australian navy is now under your direction, it is manned largely by Australian citizens who in time will return to Australian shores crowned with glorious successes. It is unnecessary to describe to you the great effect which this will have upon the Britannic spirit of the southern British Dominions.

Indeed, you yourself have recognized this when you recently sent the New Zealand battle-cruiser from England around Cape Horn to take part in the soon-to-be glorious victory over the German Pacific fleet. This in itself is evidence that you appreciate the effect upon the over-seas Dominions of allowing them to share in the naval work which lies most closely to their hand and which is also most important in the general welfare of the whole Britannic Alliance.

\*\*\*

UNDER these circumstances, it is natural that Canadians should enquire whether or not you and your advisers have any different ideas from those expressed by you in your memorandum to the Canadian Government two years ago, when you advised Canada to build Dreadnoughts. If your opinions, after the political events of two years and

the naval experiences of three months, teach you that your advice would be still the same, Canada should know it. If you and your advisers find your opinions modified by recent events, then Canada should be so advised. This question must be settled some day and the sooner it is settled permanently the better.

Should you choose to say nothing at the present time then Canadians must continue their discussion along the lines of your communication of two years ago. A session of the Canadian Parliament is approaching and after that comes a general election. With the best Imperial intent, neither party can ignore the naval question. If the Conservative party should continue to advocate their previous Dreadnought policy, they will win with it, but they will not unite all the people of Canada behind that policy. No Imperial policy can be successful or permanent unless both political parties in this country support it in principle at least.

Therefore, Sir, on you depends much of the future good relations between the British naval department, over which you preside, and the people of Canada as a whole.

\*\*\*

Without too much presumption, the suggestion is made that you advise the two political parties in



"BOBS! BOBS! BOBS!"

Canada to unite in a naval policy which both can support. Such a suggestion would be of immense benefit to Canada at the present moment and of inestimable value to the Empire. Should Canada continue to make a political football of the naval question, in the future as has been done in the past, a great crime will have been committed to which you must be in the nature of an accessory before the fact.

There are a large number of people in Canada who are in favour of removing this question from the political arena. They are influential, but so far have not succeeded in impressing their idea upon either Sir Robert Borden or Sir Wilfrid Laurier. You happen to be the one man who at this particular time is in a position to suggest a settlement. With the Empire in the greatest struggle in its history, with the trade of the world in the melting pot, and with new and peculiar international conditions arising, it is surely important that the British people all over the world should have one naval policy. You opposed the present Australian policy, which that Dominion adopted in spite of your advice. You have indirectly caused a contest between the two political parties in New Zealand over the naval policy of that country. You did not cause the disagreement in Canada, but you increased it by your official memorandum on the subject confided to Sir Robert Borden. It is therefore on you to see that all these differences are removed.

This is not to say that you were wrong in fighting for a centralized navy of big vessels stationed in

the North Sea. It is too early yet to say whether you were right or wrong. No doubt, you thought you were right and acted according to your conscience and your best judgment. But have the events of the past three months led you to change your mind? Even if you are still of the same opinion, would it be the part of wisdom that you should advise a compromise for Canada which both parties could support?

\*\*\*

CANADA and Australia and New Zealand and the smaller Dominions are doing their best to help the people of Great Britain in this just but terrible war. Each one is giving freely of its blood and treasure and will give and give until all is exhausted. There is no sacrifice which the Empire can demand which these Dominions will not make. Under these circumstances does it not lie in the work of the Imperial authorities to see that the one point in dispute in Imperial matters is removed from the arena of party politics.

There is a verse of Kipling's which is a prayer suitable for the present moment. He supplicates thus:

"Teach us to look in all our ends,  
On Thee for Judge, and not our friends;  
That we, with Thee, may walk uncowed  
By fear or favour of the crowd."

Canada looks to you to say what is right whether it is popular or not. You, as an Imperial statesman, should know neither political party in Canada. Your decision should be given for Canada, not for one portion of it. Whatever you say, Canada will do, whether it be Dreadnoughts, cruisers, submarines or merely coast defences. If your judgment is sound, and if it represents the united feelings and beliefs of the British Government and the naval advisers of His Majesty, Canada will be pleased and the future will be smooth and satisfactory. You have been called to high office, and as His Majesty's secretary of state for the navy, your advice must be taken. But that advice should, if possible, be given to all Canada and not to one party. It should be given to unite political differences, not to create them.

Will you pardon the presumption in this open letter? There is no sinister and not even a partisan motive in writing it. The political differences on the navy question should be eliminated for the good of Canada and for the benefit of Britannic unity. You are the particular one of His Majesty's advisers who can remove these political differences by a word.

Believe me, Sir,

Respectfully yours,

Editor Canadian Courier.

## A Tribute to "Bobs"

WHEN you have done reading about Von Kluck and Hindenburg; when you have finished with Rennenkampf and have concluded that Gen. Joffre has yet to prove the full measure of his worth as a great world general—just quietly turn to the life of the little soldier who died on Saturday last as near the trenches of the Allies as he could get. A tottering, great little godlike man, Lord Roberts, the Empire's "Bobs," couldn't rest easy in life or be happy in death till he had got to the front where his fellow-subjects and their friends are fighting for the cause of liberty. And the death of Lord Roberts in France is the greatest human event in this war of humanity against inhumanity—because of all great soldiers in any country, Lord Roberts was the most inspiring character known to fighters.

Had there been half a dozen such men as "Bobs" in all Germany, this foolhardy brute-force and explosive struggle of all nations would never have been allowed to happen. But all the militarist millions of Germany never could have produced one "Bobs," because he was the product of a free people, and a great, human, self-governing Empire. He was the darling of his country and of all the overseas dominions in the Empire. He was never a war lord, always a soldier; never a mere soldier, always a man. He was the finest expression of practical culture that had nothing to do with "kultur." And even if Kipling had never written that poem "Bobs," the original of it would have remained the fighting hero of a free people who carried the torch of liberty and democracy into India, Africa and Europe at the head of his fighting men.

All the world loves a great soldier; and a really great soldier is the best embodiment of chivalrous virtues in any age. Recalling the life of Lord Roberts from the time of his birth and early exploits in India till his heroic last struggle in France among his beloved troops, we realize that war in the hands of such a man was never ugly, diabolical and horrible. In all Germany there is no soldier with any such career as that of Lord Roberts. In all the glorious, clean-handed heroism and military strategy of Lord Roberts' career, there is no single moment or episode such as history has already set down to the eternal discredit of Germany among the nations. Lord Roberts fought as a freeman among freemen, for the cause of freedom. When, in the language of Kipling, Tommy Atkins is made to say, "And we'll follow 'im to 'ell, won't we, Bobs?" it is Tommy's way of saying that he made a hero of "Bobs" in an Empire where free speech is a cardinal principle and where great men are real democrats.