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The Utilization of Colonial Forces in Imperial Defence.

Continued.

If a colonial army reserve might with advantage be raised, how much more a colonial navy reserve? The chief factor in imperial defence must necessarily be the Navy. Apart from being the traditional bulwark of the British nation, is the fact that the supremacy of the seas is vitally necessary to Great Britain. Without that element the colonies would be impotent against us, as their supplies of munitions in war would be cut off, and the people of Great Britain would starve, as they require to import annually fifteen-thirty-thirds of the food they require for their 33,000,000 of inhabitants. Therefore, the supply lines must be kept open, and the Navy must do it. The comparative fighting power of the British Navy, is given by a research authority as two-thirds greater than Germany, one-third greater than France, and six-sevenths greater than Russia. How far is this total fighting strength available?

We are told, upon reliable naval authority, that it would take upwards of two years to put the steamers now out of commission into fighting trim. Of the total British steamers there are:—

Armoured. Unarmoured. Gunboats.

In commission.....	31	125	29
In reserve, repair, or building.....	31	77	37.

That is to say nearly one-half of the fleet of steam vessels are immediately unavailable. We are also told that the number of seamen requisite to man the fleet is about 87,000, while there are only 57,000 available (taking all reserves into the calculation), leaving 30,000 men to be provided.

Now if a royal naval reserve were to be established in the colonies, and these men were to be trained on reserve vessels provided for the purpose, there would be found in war time at the head-quarters of each colonial station a sufficient number of trained seamen to man the vessels upon that station, thus releasing the Navy men for other duty.

In Canada there are registered 37,235 sailors. On the North American and West Indian station there are 20 war vessels, manned by 3,173 officers and men. There could be no difficulty in procuring the crews for these vessels from amongst our hardy, seafaring population; but, in addition, Canada owns 1,195 sea going steam-vessels to act as transports and supply vessels. A sufficient number of these vessels should be carefully surveyed and enrolled as "naval reserve vessels," the Commander having instructions to proceed immediately upon the declaration of war to a harbour or rendezvous. There should be stored fittings and armaments designed for each vessel, and immediately available, so that no time should be lost in fitting for sea, having in view the special suitability of each vessel for cruising, transport, or supply purposes.