

CANADA'S MARITIME DEFENCE NEEDS

Part 1 - The North American Maritime Defence Situation When Canada's Navy Was Founded

The following paragraphs are extracts from the paper "The Monroe Doctrine" which appeared in the October 1909 edition of "The University Magazine" – a magazine issued by a committee for McGill University, University of Toronto and Dalhousie College. It was written by Stephen Leacock, who was then Head of the Department of Economics and Political Science at McGill University.

It was used by the Hon L.P. Brodeur, the founding minister of the Royal Canadian Navy, in speeches and in preparing the 1910 Naval Bill during the administration of Sir Wilfrid Laurier.

The discerning reader will find disturbing parallels nowadays to much of what Leacock wrote, almost a century ago.

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"During the coming session of the Canadian parliament the public of the Dominion will be called upon, for the first time in many years, to consider in all seriousness the question of maritime defence and its bearing on the future of this country... The adoption of any definite national policy in regard to naval defence will present a forward movement in one direction or the other, in the political development of the Canadian people, from which a future retrogression will be increasingly difficult."

"The existence of the so-called Monroe doctrine and its supposed bearing upon the international position of Canada has served for many years to perplex a subject already difficult in itself and to postpone beyond its due time the solution of the most important political problem of the day. The imaginary protection which it has afforded to Canada has acted as a soporific to the public mind"

"The words " Monroe Doctrine," like many other historic phrases, have been put to a variety of uses and been subject to the most conflicting interpretations.... Out of this confusion has sprung up the idea, wide-spread in the minds of Canadian citizens, that the Monroe doctrine is something which protects Canada from outside aggression, and that our national existence is safeguarded by the battleships of the United States navy - this too at a cost of some 120,000,000 per annum uncomplainingly borne on our behalf by the people of the United States."

"It is a disputed point whether the body of rules known as international law is entitled to its name. In the lack of a compelling power behind its regulations it seems probable that they will be followed or not merely according to the relative fighting power of the two parties to an international dispute."

"The United States has lost its isolation, and in its diplomacy, its commerce, and its territorial interests is intimately connected with the states of Europe. From a system of European powers we have passed to a public polity controlled by a group of world powers."

"With the settlement of the west and the consolidation of its industrial civilization, it was inevitable that American enterprise should seek a wider field than that offered within the four corners of the republic. The lateral expansion of American trade called urgently for a like expansion of political power."

"The point under discussion here is not the equity or efficiency of the American imperial governments, but the altered position thus accepted by the United States in the general sphere of world politics. It has become an Asiatic power with new lines of interest radiating in all directions across the Pacific; a naval

power and now the predominant partner in the West Indies, the former battle ground of the maritime nations of Europe; a commercial power whose colossal and highly organized industries at home look to its new possessions as bases for the conquest of the export trade. Monroe's creed of America for the Americans has been altered to mean America for the Americans and as much else of the world's surface as can be obtained at a profitable figure. This is a simple "doctrine" long known and practiced by the princes of Europe. It removes the moral bias from the original gospel of Monroe and should therefore allow the American republic to enter the comity of the great powers on a footing of complete good fellowship."

"For a maritime empire a navy is a first necessity, and for this Congress is voting yearly some million dollars and will go on voting until the navies of Europe are overtopped by the navy of the American republic. Diplomatically America has entered into the counsels of the powers. Peace and war in Manchuria are settled in Portsmouth, New Hampshire, and the appearance of American delegates at Algeciras shows that the republic is willing to aid the Princes in their protection of the Sultan of Morocco. The situation is one that is perfectly understood. In the possible struggle for China or the partition of Siam the United States will have to be reckoned with as one of the participant powers. The only person who fails to grasp the situation is the Canadian patriot-politician sitting upon a snow pile and meandering about the protection afforded him by President Monroe."

"Consider now a moment what would be the consequences, under present conditions of international politics, of the supposed axiom that Canada is protected by the United States. It could only mean that no matter what European power or combination might be at war with Great Britain, no matter how the United States might otherwise be disposed towards that power, no matter what part Canada might be taking in the contest, as an active ally, as a field of recruitment, as a granary of food supply - that the United States would declare to the European power that Canadian territory, Canadian ships, and Canadian commerce were outside of the legitimate field of belligerent attack. The thing is absolute nonsense."

"Under the rules of naval warfare adopted in 1908, the food supply of a fighting nation, in so far as it is destined for the combatants, becomes contraband of war. It is an easy inference that in the case of a nation like Great Britain, which must import food or starve, each and any part of the incoming grain or produce would be regarded as contraband of war by any adversary that could arrest its passage at sea. Is it not also at least possible that Germany in fighting England might find that under our present defenceless condition the despatch of a minor cruiser to cripple the Canadian trade and to bombard the unprotected ports of Canada, might, relatively to its size, be one of the promising exploits of the war."

"And here it is presumed the United States would intervene, that the Washington government would say to the German Empire: "Canada is neutral territory: it is lawful for the British belligerent to seize as an act of war your German dependency of South West Africa, to hold Kaiser Wilhelm's land in New Guinea, or to attack the German base in the Pacific Kiao-chau; but Germany must not in return seek to cripple the Canadian trade or seize the sea-ports of Nova Scotia without contravening the sacred rights of Canada secured by the Monroe doctrine and insulting the sovereignty of the United States." Such a statement carries with it the proof of its own absurdity. The United States could only say this at the price of itself participating in the war, of declaring itself an active ally of Great Britain in the struggle against Germany. That it would do this on each and every occasion that might arise passes the bounds of the conceivable. The United States, like every other country, has its own interests to preserve, its own international affinities and obligations to regard, its own welfare to pursue. In a war between Britain and Germany, it might side with one or with the other, or, more probably, preserve a strict neutrality between the two. To suppose that it would, at all risks to itself, take under its protection the most valuable external possession of one of the belligerents, a country of 7,000,000 people, thousands of whose citizens were combatants in the contest, is to suppose it guilty of a form of philanthropic lunacy not readily creditable to the American people."

“The long and short of it is this. The Monroe doctrine is merely an expression of policy, of what the United States at certain periods in the past thought it in their own best interests to do. In the future it will be the same, - merely an expression of what the government of Washington, having in view the advantages and disadvantages that might accrue to its own people, decide to do in a particular situation. It was invoked against the presence of the French in Mexico, not because French occupation 'of the country was unjust or oppressive to its inhabitants but, because it was dangerous to the United States. It was not invoked, officially, against the American occupation of the Philippines, because the commercial interest and the export trade of the republic was benefited by the occupation. So, too, it will be always. Under present circumstances the whole thing has become a mere diplomatic figment, a polite name for the fact that the United, States, like all other Christian countries, is prepared to use brute force in what it thinks its own interest even in regard to territory not under its immediate sovereignty”

“But in its bearing upon our national future in Canada, perhaps when all is said and done, the main reason for casting aside the worn out fiction of the protection of Monroe lies in another direction. The acceptance of such a protection, even if offered, would be unworthy of a people as lofty in their own estimation as the people of this Dominion. There is no need to elaborate the point. The nations of history have grown to greatness by sacrifice and self-reliance. There is no other path. We cannot accept unpaid the sheltering protection of another state. The future lies elsewhere”.

“Upon the North American continent, there are not one but two great powers. Side by side with the democratic republic of the United States stands the democratic empire of the British people. Not all the fiat of an American Secretary of State can annihilate its sovereignty.”

Part 2 – The Canadian Maritime Defence Situation In Modern Times

Recollecting the foresight and courage of Sir Wilfrid Laurier’s administration in the creation of the Royal Canadian Navy, it would indeed be fitting if the Canadian parliament and public would once again in Leacock’s words “consider in all seriousness the question of maritime defence and its bearing on the future of this country” This does not seem likely at this time – yet it is urgently needed and the dangers of failing to do so are incalculable .

Once again the adoption of a definite national policy in regard to naval defence will have a significant bearing on the political development of Canada from which a future retrogression is likely to become impossible – not just difficult. This arises because the production of modern warships, and submarines is an extensively value-added process, which affects a large number of industries in the producing nation, and places extraordinary demands on industrial technology and manufacturing. If Canadians allows such capabilities to become extinct they will not be recaptured – as is attested by the sad impact of the AVRO Arrow’s demise on Canada’s aerospace industries.

Of course, Canada could always go, cap and wallet in hand, to our neighbour and ally, the United States, for her new ships – but at what price, politically, militarily, industrially and economically? How subject and vulnerable would that make us to United States foreign and Alliance policy? How much timely priority would Canadian requirements receive in American production lines for warships, and weaponry? Would Canada receive the very latest weaponry or would the United States take the prudent path of not parting with the latest hardware and software modifications? How much of a share would Canadian resource and manufacturing industries receive in the American warship production programs? What would be the impact of such multi-billion dollar programs on trade and balance of payments between Canada and the United States?

Perhaps then we could look towards a European nation to build our future warships, submarines and maritime aircraft – but again at what price? The above-mentioned questions still apply; but we now inject two additional difficulties. First - the warships and submarines of European nations are, for the most part, unique to their individual nations and they often are not adequately interoperable with those of the United States Navy. Secondly - the costs and operational delays involved in maintaining and repairing naval equipments when the manufacturers' facilities are two thousand miles across the Atlantic ocean can become prohibitive – making it necessary to set up Canadian sub-contractors to do the work under license from the European manufacturers – again a costly process.

Faced with the above dilemma Canada has successfully adopted an effective solution whereby we have for many years participated fully in multi-national naval equipment programs under the auspices of the NATO Naval Armaments Group and joint naval research under bilateral, trilateral and Quadripartite programs all of which have United States Navy involvement as well as that of other nations. The highly capable Sea Sparrow missile systems in our Canadian Patrol Frigates and the very modern Data Link and communications systems in those ships are but three examples that highlight the importance of Canadian military participation in those groups.

There is something intrinsically self-defeating in failing to ensure military interoperability with an immediate neighbour who is both your major trading partner and the most militarily powerful nation in the West. Yet, the Canadian pseudo-patriot, of whom there seems to be a plentiful supply for many reasons, equates interoperability to subordination; and nothing prompts more baying in the Canadian media than the mere intimation that Canadian military units might have to take orders from an American military commander. For the most part the media is ignorant of the important distinctions between National Command, Operational Command, Tactical Command, Operational Control and Tactical Control and seems singularly uninterested in correcting that ignorance.

To their credit, Canadian politicians and the Canadian media have developed some understanding of the role and meaning of Rules of Engagement (ROE) in military operations. But these are too often envisaged as mechanisms to apply Canadian peace-loving values; whereas the actual purpose of ROE is to prevent or control escalation. The fact that ROE cease to apply when hostilities commence seems to have gone unnoticed by the media; as has the fact that a the nation with the weakest ROE in a multi-nation naval force renders its ships and personnel hostage to the actions of the nation whose ships have the strongest ROE.

The customs involving command on the high seas have been around a very long time. Putting it simply the senior officer present assumes command – that is to say Tactical Command - of the formation. If a nation has concerns about this it has but to provide an officer senior to all of the foreign officers in the force; because, regardless of nationalities, Admirals do not take orders from Captains, who in turn do not take orders from Commanders. This reality will undoubtedly dismay Canadian egalitarians who don't wish to see Canadian military units subordinate to any non-Canadian; while at the same time they don't see any purpose or necessity in having “so many” Canadian Admirals.

The same principle applies with international military staffs. If Canada wants to assume responsible and authoritative positions in critically important organizations such as SACLANT, SACEUR and the NATO Naval Armaments Group, and in international military crises, such as the Gulf War, she has to be prepared to provide officers of the requisite rank, seniority and experience.

But there is more to it. Canada will not even be **invited** to join international naval forces or to fill responsible and authoritative international naval positions if she lacks effective naval forces to contribute to her defence and that of her allies. This raises the question “What constitutes effective naval forces?”

That question is best answered by pointing out what kinds of warships and naval forces are **not** effective.

If a warship lacks endurance and seakeeping qualities to the point where she hampers her consorts in a multi-nation force - she will not be deemed effective. If she is deficient in capabilities in anti-air warfare, or anti-surface warfare, or anti-submarine warfare, or command, control and communications to the point where her consorts in the force must divert some of their capabilities in those areas to protect and assist her – she will not be deemed effective.

For a few short years after World War II and the Korean War Canada had warships which were effective in anti-air warfare, anti-surface warfare and anti-submarine warfare. The advent of the missile age changed that drastically. By the late 1970's our destroyers were largely ineffective against the modern surface and air threats and would have been similarly ineffective against the modern submarine had we not modified them to incorporate shipborne anti-submarine search and attack helicopters. The real combat capability in the Canadian Navy then lay mainly in our three torpedo-equipped OBERON Class submarines

During those years the limitations of Canadian warships made them less and less welcome in the BLUE (“Friendly”) forces of major NATO exercises and we were increasingly relegated to the ORANGE (“Enemy”) role where we could pretend to possess combat capabilities similar to those in Warsaw Pact navies.

In one humiliating instance the Captain commanding a Task Group of four Canadian warships assigned to a British NATO naval exercise was obliged by equipment shortcomings to request three successive major modifications to the exercise Communications Plan. The Royal Navy admiral in charge generously complied with the first two requests; his response to the third request was “I regret that I cannot further amend the COMPLAN to compensate for the obsolescent communications equipments in Canadian ships”. Apparently we had become obsolescent to the point where we could neither fight effectively nor communicate effectively- notwithstanding the tremendous efforts put forth by Canadian naval personnel widely acknowledged to be as professional and competent as those in any navy!

In recent years the impressive new combat capabilities in our updated Tribal Class destroyers and our new Canadian Patrol Frigates coupled with the professionalism of their crews has dramatically improved Canada's naval status. Within NATO naval forces the interoperability of our ships with United States Navy ships is unique. For the first time ever, our warships are not only welcomed within American carrier battle groups, but are also deemed sufficiently capable to replace USN ships of similar class – giving over-committed American ships sorely needed and gratefully received respite. For the first time in decades Canadian warships are recognized to be making a meaningful contribution to North America's maritime defence – a recognition that will be even further enhanced when our new submarines enter service and make their unique contribution to surveillance, deterrence and training off North American coasts.

The ability to participate fully in the operations of another nation's navy, even that of a powerful neighbour, is a very important and desirable aspect of Canada/U.S. maritime defence of North America. However, it can become a secondary consideration in any situation where Canada may have to take unilateral naval action - either in defence of her own maritime interests in adjacent oceans, or in supporting the United Nations abroad. It is both naïve and dangerous to assume that the United States would always deem it in her best interests to support every Canadian cause, regardless of the consequences to herself - just as Canada has not always found it in her best interests to support every United States causes.

Unilateral action in naval matters demands the ability to exercise control over a select area of the ocean or sea in order to preserve its use for oneself and one's friends whilst denying it to real or potential enemies. This presupposes an ability to deploy rapidly to nearby or distant waters, to remain on scene for whatever duration is necessary to achieve the mission, to conduct surveillance enroute and in situ, and to be able to defend against any form of attack which might materialize.

None of Canada's warships and submarines is singly capable of doing all of the above. This explains why Maritime Command has wisely decided to have the capability to provide on each coast a naval Task Group comprising one or more Tribal Class destroyers, Canadian Patrol Frigates, Operational Support Ships, shipborne helicopters, submarines and Aurora aircraft – as befits the mission and threat - and commanded by a senior Canadian Naval officer responsible solely to the Canadian government.

Homeland defence must now include security of our ports and coastal waters against terrorism, as well as maritime military assistance to other government departments in enforcing Canada's laws in territorial waters. As global warming continues, the ice conditions in the Canadian Arctic are no longer as forbidding as they were in 1906 when the Canadian Government first sent CGS ARCTIC, under Captain Joseph Bernier, to claim sovereignty over our Arctic archipelago and waters. As accessibility to those lands and waters increases, so too will challenges to Canadian ownership. The need to maintain technologically advanced centres on each coast to coordinate maritime surveillance and response for homeland defence will increase – as will the demands on our fleet of Maritime Coastal Defence Vessels (MCDV). There will be situations when the speed, endurance, sensors or weaponry of the MCDV will not be adequate for the mission and our larger warships and Maritime aircraft will need to be used.

With fading memories of World Wars and the Korean War, with a strong pacifist element in the Canadian population, with a very small percentage of Canadians possessing prior military experience (including parliamentarians) with all the calls for more funding for Health, Education, the Environment and Aboriginal Claims, and with the eyes of Canadians being constantly drawn to issues and events within our territorial boundaries, National Defence in general and the Maritime Forces in particular have minimal constituency with which to influence politicians, the media and the public. Therefore parliamentarians must understand that a grassroots movement in support of defence spending is highly unlikely to ever arise in Canada, and consequently it is they who must take the lead in informing their constituents of the needs of Canada's Navy Army and Air Force.

The 1909 fiction that Canada would be protected by the United States under the Monroe Doctrine has its counterpart today among those who profess that Canada need not worry about defence because the United States would be obliged to protect us in the event of attack. Stephen Leacock's warning that sacrifice and self-reliance is the only path to national greatness has been forgotten by a hedonistic Canadian society as "lofty in their own estimation" as in Leacock's days. His admonition that "We cannot accept unpaid the sheltering protection of another state" is being foolishly disregarded by those who fail to perceive that the American people are not possessed by "philanthropic lunacy" and that they will exact payment for any defence they believe attributable to Canada – one way or another – be it trade sanctions, natural resources or industrial takeovers.

There are indeed important issues and questions which warrant that the Canadian public "consider in all seriousness the question of maritime defence and its bearing on the future of this country"!

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