

Admiral Jellicoe Goes to Sea: The Naval Mission and the Ambition for an “Imperial Royal Navy”¹

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An important milestone in the development of the dominion navies was the Empire Cruise conducted by Admiral Sir John Jellicoe in 1919, during which he visited India, Australia, New Zealand, and Canada. At the conclusion of each stage of his trip, Jellicoe prepared a report for the dominion government concerned explaining how it might establish an effective local navy that could support the Royal Navy in the defense of the empire. Although Jellicoe’s advice was not immediately followed due to financial exigencies and war weariness, the principles he expounded provided the foundations for the highly effective dominion navies in the later years of the Second World War and beyond. While the historiography has largely dismissed the value of the Empire Cruise, this article offers a reappraisal.

La croisière de l’empire menée en 1919 par l’amiral Sir John Jellicoe, au cours de laquelle il a visité l’Inde, l’Australie, la Nouvelle-Zélande et le Canada, a marqué une étape importante dans le développement des marines nationales. À la fin de chaque étape de son voyage, Jellicoe préparait un rapport pour le gouvernement fédéral concerné dans lequel il expliquait comment ce gouvernement pouvait établir une marine locale efficace qui pourrait appuyer la Marine royale dans la défense de l’empire. Bien que les conseils de Jellicoe n’aient pas été immédiatement suivis en raison des exigences financières et de lassitude de la guerre, les principes qu’il a énoncés ont jeté les bases des marines fédérales très efficaces des dernières années de la Seconde Guerre mondiale et par la suite. Alors que l’historiographie a largement rejeté la valeur de la croisière de l’empire, cet article constitue une réévaluation.

¹ The author would like to thank the anonymous referees whose careful reviews proved very helpful.

Introduction

A little-known episode in the development of the dominion navies was the Naval Mission of Admiral Lord Jellicoe over the year from February 1919 to February 1920.² It has usually been given short shrift in the historiography as “over-ambitious to the point of grandiosity.”³ This article argues that Jellicoe’s Naval Mission was more significant than generally accepted and that it marked an important milestone in the development of the Royal Canadian Navy (RCN), the Royal Australian Navy (RAN) and, in due course, the Royal New Zealand Navy (RNZN). The fruits of Jellicoe’s mission, broadly speaking, lay with organisational foundations and common training and equipment that led, in turn, to the successful interoperability of the dominion navies with the Royal Navy (RN) during the Second World War and in the Cold War that followed. Indeed, the DNA of the dominion navies, received from the RN, can be detected into present times as evidenced by ongoing interoperability and aligned – albeit with national differences – naval cultures.

The genesis of the dominion navies, notably those of Australia, New Zealand, and Canada, can be traced to the twenty years prior to the Great War.⁴ This period witnessed a revolution in both technologies as applied to naval matériel, significantly affecting maritime strategies and tactics, as well as with diplomatic developments affecting international relations and questions of alliances. An additional factor for Great Britain was economic stress occasioned by relative decline compared to some rivals (notably Germany and the United States) as well as endemic financial difficulties experienced in its public finances. The *Pax Britannica* that had dominated European affairs since the conclusion of the Napoleonic Wars in 1815 was increasingly challenged and, if not yet eclipsed, was certainly under strain.⁵

² The settler colonies of, *inter alia*, Australia, New Zealand, and Canada were termed ‘dominions’ at the time and retain it still in some contexts. Here dominions refer to all three states.

³ Stephen Roskill, *Naval Policy Between the Wars: Vol. I – The Period of Anglo-American Antagonism, 1919-1929* (1968; repr., Barnsley: Seaforth Publishing, 2016), 288.

⁴ The standard histories include David Stevens, ed., *The Royal Australian Navy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001); I.C. McGibbon, *Blue Water Rationale: The Naval Defence of New Zealand, 1914-1942* (Wellington: P.D. Hasselberg, Government Printer, 1981), and, William Johnston, William G.P. Rawling, Richard H. Gimblett and John MacFarlane, *The Seabound Coast: The Official History of the Royal Canadian Navy, 1867-1939* (Toronto: Dundurn Press, 2010).

⁵ The theme of imperial decline in a relative sense is vast. Two useful accounts include: G.R. Searle, *A New England? Peace and War 1886-1918* (The New Oxford History of England, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 243-252; and, David Cannadine, *Victorious Century* (New York: Viking, 2017), 392-394. For the “Pax Britannica” another subject with a huge historiography, see Barry Gough, *Pax Britannica: Ruling the Waves and Keeping the Peace*



Jellicoe wearing the uniform of Admiral of the Fleet, a promotion he was given on 3 April 1919. (Wikimedia Commons)

This environment gave rise to a renewed push by British politicians for assistance from the Empire in imperial defence. The fundamental argument was that all components of the Empire benefited from imperial defence in terms of security, particularly protection of trade, and hence should contribute something to its maintenance.⁶ One of the themes that arose out of these notions was an initiative to create an “Imperial Royal Navy” by securing the aid of the Empire as an active element of Imperial Defence.⁷ The dominions were willing to consider this question, with Australia and New Zealand providing a subsidy, since 1887, for the maintenance of an “Auxiliary Squadron,” under the authority of the RN admiral commanding the Australia Station, designed to help protect both colonies

from the incursions of hostile imperial powers such as Russia and France in the Pacific.⁸ Important for the two colonies was that the ships comprising the “Auxiliary Squadron” could not be deployed out of Australian and New Zealand waters without their approval, which provided both visible value for money as well as ensuring that “out of area” imperial concerns would not result in Antipodean maritime security being neglected. Their situation was

before Armageddon (Basingstoke, Hants: Palgrave MacMillan, 2014).

⁶ The proximate cause at the turn of the twentieth century was the financial burden associated with the prosecution of the Second Anglo-Boer War (1899-1902). See Jon Sumida, *In Defence of Naval Supremacy: Finance, Technology, and British Naval Policy, 1889-1914* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1993), 18-28.

⁷ Searle, *A New England*, 252-253; John Darwin, “A Third British Empire? The Dominion Idea in Imperial Politics,” in *The Oxford History of the British Empire: The Twentieth Century*, eds. Judith Brown and Wm Roger Lewis (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 64-88.

⁸ C 5091 *Proceedings of the Colonial Conference, 1887, Vol. I* (London: Her Majesty’s Stationery Office, 1887), 28-49; and, C 5091-I *Proceedings of the Colonial Conference, 1887, Vol II* (Appendix) (London: Her Majesty’s Stationery Office, 1887), 260-262; for the debate and agreement respectively. Germany replaced traditional rivals by the early years of the first decade of the twentieth century.

different from that of Canada where the potential danger from hostile imperial powers was assessed as distant and notional rather than direct, excepting the potential threat from the United States, which was considered unlikely and against which little could be realistically done.⁹ Canada was not willing to provide a subsidy or consider any maritime security expenditure beyond that involving fishery protection and local defence.¹⁰

The venue at which such matters were discussed was the Colonial Conferences (renamed Imperial Conferences in 1907). At the conference of 1902, Colonial Secretary Joseph Chamberlain famously remarked that Great Britain was the “weary titan” struggling to meet its many obligations, and asked for assistance from the Empire more broadly and the dominions in particular.¹¹ However, the willingness of the dominions to directly assist the Mother Country was impeded by the question of raising taxes to address imperial defence requirements, as well as the vexing question of dominion autonomy. Local taxpayers were not keen to make such payments without enjoying the benefits of local procurement and local control over the forces paid for by those taxes. Canada was perhaps the most vocal in its opposition to making such payments to London, but Australia was no more enthusiastic, with New Zealand an outlier in this regard.¹² The British preference was for financial contributions to the Royal Navy so that it could be controlled by the Admiralty without recourse to the dominion governments.¹³ Conceptually this position was founded upon the essential unity of the world’s oceans that demanded a single controlling naval authority in the name of efficiency and effectiveness. However, this approach did not commend itself to the dominions for the financial reasons noted, as well as key questions regarding conflict between perceived local interests and imperial priorities.¹⁴ Indeed, the decades

⁹ James Eayrs, *In Defence of Canada: From the Great War to the Great Depression* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1964), 70-78 and 323-328 (Defence Scheme No. 1). The latter reference, from the 1920s, addresses how Canada might meet an American invasion, which includes the fantasy of “offensive action” as if the experience in Flanders had taught nothing and the 12:1 disparity in military, economic, and population strength ignored.

¹⁰ C.P. Stacey, *Canada and the Age of Conflict, Vol. I: 1867-1821* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1984), 77-78.

¹¹ Cd. 1299 *Papers relating to a Conference between the Secretary of State for the Colonies and the Prime Ministers of Self-Governing Colonies* (London: His Majesty’s Stationery Office, 1902), 4.

¹² An excellent summation of the pre-Great War conferences is J.E. Kendle, *The Colonial and Imperial Conferences, 1887-1911* (London: Longmans, Green and Co Ltd, 1967). See pp 39-54 for commentary on the 1902 Colonial Conference.

¹³ Cd. 1299 *1902 Colonial Conference Papers*, 20. Here Lord Selbourne articulates the theme of “one sea” and “one navy” in the interests of effectiveness and efficiency. It was to be repeated regularly by British officials, including Admiral Jellicoe in 1919 (see below).

¹⁴ There were two subsidy agreements between Australia and New Zealand, both arising out of

prior to the Great War featured a marked evolution from complete dependence and deference of the self-governing colonies to Great Britain, towards increasing autonomy.¹⁵ The question of imperial defence was but one of numerous issues relating to this evolving relationship. Both sides were feeling their way, with no definitive end game in sight. It is sufficient for our purposes to note that change in the traditional relationship was in the air, that, since the 1907 Imperial Conference, there was a growing divergence in the interests of the dominions and Great Britain, and that there was acknowledgement from imperial officials as to the inevitability of this shift.¹⁶ Loyal sentiment towards Great Britain remained a powerful force into the post-Second World War era and was very strong at this time.

Pre-Great War Dominion Naval Development

Both Canada and Australia had a start in creating local navies by the turn of the twentieth century. Canada had “naval-like” patrol vessels designed to enforce fishery regulations, particularly against the United States. Australia had coast defence vessels designed to protect its littoral acquired by the constituent Australian pre-federation colonies. New Zealand, by contrast, relied on financial contributions to Great Britain to provide some visible and present maritime protection. Its chief act during this period was the gift of a capital ship to Great Britain and to lay the legislative foundations for its eventual navy. Inevitably in both Canada and Australia the question of developing local navies was topical during the pre-war years. A summary of the eventual establishment of the RAN and RCN is appropriate here to provide a foundation for what follows.¹⁷

In Australia during the first decade of the twentieth century, the belief that the Auxiliary Squadron was entirely inadequate to the potential challenges from

Colonial Conferences (1887 and 1902). Prime Minister Alfred Deakin noted, in correspondence with Australia’s governor general on 16 October 1907, the essential problem of control resting with the Admiralty with regard to Australian interests as well as a public that deprecated the arrangement. See, Nicholas Lambert, *Australia’s Naval Inheritance: Imperial Maritime Strategy and the Australia Station, 1880-1909* (Canberra: Department of Defence, Maritime Studies Program, 1998), 115-118. Deakin was arguing for a more robust *Australian* naval commitment.

¹⁵ Not in the event fully achieved until the passage of the Statute of Westminster in 1931 that granted the dominions complete freedom in external affairs.

¹⁶ McGibbon, *Blue-Water Rationale*, Chapter 1, 1-17; Johnston et al, *Seabound Coast*, Chapter 1, 3-67; and, Stevens, *Royal Australian Navy*, Chapter 1, 5-27.

¹⁷ Helpful and brief summaries are at Roger Sarty, “A Navy of Necessity: Canadian Naval Forces, 1867-2014”; David Stevens, “The Australian Naval Experience, 1904-2010”; and, Michael Wynd, “Small Steps from Empire to Independence: The Royal New Zealand Navy, 1910-2010,” *The Northern Mariner* XXIV, no’s. 3 & 4, (2014); 32-38, 60-64, and 104-106 respectively.

likely hostile powers led to increasing calls for more modern and powerful warships. These were the early years of the Australian federation and financial resources were not available to do anything by way of creating an effective local navy. Indeed, out of the 1902 Colonial Conference, Australia and New Zealand agreed to continue the subsidy arrangement with the Admiralty for a further ten years (until 1912). The Canadian perspective was somewhat different in that Great Britain, because of its own vital interests in the north Atlantic and eastern Pacific, had always provided maritime defence services in the past and so this request threatened an unwelcome new burden on a dominion government whose resources were already strained by the heavy costs of trans-continental development.¹⁸

The Australian approach was much more closely aligned with imperial policy. Four of the state governments had small naval establishments, which were constituted as the Commonwealth Naval Forces (CNF), effective 1 March 1901 (the Federation itself came into force on 1 January 1901). The years immediately following this development were characterised by financial and organisational challenges making the creation of an effective local maritime security service problematic. A significant impediment was the ongoing deprecation of the entire concept of a local navy by the Admiralty.¹⁹

The key individual who worked tirelessly to make progress despite such difficulties was Captain William Creswell.²⁰ Creswell joined the RN in the mid-1860s at the usual age of 13, and after a relatively brief but honourable career

¹⁸ The Canadian prime minister, Sir Wilfrid Laurier, noted during the 1907 Colonial Conference, that financial resources were overwhelmingly required for public works, particularly railroads. Naval subsidies were out of the question. Earlier at the same conference, Louis Brodeur, Canadian minister of Marine and Fisheries, summarised various “naval” expenditures including fisheries protection, hydrographic surveying, Great Lakes patrolling, a naval militia, and maintenance of the two ex-RN Canadian bases at Halifax and Esquimalt. Modern warships were not part of this list, nor was there any commitment to acquire any at this time. See Cd. 3523, *Colonial Conference, 1907, Minutes of Proceedings of the Colonial Conference, 1907* (London: His Majesty’s Stationery Office, 1907), 542 (Laurier) and 139-141 (Brodeur). Brodeur’s title as minister of marine and fisheries expressed well Canadian sentiment.

¹⁹ Examples from the 1880s to the early 1900s are readily at hand. For example, see Rear Admiral Sir Lewis Beaumont’s rejection of an Australian proposal prepared by Captain W. Creswell in late 1901. Essentially, reliance was to remain on the RN, noting the complete absence of any “real” threat to Australian security, combined with the very real practical difficulties in maintaining warships given Australia’s finances, infrastructure and crew efficiency given their part-time status. Beaumont was the commander-in-chief of the Australia Station. See Lambert, *Australia’s Naval Inheritance*, 86-88, for the Beaumont example; and 1-9 for practical difficulties and Admiralty perspectives in Lambert’s introduction.

²⁰ A brief summary of Creswell’s career can be found at Gregory Gilbert, *Australian Naval Personalities: Lives from Australian Dictionary of Biography* (Canberra: Sea Power Centre, 2006), 53-57.

resigned his commission and emigrated to Australia in the late 1870s. He, almost by happenstance, found himself appointed to the South Australian Naval Forces in 1885. Creswell advocated the establishment of an Australian navy to supplement the RN early in this new career and he became the acknowledged expert on whom politicians could rely. After Federation, he was appointed Naval Officer Commanding the Commonwealth Naval Forces from which perch he continued his advocacy for men and ships. The Admiralty, due to its own financial pressures, relented on the subject of local navies, with Admiral Sir John Fisher's support from 1905. Progress was not rapid for a variety of reasons, but by late 1908 and early 1909 circumstances permitted the ordering of three destroyers as the nucleus of a revitalised CNF fleet. Importantly, at the same time, an agreement had been reached with the Admiralty that allowed the free interchange of personnel between the two services (RN and CNF), thus permitting training at RN establishments and thereby allowing Australia to take advantage of the RN's extensive infrastructure. Two of the destroyers were completed in 1910, with the third in 1912. These ships, *Parramatta*, *Yarra*, and *Warrego* were modern in all respects and represented new operational potential in comparison with the rather elderly vessels inherited by the CNF from the individual states in 1901. It was a beginning.²¹

International developments now profoundly affected both Australia and New Zealand. There were two elements of immediate relevance. The first was British acknowledgement that reliance on Japan for Empire security in the Pacific was perhaps unwise and certainly highly unpopular in both Australia and New Zealand given fears over Japanese ambition and aggression, combined with racial prejudice.²² The 1902 alliance between Britain and Japan had allowed the sharp reduction in the scale of the China Squadron with the withdrawal of its five battleships to home waters. Financially recreating a battleship force for the China Squadron was now out of the question as well as contrary to the strategic imperative to concentrate against the German threat. The second was the eruption of a crisis over the supposed erosion of Britain's superiority over the German battlefleet. This reverberated throughout the Empire, with Australia and New Zealand promising to fund a dreadnought each. Fisher seized on the offer.²³ He proposed that the two ships should be battlecruisers

²¹ David Stephens, ed., *The Australian Centenary History of Defence, Vol. III: The Royal Australian Navy* (South Melbourne, Oxford University Press, 2001), 5-19.

²² A useful discussion on Australian feelings regarding overseas threats, particularly that of Japan, can be found at Peter Overlack, "'A vigorous offensive': core aspects of Australian maritime defence concerns before 1914," in *Southern Trident: Strategy, History and the Rise of Australian Naval Power*, eds. David Stevens and John Reeve (Crow's Nest, NSW: Allen and Unwin, 2001), 140-159.

²³ This is the well known 1909 "Dreadnought Crisis" that led to an acceleration of British

and further that a “fleet unit” of accompanying light cruisers, destroyers, and submarines be acquired by Australia to form the core of its navy, which would replace the Australia Squadron in peacetime, with Admiralty control during war (the second fleet unit would be based in Hong Kong, centred on New Zealand’s gift). Fisher hoped that Canada, India, and South Africa might, in time, also contribute “fleet units” to provide a powerful Pacific and Indian Ocean fleet.²⁴ The size of the fleet unit was such that one of the chief practical difficulties in creating a new navy was eased with the scale involved – well beyond three destroyers – and the very real responsibilities assigned.²⁵ From Fisher’s perspective this option was ideal in that it relieved an awkward strategic liability from Great Britain directly, with the warships involved sufficient to deal with armoured cruisers (now unambiguously identified as German) in the Pacific but not threatening towards nor disrespectful of Japan.²⁶ The Australian “fleet unit” was virtually complete ahead of the Great War with HMAS *Australia* proudly forming the core of the RAN throughout the conflict.²⁷

Canada was by no means entirely immune from the reverberations from the Dreadnought Crisis, with a reluctant Laurier agreeing to the establishment of a navy to assist in the defence of Canadian waters. This would relieve the RN from that responsibility but there was no political support in a fractured Canada for a “fleet unit,” let alone such a force being based in Esquimalt, far

battleship construction, which also included the Australian and New Zealand contributions. Malaya provided a third dreadnought later. See Arthur J. Marder, *From Dreadnought to Scapa Flow, Vol. I: The Road to War* (1961; repr., Barnsley: Seaforth Publishing, 2013), 151-207.

²⁴ Correspondence between Fisher and Lord Esher, 13 September 1909, see Arthur J. Marder, *Fear God and Dreadnought: Years of Power, 1904-1914* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1956), 264-66. See also, Stevens, *Royal Australian Navy*, 19-22.

²⁵ Nicholas Lambert, “Sir John Fisher, the fleet unit concept, and the creation of the Royal Australian Navy,” in *Southern Trident*, 214-224, esp. 222.

²⁶ A useful discussion of the machinations associated with both the “Dreadnought Crisis” and its effects on the gifts from New Zealand and Australia can be found at Matthew Wright, *The Battlecruiser New Zealand: A Gift to Empire* (Barnsley: Seaforth Publishing, 2021), 46-61. Of relevance to the relations with Japan aspect of the “fleet unit” concept for the Pacific, was that the two ships were of the Indefatigable class armed with 12” guns and armoured cruiser standards of armour plate. This design had already been eclipsed that very year with new 13.5” guns and enhanced armour standards (Lion Class) and other features that were a significant improvement. These latest vessels, if deployed to the Pacific, would have perhaps alarmed Japan as to British intentions. It was hoped that the lesser quality of the two ships would raise no Japanese eyebrows. See also Nicholas Lambert, “Economy or Empire? The Fleet Unit Concept and the quest for collective security in the Pacific, 1909-14,” In, *Far Flung Lines: Essays on Imperial Defence in Honour of Donald Mackenzie Schurman*, eds. Greg Kennedy and Keith Neilson (London: Routledge & Co., 1996), 55-83.

²⁷ Note that New Zealand’s contribution was directly to the RN, hence HMS *New Zealand*.

from the political centre and to meet a threat that was peripheral from Canada's perspective.²⁸

Canada's equivalent to Australia's Creswell was retired Rear Admiral Charles Kingsmill who had spent a full career with the RN but was Canadian by birth and background. He was charged with dealing with a financial scandal associated with the Department of Marine and Fisheries when the Dreadnought Crisis erupted. This accelerated matters and with a force identified as four light cruisers and six destroyers, Laurier manoeuvred through Parliament the Naval Service of Canada Act in 1910. The fissures within the Canadian polity significantly affected progress, with Quebec's francophone population vehemently opposed to imperial entanglements, particularly the Admiralty's intent of directly controlling dominion naval assets in time of war. Laurier endeavoured to meet this objection with the requirement that Parliament would have to approve any such operational transfer at the time of need. English Canada was pulling the other way and pressing for a far closer relationship with Britain and a far more significant contribution than proposed.²⁹ Laurier's government gave way to Robert Borden's in 1911 in an election partially fought on the naval service question.³⁰ Borden's government, beyond opposing its predecessor, had given little concrete thought as to the form of a naval service that they would support. As 1911 slipped into 1912, the then stalled RCN, consisting of two transferred British cruisers – HMCS *Niobe* and HMCS *Rainbow* – represented all that was in place. The construction programme identified by Kingsmill was not progressing pending final government approval, which was not forthcoming. In its place was Borden's proposed contribution of three dreadnoughts to be financed by Canada as a gift, essentially on the same lines as the New Zealand contribution from 1909. In the event, the Borden initiative, which he developed at the urging of and in close consultation with Winston Churchill, first lord of the Admiralty, passed the Canadian House of Commons, but failed at the Senate in 1913.³¹ The net effect was when war came in August 1914, the state of the infant RCN was

²⁸ Richard Gimblett, "Reassessing the Dreadnought Crisis of 1909 and the Origins of the Royal Canadian Navy," *The Northern Mariner* IV, no. 1 (1994), 35-53.

²⁹ Johnston, Gimblett, et al., *Seabound Coast*, 141-210 is a comprehensive exploration of the period. See also Sarty, *A Navy of Necessity*, 37-8; and Michael Hadley and Roger Sarty, *Tin-Pots and Pirate Ships: Canadian Naval Forces and German Sea Raiders, 1880-1918* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1991), 53-75.

³⁰ The major issue was that of trade reciprocity with the United States. Borden's Conservatives were opposed.

³¹ Martin Thornton, *Churchill, Borden and Anglo-Canadian Naval Relations, 1911-14* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), xiii-xvi, 51-52, and 55 addresses the subject comprehensively, including useful appendices with reprints of the legislation involved as well as Admiralty reports. See also, Tucker, *Naval Service of Canada*, 177-183.



“HMCS *Niobe* at Daybreak, 1914.” With a displacement of 11,000 tons and a length of 450 feet (140 m), the vessel was one of two transferred British cruisers that made up the Royal Canadian Navy in the years prior to the First World War. (Painting reproduced with the permission of the artist, Peter Rindlisbacher)

parlous, with a poorly manned and maintained pair of increasingly obsolescent ex-British cruisers representing the sum total of its barely floating assets.³² As Gilbert Tucker summed up this entire affair:

During its pre-war tenure of office the Borden government had not implemented [Laurier’s] Naval Service Act. It had not set on foot its own intermediate policy, still less a permanent one. Nor had it been able to start its immediate project, born of the German naval threat and a fear of war. When this fear became a reality, therefore, there were no Canadian Bristols and destroyers, nor fleet units, nor contributed Queen Elizabeths, either built or building.³³

By 1914 the Admiralty’s efforts at securing dominion support in the provision of maritime security to the Empire had produced mixed results. Australia had gone the furthest with its financing of a fleet unit centred on the

³² Hadley and Sarty, *Tin-Pots and Pirate Ships*, 70-71 identified the frankly shabby shape of the RCN as represented by HMCS *Niobe* at this time – Kingsmill was quoted as saying that it was a “heart-breaking starvation time...” for the RCN in this bleak period (1911-14).

³³ Gilbert Tucker, *Naval Service of Canada*, 211. The reference to “Bristols” was to the British light cruiser design recommended by Kingsmill, and to the “Queen Elizabeths” was to the latest British design of dreadnoughts that Borden had recommended Canada finance.

battlecruiser HMAS *Australia* as well as additional light cruisers, destroyers, and submarines. The legislative foundations for the RAN were in place and the administrative and physical infrastructure aspects were developing satisfactorily.³⁴ Matters were in some disarray in Canada with the start provided by the provision of two cruisers languishing in Halifax and Esquimalt and the launch of the RCN effectively stalled. New Zealand remained content with its contribution of a single dreadnought and continued reliance on the RN for maritime security. The declaration of war against Germany on 4 August 1914 automatically involved the Empire, including the self-governing dominions. Operational control of the dominion warships shifted to the Admiralty as per agreement, but the communication protocols remained underdeveloped between London and the dominion capitals. Internally, the Admiralty retained many who wished to establish an Imperial Royal Navy and control a global naval war without dominion impediment.³⁵

Genesis of the Empire Mission

The war history of both the Royal Navy and the infant RAN and RCN will not detain us here. However, the more general military crisis of 1917, which generated scepticism and concern over the war's conduct and the evident potential for defeat, led to the calling of an Imperial War Conference that year. The conference included representatives from the dominions and Empire more generally to consider options and what the way ahead might involve.³⁶ One of the resolutions adopted was a request by the dominion governments of the British government as to what form future dominion naval forces should assume. No immediate action was taken in 1917, but a renewed call was made at the follow up conference in the summer of 1918, and later that year it was concluded that Admiral Sir John Jellicoe was the ideal candidate to head such a

³⁴ Stevens, *Royal Australian Navy*, 22-27. Note the advice provided to the Australian government by Admiral Sir Reginald Henderson regarding a potential long-term plan for the RAN including ships, bases, personnel and associated infrastructure and organisation. See: C4321 - *Recommendations by Admiral Sir Reginald Henderson, KCB, 1911* (Melbourne: J. Kemp, Government Printer, 1 March 1911).

³⁵ It is instructive to note a parallel effort made by the British Government to establish an "Imperial Army" at the same time as one of the initiatives that came out of the Second Anglo-Boer War. This was quite successful in many ways as the Great War was to demonstrate. See Douglas Delaney, *The Imperial Army Project: Britain and the Land Forces of the Dominions and India – 1902-1945* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017).

³⁶ Cd. 8566 *Imperial War Conference, 1917: Extracts from Minutes of Proceedings and Papers Laid Before the Conference* (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1917). More generally, regarding the crisis of 1917, see Douglas Delaney and Nikolas Gardner, *Turning Point 1917: The British Empire at War* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2017).

study.³⁷ The value of the mission from the Admiralty perspective was the hope that dominion deprecation for an imperial Royal Navy might be reversed by British arguments, particularly one advocated by such a luminary as Admiral Jellicoe.³⁸

Consequently, notwithstanding the discouraging dominion history on the matter, the Admiralty drafted a paper on the Naval Defence of the British Empire in August 1918 after the conclusion of that year's conference. Building on the resolution from the 1917 Imperial War Conference, particularly the exhortation to "consider the most effective scheme of naval defence of the Empire" it was decided to lay the cards for an Imperial Royal Navy on the table.³⁹ The basic theme identified in the paper was that the lessons of the Great War, not then concluded, centred on the "maintenance of sea-power" by the Royal Navy. The sharing in the costs of that sea power, from which all ineluctably benefited meant that the best approach was to adopt a single navy devoted to the maritime security of all.⁴⁰ The paper went on to discuss a complicated scheme by which dominion "naval boards" would answer to the dominion parliament, with the Imperial "Naval Authority" (aka the Admiralty) delegated power by the dominion governments to determine strategy, estimates, deployments, policy of all kinds, personnel and personnel management, and practical matters of a similar nature. The paper did conclude that it was not the time to make "final proposals as to the composition, title, and constitutional status of the proposed Imperial Naval Authority...."⁴¹

Sir Robert Borden, the Canadian prime minister, wasted no time in torpedoing the premise of the Admiralty paper and dismissed the notion in letter to the First Lord of the Admiralty Sir Eric Geddes, as "not considered practicable."⁴² Speaking on behalf of the other dominion premiers, he did

³⁷ A. Temple Patterson, *The Jellicoe Papers, Vol. II: 1916-1935*, Naval Records Society, Vol. 111 (London: Spottiswoode, Ballantyne and Co. Ltd., 1968), 265-6. Here Patterson provides a short discussion of Jellicoe's activities after his dismissal as first sea lord, with most options proving to be either unworthy or unacceptable to him. His real ambition as 1918 progressed was to serve as governor general of New Zealand, a post he achieved in 1920.

³⁸ Cd. 8566 – *Extracts 1917 Imperial Conference*, 56. Sir Joseph Ward, prime minister of New Zealand, was supportive on the point. See also, A. Temple Patterson, *Jellicoe, A Biography* (London: Macmillan and Co. Ltd, 1969), 214.

³⁹ See the full resolution in Cd. 8566 – *Extracts 1917 Imperial War Conference*, 4.

⁴⁰ Patterson, *Jellicoe Papers, Vol. II*, 284-5. Extract from Admiralty memorandum on the "Naval Defence of the British Empire," early August 1918 (the Conference concluded in late July, hence this approximate date).

⁴¹ Patterson, *Jellicoe Papers, Vol. II*, 286. This reluctance had a long history going back at least as far as the 1870s and early 1880s during debates on Imperial Union or Federation. In principle everything made sense, but in practice governance options were insuperable then and no more amenable to resolution at this time.

⁴² Patterson, *Jellicoe Papers, Vol. II*, 286-7. The letter is dated 15 August 1918.

agree that:

It is thoroughly recognised that the character of construction, armament and equipment, and the methods and principles of training, administration and organisation, should proceed along the same lines in all the navies of the Empire. This policy has already been followed in those Dominions which have established naval forces.

For this purpose, the Dominions would welcome visits from a highly qualified representative of the Admiralty who, by reason of his ability and experience, would be thoroughly competent to advise the naval authorities of the Dominions in such matters.⁴³

The emphasis on administrative, personnel, training, and material matters was eminently sensible in that unity in these spheres would clearly encourage unity in direction and strategy in the event of any future war, but would preserve dominion autonomy. Unity was by no means as assured and as automatic as the Admiralty clearly wished with Borden's model. The prime minister's articulation of a "doable" model was, however, "practicable" in contrast to the Admiralty scheme.⁴⁴

Towards the end of the year and the end of the war, Geddes, as noted above, named Admiral Jellicoe as the appropriate individual to conduct the mission. Jellicoe was willing and in an exchange of letters between the Colonial Office and the Admiralty, the arrangement was confirmed.⁴⁵ It was agreed that Jellicoe would visit India, Australia, New Zealand, and Canada. There was a thought that South Africa might be included as part of the itinerary, but it was ultimately decided at the conclusion of his circumnavigation that the timing was not propitious.⁴⁶ The instructions that Jellicoe received as his mandate

⁴³ Borden letter to Geddes, 15 August 1918 in Patterson, *Jellicoe Papers, Vol. II*, 287. See Barry Hunt, "The Road to Washington: Canada and Empire Naval Defence, 1918-1921," in *The RCN in Retrospect, 1910-1968*, ed. James A. Boutilier (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1982), 49.

⁴⁴ Richard Preston, *Canada and Imperial Defense: A Study of the Origins of the British Commonwealth's Defense Organization, 1867-1919* (Durham, NC, Duke University Press, 1967), 501-03. The Admiralty was not completely downhearted with Borden's succinct summary of the situation. A minute on the document from the paymaster-in-chief, Captain Charles F. Pollard to the first sea lord, Admiral Wemyss, dated 23 September 1918, observed that new dominion governments [e.g., after an election] might think otherwise; and that same month in a memo covering their paper opined that perhaps whatever navies the dominions might establish would at least cohere to the RN model. Nicholas Tracy, *The Collective Naval Defence of the Empire, 1900-1940*, Naval Records Society, Vol. 136 (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing Ltd, 1997), 232 and 233.

⁴⁵ Geddes to Walter Long (colonial secretary), 25 November 1918; Long to Geddes, 28 November 1918; and Geddes to Long, 30 November 1918, Patterson, *Jellicoe Papers, Vol. II*, 287-9.

⁴⁶ Patterson, *Jellicoe Papers, Vol. II*, 287-9. South Africa was not then in position to establish

for the mission were not as comprehensive as might be considered ideal. He was encouraged to "...recognise that the main object...is the promotion of uniformity in naval organisation...training... [and] material...throughout the Empire with a view to efficient co-operation."⁴⁷ Jellicoe was also empowered to provide schemes for maritime forces to the several dominions so as to promote "a more effective share in the naval defence of the Empire..."⁴⁸ Such



Image of Jellicoe from 1918. (Imperial War Museum)

open ended direction was inevitable given the wide range in circumstances facing the dominions and their navies (i.e. RCN and RAN) or more general maritime defence needs and obligations, but the lack of any assessment of Great Britain's objectives and defence posture in the post-war world meant that Jellicoe had to provide his own judgement on such matters and hence how the dominions might contribute to the common weal. The lack of such definition was certainly due to the fact that the British government was not clear as to what its objectives and defence posture might be given the sudden ending of the Great War in November 1918.⁴⁹

Admiral Jellicoe Sets Forth

Jellicoe sailed from Portsmouth in HMS *New Zealand* on 21 February 1919, with his first port of call being India. On passage, Jellicoe, who thought he had the latitude to fill the strategic lacuna with his own assessment, drafted a memorandum to the Admiralty outlining his views on Great Britain's post-war naval defence needs, which was despatched from Port Said on 3 March.⁵⁰

its own navy, hence reliance on the RN would remain the *de facto* reality for the immediate future. The situation was affected by the splits in South Africa between some Boers who had favoured Germany in the Great War and the British settlers and those Boers who had remained loyal. See Allan du Toit, "The Long Haul: The Evolution and Development of an Independent South African Navy," *The Northern Mariner* XXIV, no. 3 & 4 (2014), 85-6.

⁴⁷ Admiralty to Jellicoe, 23 December 1918, Patterson, *Jellicoe Papers*, Vol. II, 289.

⁴⁸ Admiralty to Jellicoe, 23 December 1918, Patterson, *Jellicoe Papers*, Vol. II, 290.

⁴⁹ Roskill, *Naval Policy*, Vol. 1, 275-6 and Patterson, *Jellicoe Papers*, Vol. II, 266. It was assumed, of course, that the interests of the dominions and Great Britain would be aligned notwithstanding endless examples of divergences over the preceding fifty years. The sharp debates and divergence over Imperial Preference is but one example of many.

⁵⁰ Patterson, *Jellicoe Papers*, Vol. II, 290-5.

It is to be recalled that at this date the Treaty of Versailles was in the process of formulation and that the shape of the post-war world was completely unclear. Against whom the British should prepare was therefore an open question, albeit American pressure to abrogate the Anglo-Japanese Alliance was building and hence the probability of future conflict with that rising Asian power was growing. Conflict with the United States was unthinkable even if rivalry was certain. The traditional European powers against which Britain measured itself in the past were either prostrate or nearly so, be they victor or vanquished. Great Britain was itself in dire financial straits given the immense burden of the war and had a rather limited quantity of cloth from which to cut its defence suit.⁵¹ The imperative to secure dominion participation in matters of Imperial Defence in general and naval defence in particular was therefore stronger than in the pre-war period.

Jellicoe's assessment of Great Britain's naval needs was perforce tentative and heavily caveated in view of developing international relationships and rivalries. The first part of his memorandum outlined the broad numbers of warships of varying kinds that would be required to maintain the Royal Navy's maritime dominance, as well as a listing of desirable developments that would rectify the shortcomings made manifest during the Great War. The fleet that Jellicoe identified included no fewer than some fifty-three battleships and battlecruisers, eight-nine cruisers, 300 destroyers, 100 submarines, six aircraft carriers, and appropriate numbers of light craft for miscellaneous duties. This, essentially, was the fleet with which the Royal Navy was ending the war. Jellicoe averred, however, that only 9000 more men were required than had been authorised in the last peacetime budget of 1914, and hence feasible.⁵² Jellicoe noted that the provision of well defended bases as well as adequate anti-submarine forces were critical, including peacetime preparation for merchant shipping convoys.⁵³ Jellicoe then went on to sketch out a worst-case scenario of war with the United States and how that might be conducted. Importantly, he embarked on a discussion regarding the defence of trade noting the necessity

⁵¹ Roskill's introductory chapter provides an overview of what we would now term Britain's geo-political circumstances in 1919. Roskill, *Naval Policy, Vol. 1*, 19-70.

⁵² Patterson, *Jellicoe Papers, Vol. II*, 291. These capital ship numbers assumed, in effect, the potential enmity of all countries possessing battlefleets, including such current allies as France and the United States. Jellicoe's "worst case" position was unrealistically premised and assumed global diplomatic isolation, a highly improbable circumstance. In fairness, admirals are paid to consider the improbable.

⁵³ Patterson, *Jellicoe Papers, Vol. II*, 291-2. Jellicoe was certainly recalling the difficulties in establishing a convoy system in the first half of the war as well as the embarrassments involving an inadequately prepared Scapa Flow or indeed any naval base on the British east coast in 1914.

of widely distributed cruisers and a chain of colonial bases.⁵⁴ Here was where the dominions could play a most helpful role.

Jellicoe in Australia

Jellicoe's first stop was India, which will not be addressed in this paper as it is limited to the dominion navies extant or likely to arise. HMS *New Zealand* proceeded to Australia after the India sojourn, arriving in Sydney on 23 June 1919. The Australian government had invited Jellicoe to examine Australia's outlying territories as part of his mandate to properly situate himself regarding the problems of Australia's defence.⁵⁵ This he did before arriving at Sydney.⁵⁶ His report to the Australian government therefore included a significant analysis of these wider defence challenges, which an alarmed Admiralty later deprecated as straying outside their understanding, if not direction, of what he was supposed to examine.⁵⁷ Unaware of such restrictions, Jellicoe produced his report for Australia by mid-August.

HMS *New Zealand*
berthed at Outer Harbor,
South Australia on 27
May 1919. (Wikimedia
Commons)



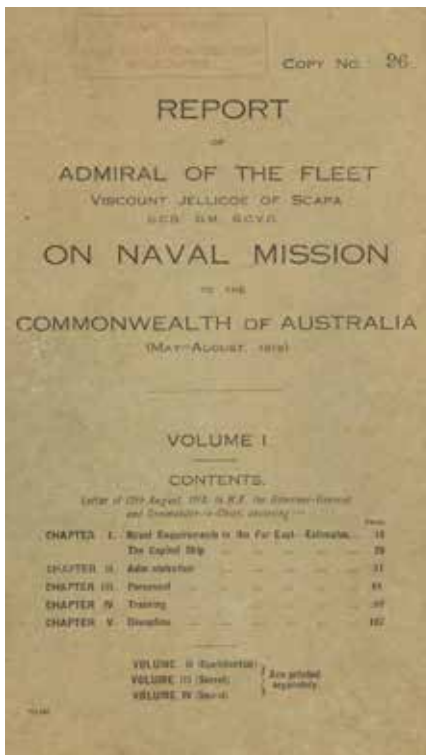
⁵⁴ Patterson, *Jellicoe Papers, Vol. II*, 293-5. Jellicoe's assessment vastly overplayed the financial resources that Great Britain had to hand to meet the threats implied. In this paper he did not note the possibility of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance being unwound.

⁵⁵ Jellicoe received significant advice from RAN officials including input from Creswell and Captain Walter Thring, RAN and Captain Constantine Hughes-Onslow, RN. Thring had prepared the RAN War Book in 1914 and with his superior Creswell was a key member of the Naval Board. See David Stevens, "'Defend the north': Commander Thring, Captain Hughes-Onslow and the beginnings of Australian naval strategic thought" in *Southern Trident*, 225-228 (Thring), 228-230 (Hughes-Onslow); and David Stevens, *In All Respects Ready: Australia's Navy in World War One* (South Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 2014), 366; and, see also Gilbert, *Australian Naval Personalities*, 199-200 on Thring.

⁵⁶ Roskill, *Naval Policy, Vol. 1*, 278. Jellicoe visited, *inter alia*, Papua New Guinea, the Solomon Islands, and New Britain.

⁵⁷ Roskill, *Naval Policy, Vol. 1*, 279-80.

In his covering letter for his Australia report to the first lord of the Admiralty, Walter Long, Jellicoe declared that preparing any kind of useful recommendation to Australia was impossible without assessing the threats it might face in the Pacific, notwithstanding the absence of any formal Admiralty strategic analysis. He concluded that the potential enmity of the United States was of low probability. He consequently based his analysis on a potential conflict with Japan. Jellicoe assumed that to counter the growing power of the Imperial Japanese Navy (IJN) the RN would deploy a permanent and powerful force of battleships to the Far East. Australia and New Zealand were to contribute to this force, as well as provide necessary infrastructure in their territories in support. Jellicoe noted that his verbal instructions had included



Cover for *Report of the Admiral of the Fleet Viscount Jellicoe of Scapa on Naval Mission to the Commonwealth of Australia (May-August, 1919)*.

the possibility of organizing “a propaganda campaign in Australia to turn the Australian mind from the present system of a local navy to that of an Imperial Navy,” but concluded that such an effort would be futile and counterproductive. Indeed, he concluded that “the Admiralty will be well advised to accept the inevitable [Australian determination to exercise autonomy] and to make the best of it, although of course the Imperial Navy, with Dominion contributions,

is strategically the correct idea.⁵⁸ Jellicoe's observations were echoed in a Committee of Imperial Defence (CID) analysis on the subject of "Imperial Naval Defence" dated in October 1919: a co-operative relationship with independent dominion navies was the de facto reality and had to be accommodated by the Admiralty and Great Britain. An Imperial Royal Navy was acknowledged as a non-starter.⁵⁹

In his formal submission to the Admiralty (i.e., Admiral Rosslyn Wemyss, first sea lord and Jellicoe's replacement from December 1917) covering his Australia report, Jellicoe referred to the fact that his energies had been directed towards the creation of an effective and efficient RAN that in time of war would smoothly serve alongside the RN. He also included in this letter a lengthy digression on indiscipline and a general lack of proper deference to authority in the RAN, at least in comparison with the RN. Jellicoe made much of the fact that this problem could only be overcome by the secondment of only the best RN officers and petty officers to the RAN. Those presently serving were apparently an undistinguished conglomeration of second-raters who were in Australia "in the expectation of enjoying themselves ... and not working ... [or were] ... officers who have failed in the Royal Navy.... A new Service cannot be built upon such lines...."⁶⁰

The indiscipline of the Australians was a byword throughout the Great War and largely reflected British norms being applied against dominion cultural realities. The fundamental clash in cultures between Great Britain and the dominions in general, and Australia in particular, was the class system and the associated deference due to those of higher social station, beyond that of naval or military rank. Such attitudes were increasingly foreign to dominion citizens and were often a significant factor in any decision to emigrate from Great Britain. Jellicoe, to his credit, did acknowledge such differences and that those differences had to be respected in any dialogue between the RN and RAN as institutions.⁶¹ Dominion soldiers and sailors performed effectively as

⁵⁸ Jellicoe letter to Long, 20 August 1919, Patterson, *Jellicoe Papers, Vol. II*, 312-3. Note that Walter Long had replaced Sir Eric Geddes as first lord of the Admiralty by this date. Prior to his appointment as first lord, Long had served as secretary of state for the colonies and hence was well briefed on dominion matters.

⁵⁹ Tracy, *Collective Naval Defence of the Empire*, 252.

⁶⁰ Jellicoe to the Admiralty, 21 August 1919, Patterson, *Jellicoe Papers, Vol. II*, 315.

⁶¹ Stevens, *Royal Australian Navy*, 21, 56-8. An episode affecting Jellicoe's perspective was one involving refusal to obey orders associated with a scheduled departure from an Australian port in May 1919. It was highly publicised, with public opinion firmly on the side of the sailors involved. An element involved in this public row was the fact of British officers trying Australian sailors and imposing culturally inappropriate disciplinary standards. These punishments were ultimately reversed. For Jellicoe it was a shocking breach of naval discipline.

experience in the just concluded Great War clearly had shown.⁶² Still, Jellicoe devoted an entire chapter of his report to the subject, illustrating a very conventional British view.⁶³

It will be useful to explore in some depth Jellicoe's report to Australia as it served as a template for his subsequent reports to both New Zealand and Canada. It was prepared in four volumes that included the report itself (Vol I) as well as three separate, and secret, volumes (Vols II-IV) that expanded on subjects covered at a higher level in the first.⁶⁴ The first volume was publicly released to the Australian parliament. This volume was divided into chapters with the first on Naval Requirements in the Far East, the second on Administration of the RAN, the third on Personnel, the fourth on Training, and the fifth on Discipline.⁶⁵ Of these, the first was the most controversial, straying as it did on strategic issues as well as potential Empire foreign policy.

The introduction to the report provided a short sketch as to the origins of the RAN.⁶⁶ Jellicoe went on to observe "that Australia is powerless against a strong naval and military power without the assistance of the British Fleet" and that Australia's main assistance to that British Fleet lay in local facilities and such forces as may exist to supplement it.⁶⁷ He noted as well that the RN could never entirely prevent incursions from enemy fleets or isolated cruisers and that consequently sufficient force needed to be at hand for self-defence. This Australia could successfully provide. Many of the remaining pages in this introduction addressed personnel issues and the relation of these to the efficiency and effectiveness of the RAN. Jellicoe's exegesis on this topic harkened back to Admiralty arguments for an Imperial Navy. His chief concern was that a small navy such as the RAN lacked suitable scale to truly provide for a top-notch service. RN officers would be reluctant to take on

⁶² The references to this point are legion. For two see Peter Dennis, "Introduction" and K.S. Inglis, "Anzac and the Australian Military Tradition" in *Revue Internationale d'Histoire Militaire*, no. 72, Canberra, 1990, xiii and 2-3 respectively. Both Canada and Australia have robust modern perspectives on their contribution to Allied victory, implying parity with that of the British and French, and certainly exceeding that of the Americans. This cannot be entirely sustained. See Preston, *Canada and Imperial Defense*, 492-495.

⁶³ Patterson, *Jellicoe Papers*, Vol. II, 315; and Patterson, *Jellicoe Biography*, 220-222; and Stevens, *Royal Australian Navy*, 57-8.

⁶⁴ Vol. II covered docks, naval air, logistics, ship types; Vol. III addressed naval bases, coast and harbour defences, intelligence, wireless services, trade protection; Vol. IV explored the naval situation in the Pacific and naval strategy. The last volume was the most contentious from the Admiralty's perspective.

⁶⁵ *Report of the Admiral of the Fleet Viscount Jellicoe of Scapa on Naval Mission to the Commonwealth of Australia (May-August, 1919)*, dated 12 August 1919, 1-2.

⁶⁶ *Report ... on Naval Mission to the Commonwealth of Australia*, 3-4.

⁶⁷ *Report ... on Naval Mission to the Commonwealth of Australia*, 5.

secondments to the fledgling RAN for fear of impeding their own careers, which were dependent on securing a variety of sea and shore posts that would permit orderly and regular promotion. Particularly germane to this issue was the necessity of being “seen” by senior officers in the RN. Jellicoe thought a common officer list, with all liable to serve in all dominion or home navies, might serve. This would promote standardisation, familiarity, and broaden experiences of the entire officer corps. Similar arrangements were needed at the petty officer level.⁶⁸ Whether individuals of British or dominion stock would really be prepared for global liabilities on this basis was left untouched. It seems fanciful. The balance of the introduction covered the topic of discipline, contextualising it for the presumably difficult Australian audience, as well as more technical issues such as communications, intelligence services, local manufacturing capacity, and fuel supply.⁶⁹

Jellicoe’s discussion in the first chapter on naval requirements explored at some length the strategic situation that Australia faced and hence the need for appropriate naval and military forces. He emphasised that the various components of the Empire all had a stake in the British maintenance of the freedom of the sea lines of communication and that consequently those various components should provide for the Far Eastern Fleet in co-operation with Great Britain, notably Australia (in this case).⁷⁰ Jellicoe then defined what an adequate Far Eastern Fleet should be to defend the British Empire in the Pacific and Indian Oceans. He averred that:

This fleet, comprising ships of the Royal Navy, the East Indies Squadron, the Royal Australian Navy, and any vessels stationed in Far Eastern Waters, and furnished by Canada, New Zealand, and the Malay States, should be organised to act under one single direction in war, and for the general safety of British Far Eastern Possessions, and sea communications.⁷¹

The Imperial Navy theme in all but name is repeated here, as is the assumption that British interests and dominion or colonial interests were the same.

Jellicoe next tackled cost. This was a critical issue as he observed that “the Mother Country is probably no longer able to shoulder to the same degree as in the past the financial burden that will be imposed [to provide for a Far Eastern Fleet]”.⁷² He proposed that a split in costs between Great Britain, Australia, and

⁶⁸ *Report ... on Naval Mission to the Commonwealth of Australia*, 6-9.

⁶⁹ *Report ... on Naval Mission to the Commonwealth of Australia*, 9-13.

⁷⁰ *Report ... on Naval Mission to the Commonwealth of Australia*, 15.

⁷¹ *Report ... on Naval Mission to the Commonwealth of Australia*, 15.

⁷² The scale of this fleet was ambitious. The main components included 8 dreadnoughts, 8 battlecruisers, 10 cruisers, 43 destroyers, 36 submarines and four aircraft carriers, plus a significant number of auxiliary and support vessels. These ships, presumably, were part of the

AUSTRALIA.		
Ships.	Annual Cost of Maintenance and Depreciation—each.	Total.
	£	£
1 New Battle Cruiser	685,000	685,000
1 Battle Cruiser ("Australia")	514,000	514,000
4 Light Cruisers (full commission)	211,300	845,200
4 Light Cruisers (in Reserve)	105,650	422,600
1 Flotilla Leader	89,200	89,200
10 T.B.D.'s (full commission)	67,600	676,000
2 T.B.D.'s (in Reserve)	33,800	67,600
1 T.B.D. Depot Ship	92,500	92,500
8 Submarines	33,200	265,600
1 Small Submarine Parent Ship	58,500	58,500
1 Seagoing Minelayer (in Reserve)	39,650	39,650
2 Sloop Minesweepers (in Reserve)	16,700	33,400
2 Special Reserve Sloop Minesweepers... ..	4,175	8,350
1 Aircraft Carrier	134,500	134,500
1 Fleet Repair Ship	92,500	92,500
Total		£4,024,600

Jellicoe's suggestion for the Australian contribution to the empire's Far Eastern Fleet. *Report of the Admiral of the Fleet Viscount Jellicoe of Scapa on Naval Mission to the Commonwealth of Australia (May-August, 1919)*, pg. 19.

New Zealand be established at a ratio of seventy-five percent, twenty percent and five percent respectively. He calculated the annual cost to provide for the force of ships required, as well as the men to crew them and arrived at the total figure of £19.7 million per annum. Taking the ratio defined above, and then defining what warships should be provided by each country involved, came up with a split in the costs of approximately £14 million for Great Britain, £4 million for Australia and just under £1 million for New Zealand.⁷³ On top of these expenditures for the Far Eastern Fleet, were additional investments required for shore installations, harbour defence and local forces to defend

numbers identified in his Port Said memorandum discussed above. *Report ... on Naval Mission to the Commonwealth of Australia*, 15 and 16.

⁷³ The proportions applicable to each was computed based on an average of population levels with the value of trade dependent on the sea lines of communication. Australia was expected to continue to support HMAS *Australia* in this conception, as well as to fund a second battlecruiser. HMS *New Zealand* would remain a RN commitment. The cost calculations were quite detailed and accommodated expenditures for pay, pensions, victuals, maintenance, fuel, stores, and depreciation (akin to a sinking fund designed to fund replacement vessels). *Report ... on Naval Mission to the Commonwealth of Australia*, 16-20 and 25-28.

local waters.⁷⁴ Jellicoe calculated that the number of vessels required for these purposes was no less than forty-two, with approximately another seventy trawlers taken up from the fishing fleet for minesweeping duties.⁷⁵

Jellicoe averred that each dominion ought to be able to afford to spend either on its navy, or as a contribution to the Royal Navy, approximately £1 per annum, per citizen.⁷⁶ Table 1 illustrates relative per capita spending for 1920-21 (first year of the return to pre-war spending levels).⁷⁷ As is readily apparent, no dominion approached this target level of expenditure, with Australia the closest. Canada and South Africa's efforts were undeniably on the thin side in comparison. If spending were boosted to this nominal figure, then much could be accomplished and investment in the navy would be proportionately fifty percent of what Great Britain itself spent.

Jellicoe concluded this chapter with what now appears a quixotic defence of the battleship notwithstanding its increasingly lethal adversaries, including the untoward effectiveness of aircraft, not yet fully into their own. Jellicoe listed various vulnerabilities and noted their countermeasures, in all of which he expressed great confidence. With battleships at hand, Jellicoe averred, none could forestall save with similar warships deployed by an enemy power.

⁷⁴ It perhaps should be pointed out that the British commitment was to construct a base in Singapore to house the Far Eastern Fleet – or, at least the RN component, which was by far the largest (the RN commander would be based here as well). In the event, this commitment was not adequately met, which led to considerable acrimony and distress between Great Britain and Australia at the time of the Second World War. *Jellicoe Report – Australia*, 24. See also, Cmd. 2083 *Singapore Naval Base: Correspondence with the Self-Governing Dominions and India*, (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1924), 13, for the then prime minister's (Labour's Ramsey MacDonald) comments to the House of Commons on this commitment and its delay for reasons of "diplomacy." Various rationales for not proceeding were to continue for much of the inter-war period. Indeed, the question of the Singapore base was to dog Admiral David Beatty for much of his time as first sea lord in the 1920s. See, B. McL. Ranft, *The Beatty Papers, Vol. II (1916-1927)*, Navy Records Society, Vol 132 (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing Co., 1993), 357-413; and, W. David McIntyre, *The Rise and Fall of the Singapore Naval Base*, (London: The MacMillan Press, Ltd., 1979).

⁷⁵ *Report ... on Naval Mission to the Commonwealth of Australia*, 21-22.

⁷⁶ *Report of Admiral of the Fleet Viscount Jellicoe of Scapa, GCB, OM, GCVO on Naval Mission to the Dominion of Canada (November – December 1919)*, found in Patterson, *Jellicoe Papers, Vol. II*, 388.

⁷⁷ "Naval Expenditure, Great Britain and the Dominions," Admiralty Statistics Department, 12 March 1923 in Tracy, *Collective Naval Defence*, 337-347. Percentage calculation provided by author.

Table 1. Comparative Naval Expenditures 1920-21.

Country	Per Capita Naval Expenditure (pounds/shillings/pence)	Percentage of UK Expenditure
United Kingdom	£1/19/5½d	100.0%
Canada	£0/1/8½d	4.2%
Australia	£0/13/7½d	34.5%
New Zealand	£0/4/4½d	10.0%
South Africa	£0/1/1½d	2.7%

The need, therefore, of maintaining an active battleship building programme was self-evident to him, as was the need for the dominion navies to retain or develop some experience in operating one or two of their own battleships. He observed with concern the building programmes of both the United States (sixteen) and Japan (four) in contrast with that of Great Britain, which was restricted to completing the ill-fated HMS *Hood*.⁷⁸ Jellicoe was undoubtedly thinking of the need to replace a significant proportion of the British battlefleet during the 1920s. Notionally warships had effective lives of twenty years, implying the obsolescence of several early classes of dreadnoughts as well as the battlecruisers of similar vintage as the 1920s unfolded. Such a programme would keep British shipyards employed as well as the RN up to date with all the lessons learned from the Great War.⁷⁹ Financially this notion was out of the question.

The remaining chapters of Jellicoe's report were more mundane, but perhaps more useful. He provided much helpful information regarding the nuts and bolts of establishing and maintaining a navy in terms of organisation, administration, intelligence, operations, liaison with the Admiralty, and facilities. The experience the Royal Navy had in such quotidian aspects of running a successful maritime force was vast and that of the dominions virtually nonexistent. Getting the foundation right would enable a future edifice of success to be built. In pointing the way forward in this regard, Jellicoe

⁷⁸ *Report ... on Naval Mission to the Commonwealth of Australia*, 28-30. Neither the United States nor Japan completed their battleship programmes as one of the outcomes of the Washington Treaty of 1922. Both converted two hulls to aircraft carriers (all served in the Second World War – USS *Lexington* and *Saratoga*; and IJMS *Kaga* and *Akagi*). Patterson notes the overly sanguine assessment as to the future of battleships in Jellicoe's rosy hued exegesis, *Jellicoe Biography*, 216-217.

⁷⁹ This included, in particular, the less than fully satisfactory designs of HMS *Dreadnought* and the subsequent vessels of the Bellerophon, St. Vincent, Neptune, Invincible and Indefatigable classes of battleships and battlecruisers. This represented some 12 ships (three original ships of these classes had been lost in the war).

provided real service.⁸⁰

In the report's second chapter, Jellicoe commented on a recent Australian Royal Commission that examined the RAN structure of management and control – in effect, an Australian model of the RN's Admiralty. The Australian version involved a fair amount of potential trespass on professional matters by the civilian minister. The RN tradition involved the resignation of the naval members of the Board of Admiralty if their advice was overridden. This step was considered severe and would have significant political repercussions likely to the detriment of the minister, as Churchill learned to his cost in 1915. Jellicoe concluded that such was the lack of appreciation of the role of the navy in Australia that the naval members of the Board should have a pipeline to the prime minister and the right to state their case in parliament. Resignations of nationally obscure naval officers on matters of nationally obscure naval questions would be unlikely to generate the necessary level of excitement that would obtain in Britain's more mature system.⁸¹ The balance of the chapter defined the roles for the Naval Board members,⁸² outlined the specific responsibilities of each,⁸³ and concluded with the general organisation of the Navy Office.⁸⁴

The final three chapters dealt with personnel with the first looking to policy, the next to training and the last to discipline.⁸⁵ As with the previous chapter discussed above, the report contained much good sense based entirely on the RN's way of doing things. As an example, Jellicoe repeated the recommendation regarding a common General List, and so promoted the notion of interchangeability amongst services, and interoperability between services.⁸⁶ This was another way of creating an Imperial Navy in fact if not form. While this was a non-starter with the dominions, the point was made that a small dominion navy could not provide the breadth and scale of service for its members like that of the RN was quite correct. During the interwar years, the RAN required their officers to experience exchange postings with the RN in order to qualify for promotion, which illustrates the soundness of

⁸⁰ See Tracy, *Collective Naval Defence*, xxviii-xxix. The benefits went both ways in that the Admiralty recognised that it had to accommodate dominion realities in regard to their navies and that active co-operation and alignment in systems was entirely positive. Australia was ahead of the other dominions in these areas given the pre-war arrival of its Fleet Unit and the larger scale of the RAN at that time.

⁸¹ *Report ... on Naval Mission to the Commonwealth of Australia*, 31-33.

⁸² *Report ... on Naval Mission to the Commonwealth of Australia*, 32-33.

⁸³ *Report ... on Naval Mission to the Commonwealth of Australia*, 36-41.

⁸⁴ *Report ... on Naval Mission to the Commonwealth of Australia*, 41-60.

⁸⁵ *Report ... on Naval Mission to the Commonwealth of Australia*, 61-89; 90-106; and 107-116 respectively.

⁸⁶ *Report ... on Naval Mission to the Commonwealth of Australia*, 62.

Jellicoe's thinking in this regard and its acceptance by, in this immediate case, the RAN.⁸⁷ Jellicoe's anxiety about efficiency and effectiveness by small naval establishments was not misplaced as the generally poor standards in performance of, as an important example, the RCN during the first half of the Second World War.⁸⁸

One matter that Jellicoe was keen to promote was the matter of training and that that training needed to mirror the RN in terms of standards and content. His preliminary remarks on the chapter noted:

The question of training is one which requires constant attention and revision, if the highest standard of efficiency is to be maintained. The Royal Navy has the advantage over the Dominion Navies by reason of its size, and consequently great facilities for gaining experience. The training regulations are based on the experience thus gained, and it is strongly recommended that the Dominion Navies should adopt the procedure and regulations issued from time to time by the Admiralty for use in the Royal Navy. The advantage of having all the Dominion Navies trained on similar lines must be apparent to all.⁸⁹

This strong recommendation was accepted without debate in that they had been used from the inception of the RAN and the arrival of the new warships in the first decade of the twentieth century. Indeed, the retention of Admiralty training manuals by the dominion navies into the late decades of the twentieth century, as well as the regular despatch of dominion officers to Great Britain to take various courses for which facilities were either inadequate or non-existent locally helped retain the links with the RN.

The final chapter covering discipline was one requiring some delicacy on Jellicoe's part given the reputation for its absence in the Australian Army. What Jellicoe largely failed to adequately appreciate in his thinking was the differing national cultures in the dominions. His approach was to advocate a British model in terms of discipline, and he used no less than five short essays on the subject from British naval officers (a rear-admiral, a captain, two commanders and a chaplain, RN).⁹⁰ The essential concepts identified by Jellicoe are, by

⁸⁷ Stevens, *Royal Australian Navy*, 68-70.

⁸⁸ Vice-Admiral Sir Peter Gretton provided a succinct introduction to Marc Milner's seminal book on the performance of the RCN during the Second World War. There were many reasons for its relatively poor level of professional competence, but the small scale of the pre-war RCN and the lack of training and experience of the "hostilities only" officers and crews were largely to blame. Jellicoe was quite right to be concerned on this point. See Marc Milner, *North Atlantic Run: The Royal Canadian Navy and the Battle for the Convoys* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1985), ix-xi.

⁸⁹ *Report ... on Naval Mission to the Commonwealth of Australia*, 90.

⁹⁰ *Report ... on Naval Mission to the Commonwealth of Australia*, 107, with the five essays

and large, commonplace and represent no unique insight into the subject. His naval experience, measured in decades, taught him much and he well knew what worked for him and the RN. His assertion that discipline was essential to an effective and efficient Service and ship is true enough. That this might be achieved by ensuring the happiness of one's subordinates by listening to them and attending to their physical and spiritual needs would result in high morale and good performance is an unremarkable insight. Essential to accomplishing all this resides in character, fairness, respect, consideration, and accommodation of individual personalities. Jellicoe, however, revealed his fundamental perspective with the quote in one of the essays: "The Englishman is, on an average, naturally disciplined."⁹¹ Where Jellicoe missed the mark was not appreciating the "accommodation of individual personalities" or the world view of the men serving in the RAN that required a different approach from what worked for the RN. He expected that these short sermons would help eliminate differences in discipline standards between the RN and the dominion navies that he had witnessed throughout his stay in Australia. He was to be disappointed.⁹²

The Australian reaction to the report was positive in that its analysis was considered sound and the recommendations reasonable but financially its requirements were out of reach. Those recommendations that were organisational in nature, and largely cost free, were adopted and adapted to Australian circumstances, but the investment in warships and personnel was put off for more auspicious times. The most significant effect of the report on RAN and Australian government thinking was the criticality of retaining close links with the RN to secure the benefits of training, material, and system.⁹³

Onward to New Zealand

from 109-116.

⁹¹ *Report ... on Naval Mission to the Commonwealth of Australia*, 111.

⁹² Jellicoe, in common with many of his middle class, professional, background, laboured under numerous fallacious cultural assumptions regarding the citizens of the dominions. His sense was that such individuals were "overseas" Englishmen. Affinity and identity with Great Britain certainly predominated emotionally for many in the dominions. However, there were, even by this comparatively early date, growing differences in outlook, sentiment, and interests. People were identifying as Australians, Canadians, and New Zealanders ahead of any British link. The experiences of the Great War accelerated a trend well underway by 1914. Jellicoe was imperceptive of this reality, but he was scarcely alone. See the various books and articles by John M. MacKenzie. One useful article is "The Popular Culture of Empire in Britain," *Empire: The Twentieth Century*, 212-231.

⁹³ See Robert Hyslop, *Australian Naval Administration: 1900-1939* (Melbourne: The Hawthorn Press, 1973), 164-166; and, G. Hermon Gill, *Royal Australian Navy: 1939-1942* (1957; repr. Sydney: William Collins in association with the Australian War Memorial, 1985), 2-5.

Jellicoe and HMS *New Zealand* sailed for the eponymous dominion on 16 August and arrived at Wellington on the 20th. The report Jellicoe prepared for New Zealand closely followed the template established with the Australian version, involving the same five basic chapters, and covering letter.⁹⁴ Circumstances in New Zealand were somewhat different from Australia and Canada in that concrete steps to create a navy had not been taken. The foundation was in place with the passage of the *New Zealand Naval Defence Act* of 1913,⁹⁵ which included the highly desirable provision from Great Britain's perspective that any New Zealand warships would immediately "pass and remain under the control and be at the disposition of the Government of Great Britain" during hostilities involving her and any other country or group of countries.⁹⁶ Jellicoe referenced the two wartime Imperial Conferences that had led to his mission, repeating the aim of which was to determine an effective approach to effecting the naval defence of the Empire. In New Zealand's case, given the lack of a local navy, Jellicoe observed that:

Experience has shown abundantly that responsibilities in the matter of naval defence are far more clearly recognized and far more cheerfully shouldered if the results of the effort made is apparent to those making it – in other words, if the ships provided are seen by the people who pay for them, and are manned as far as possible by their own kith and kin.

With the adoption of such a policy there is still no reason why the vessels should not be part and parcel of the Royal Navy, the ships of the same type, the personnel actuated by the same motives, trained on the same lines, imbued with the same traditions, governed by a practically common discipline, and aiming at the same high standard of efficiency. The proposals I lay before the Government of New

⁹⁴ *Naval Mission to the Dominion of New Zealand Report of the Admiral of the Fleet Viscount Jellicoe of Scapa on (August-October 1919)*, dated 3 October 1919. The first volume was presented to parliament. Two additional volumes were secret and covered the same sort of topics addressed by the *Australia Report* (see note 64).

⁹⁵ There is considerable correspondence between Churchill as first lord of the Admiralty and James Allen, New Zealand minister of defence, in 1913 on how to craft the necessary legislation for any future RNZN. Tracy, *Collective Naval Defence*, 194-5, 195-6, 199-203, and 211-19.

⁹⁶ This provision was quoted by Jellicoe in his covering letter. *Naval Mission to the Dominion of New Zealand Report*, 5. In addition, note that the Australian Naval Defence Act of 1910-1912 also made a similar provision for this and that the RAN had in fact been transferred "to the King's Naval Forces" by Executive Council order on 10 August 1914 and remained so till the reversion to Australian control on 1 August 1919. Stevens, *Royal Australian Navy*, 32 and 57. Canada's situation was identical with its two warships reverting to Admiralty control for the duration of the war as per the 1910 Naval Service Act. Johnston et al, *Seabound Coast*, 215-6.



HMS *New Zealand* in Lyttelton Harbour, New Zealand, 2 September 1919 (Ref: 1/2-072638-G. Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington, New Zealand)

Zealand are drawn up with the object in view.⁹⁷

Unlike, therefore, Australia, Jellicoe recommended the continuation of the payment of a subsidy to the Royal Navy for the Far East Fleet, as well as providing for the local defence of harbours and providing as many officers and sailors as possible. New Zealand, in a nutshell, was optimally contributing to the reality of an Imperial Navy.⁹⁸

Except for this important variation, Jellicoe's New Zealand report included verbatim extracts from the Australian version that covered his assessment of the strategic situation and the establishment of a powerful Far East Fleet. The proportion of which was to be financially supported by New Zealand was calculated in an identical fashion.⁹⁹ Jellicoe defined a "unit" that New Zealand should strive to maintain and crew, which was to be composed of a light cruiser, two destroyers, and two submarines. In time, some three such "units" would be funded, along with support ships and the provision for an aircraft carrier once the "units" were complete and aeronautical developments supported such an

⁹⁷ *Naval Mission to the Dominion of New Zealand Report*, 5-6.

⁹⁸ *Naval Mission to the Dominion of New Zealand Report*, 6. Note Churchill's correspondence on 14 February 1913 with Allen on the subject of contributions to the Royal Navy. Churchill considered the "gift without strings" of HMS *New Zealand* ideal, effective and generous. Allen, in contrast, was more anxious about the presence of RN vessels in the Pacific. Churchill noted the benefit of the alliance with Japan in lieu. Allen's reply, 18 March 1913, included the observation that reliance on the good offices of Japan was not enough. Tracy, *Collective Naval Defence*, 186-189 and 190-193. See also, McGibbon, *Blue Water Rationale*, 34.

⁹⁹ *Naval Mission to the Dominion of New Zealand Report*, 14-16.

investment. The financial outlays required for this were detailed as starting at nearly £360,000 and rising to some £1,170,000 in six years (1920-26). This was deemed achievable and useful.¹⁰⁰

The balance of the report was structured in line with the Australian version. It was shorter, due to the differences between the two dominions. New Zealand having but a RN “division” had no need for the full administrative, policy, maintenance, and personnel apparatus of a permanent naval force. The sermon on discipline was repeated, virtually verbatim, that Jellicoe believed illustrated the benefits of the British model on the subject.¹⁰¹ The report was positively received, and efforts made, with due regard to financial resources, to give some of its provisions effect.¹⁰²

Final Leg of Jellicoe’s Naval Mission: Canada

Jellicoe departed from New Zealand on the date he submitted his report (3 October) to that dominion and set course for Canada, arriving 8 November at Esquimalt. He then went overland to Ottawa to discuss the naval situation in Canada, learning two things enroute. The first was that an assessment on the Pacific strategic situation had indeed been conducted in London by the CID which dovetailed nicely with Jellicoe’s own views.¹⁰³ Jellicoe had received a rebuke in the form of a signal from the Admiralty dated 3 November 1919 relating to his *Australia Report* (dated 12 August, sent to the Admiralty on 21 August, which pre-dated the CID Report). Jellicoe at that time was well on his way to Esquimalt and thus had completed his similarly oriented report to New Zealand. Meantime, the CID assessment had been endorsed by 25 September and so was certainly known by Wemyss and his successor as first sea lord, Admiral of the Fleet Lord David Beatty (1 November 1919), at the time of his signal to Jellicoe.¹⁰⁴ The criticism he had received was therefore moot and

¹⁰⁰ *Naval Mission to the Dominion of New Zealand Report*, 18-22. The affordability of this scheme was questioned in New Zealand as, in common with all the victors of the Great War, enthusiasm for defence expenditures was very low. See McGibbon, *Blue Water Rationale*, 56.

¹⁰¹ *Naval Mission to the Dominion of New Zealand Report*, 22-59.

¹⁰² See the generally upbeat summation in New Zealand’s official history of the RNZN’s Second World War. S.D. Waters, *The Royal New Zealand Navy* (Wellington, NZ, War History Branch, Department of Internal Affairs, 1956), 8. Also, W. David McIntyre, *New Zealand Prepares for War* (Christchurch, NZ: University of Canterbury Press, 1988), 32-34, and 41-46 for a more recent, but similar, reaction. Finally, a judicious summary of the report’s influence can be found at McGibbon, *Blue Water Rationale*, 35-66.

¹⁰³ The paper titled “Imperial Naval Defence”; and a complementary analysis of the “Naval Situation in the Far East,” both dated October 1919, can be found at Tracy, *Collective Naval Defence*, 251-62; and 262-264.

¹⁰⁴ The dates of these various signals and documents are provided by Roskill, *Naval Policy*, Vol. 1, 278-280, 282-283, and 285. Wemyss is likely responsible for the draft and preparation of the

approaching ill-mannered.¹⁰⁵ The fact that Jellicoe had not been afforded a copy of this assessment can be explained as a combination of bureaucratic muddle as the RN struggled to adapt to the post-war world and the sharp budget cuts then contemplated and soon imposed. The latter is perhaps more likely, albeit the low regard of Jellicoe held by Wemyss may have contributed.¹⁰⁶



Admiral Jellicoe with Victory Loan Organization at “Over the Top” Luncheon at the Lodge Café in Vancouver on 15 November 1919. Photo by Stuart Thomson. (City of Vancouver Archives)

The second detail Jellicoe learned en route to Ottawa was that the future of the fledgling RCN was very much up in the air. The minister of Marine and Fisheries and the Naval Service, C.C. Ballantyne, was anxious to either make a go of it or scrap the whole idea of a Canadian navy. Financial resources were extremely scarce and there was no question that disbanding the RCN before it had properly got underway was quite possible.¹⁰⁷ Consequently, he was greeted with a detailed list of questions regarding administrative and

signal, and Beatty its transmission.

¹⁰⁵ See above at page 49, note 151. The Admiralty minute on the *Australia Report* is dated 31 October 1919 and can be found at Tracy, *Collective Naval Defence*, 268.

¹⁰⁶ The relationship between the two admirals was damaged during Wemyss' time as deputy first sea lord during the last months of Jellicoe's appointment as first sea lord. Jellicoe failed to make effective use of Wemyss and largely ignored him due, in part, to the lack of consultation as to Wemyss' appointment and function. Wemyss' resentment is understandable. John Johnson-Allen, *Rosy' Wemyss, Admiral of the Fleet* (Caithness, Scotland: Whittles Publishing Ltd., 2021), 179-182.

¹⁰⁷ Roskill, *Naval Policy, Vol. 1*, 285. See also Jellicoe's letter to Long on 3 December 1919 from Ottawa, Patterson, *Jellicoe Papers, Vol. II*, 368-9; Patterson, *Jellicoe Biography*, 224. See also, Gilbert Tucker, *The Naval Service of Canada: Its Official History, Vol. I* (Ottawa: King's Printer, 1952), 309; and, Johnston, Gimblett et al, *The Seabound Coast 735-6*. The two revelations touched on here clearly taught Jellicoe that the foundations for meeting the challenges embodied in his assessment of the Empire's strategic challenges were weak. Indeed, those challenges were not met.

policy matters, largely driven by the need of the Canadian government to ascertain the costs and utility of their very limited naval ambitions. Jellicoe was drawn into this debate, most unwillingly as his correspondence with the first lord clearly articulates,¹⁰⁸ as he was regularly asked while in Ottawa to give speeches and talks on naval matters as a contribution to this Canadian discussion on maritime affairs. Indeed, Canadian expectations included the hope that Jellicoe would help to comprehensively resolve the issues faced by the government and its fledgling RCN.¹⁰⁹

Jellicoe worked rapidly in preparing his report to the Canadian government and submitted it on 31 December 1919. Like his earlier reports, there was a great deal of repetition, making such rapid production of the report possible. The Canadian questions were unique in that the other dominions did not provide comparable input, but they were similar in terms of subject matter that Jellicoe had fully intended to examine prior to arrival and had been addressed in his earlier reports. In his preamble, Jellicoe noted two matters that were of wider significance in the long term. The first is that he observed various efforts at creating a “navalist” mindset with the formation of boys’ naval brigades in some of the cities of Canada. Such efforts would, he believed, foster a belief in the role of the RCN in the defence of sea lines of communication and was entirely to the good.¹¹⁰ The second was his observation that the “form which the Canadian naval effort should take has been a matter over which there has been considerable controversy in the past.”¹¹¹ The Canadian geopolitical reality involved the *de facto* need to create two navies – one for each coast. The separation between Halifax and Esquimalt was approximately 4,500 miles by rail across the continent, and nearly double by sea.¹¹² Australia,

¹⁰⁸ Patterson, *Jellicoe Papers, Vol. II*, 369.

¹⁰⁹ Tucker, *Naval Service of Canada, Vol. I*, 309-10. This does not imply that Jellicoe would in any form “make” a decision, but his advice was expected to be a powerful argument supporting any eventual Canadian resolution of the issues at stake.

¹¹⁰ *Report of Admiral of the Fleet Viscount Jellicoe of Scapa, GCB, OM, GCVO on Naval Mission to the Dominion of Canada (November – December 1919)*, dated 31 December 1919. Quoted in Patterson, *Jellicoe Papers, Vol. II*, 371. The Canadian Navy League was indefatigable in this proselytizing effort, hence the pressure on Jellicoe himself to give talks and speeches on naval defence throughout his stay in Canada. See Johnston, Gimblett et al., *Seabound Coast*, 736-7 and Ken MacKenzie, *Keeping Watch: A History of the Navy League of Canada, 1895-1965* (Victoria, BC: Aldridge Street Editing and Publishing Services, 2010.). This notion received its confirmation with the establishment of the Royal Canadian Naval Volunteer Reserve units across the country and provided the bedrock for the enormous expansion in the Second World War. This theme also informed Jellicoe’s work in Australia – see above.

¹¹¹ Patterson, *Jellicoe Papers, Vol. II*, 372.

¹¹² The distance by sea is approximately 7500 nautical miles via the Panama Canal, or some thirty-two days at 10 knots. See ports.com/sea-route. Nevertheless, there was some thought into the potential of moving the Canadian warships between the two coasts on a regular basis.



Admiral Jellicoe in Toronto in December 1919, alongside the financier and sailor Aemilius Jarvis (bowtie) and Mayor Tommy Church. (City of Toronto Archives)

also a continent-sized territory, had in its favour much more straightforward connections between its east and west coasts. Canada was reluctant to spend the necessary sums to create these two navies, and indeed was reluctant to spend much at all. Jellicoe put his finger on the why: “It is of course true that in some cases the danger of attack is remote and the risk may be accepted.”¹¹³

Jellicoe gamely prepared a detailed analysis of an appropriate naval force for each coast, along with alternatives depending on the sums that the Canadian government was willing to spend. He also delved into questions of personnel, training, discipline, and similar matters as he had with his previous reports and to a similar conclusion. Reliance on the Royal Navy for training, policy, and equipment was recommended as a cost-effective solution as well as ensuring that degree of uniformity and familiarity that would promote interoperability in the event of future war. Finally, Jellicoe examined the question of what facilities should be maintained by Canada in support of the RCN, including the question of coastal defences.¹¹⁴

The naval force that Jellicoe recommended included three light cruisers, one flotilla leader, and twelve torpedo craft, accompanied by eight submarines. This fleet would be adequate to provide Canada with local defence of its coasts and not much more. Should Canada decide to actively contribute to the defence of the Empire, then Jellicoe recommended a fleet unit as had been described prior to the Great War. The heart of such a force included a battlecruiser as well as two light cruisers, six destroyers, four submarines, and two minesweepers. The fleet unit, it was implied, would be in addition to the coastal defence force

The practicality of this notion can certainly be debated and in the event was never seriously attempted. Johnston, Gimblett et al, *Seabound Coast*, 733.

¹¹³ Patterson, *Jellicoe Papers*, Vol. II, 372.

¹¹⁴ See the summary of the areas he reviewed in Patterson, *Jellicoe Papers*, Vol. II, 371-4.

enumerated above.¹¹⁵ The fleet unit would allow Canada to deploy a similar scaled force as had been provided by Australia ahead of the Great War, as well as aligning with New Zealand's financial contributions to the Far East Fleet. As the wealthiest and most prosperous of the dominions, Jellicoe, in common with others who opined on the matter, believed that Canada could easily afford such a navy.¹¹⁶ Jellicoe concluded his report with a summary of the geopolitical situation in common with what he had already provided to the other dominions as related above. In the Canadian case, he noted that war with America was essentially unthinkable and therefore not worth preparing for. His unwritten assumption was that defence against an American invasion was beyond the capacity of either Canada or the Empire to meaningfully resist. Japan was a different matter, and hence Canada needed to be alert to the potential conflict with that nation. The main threat would not be invasion, which the United States could be counted on to resist in alliance with Canada, but on trade and shipping. The force described by Jellicoe ought to be sufficient to protect that trade. Jellicoe did promote the option of creating the main Pacific Coast base at Prince Rupert rather than Esquimalt as the latter's harbour was too small to accommodate a sizeable fleet.¹¹⁷

Coincident with Jellicoe's Naval Mission, was a series of Occasional Papers prepared by the RCN headquarters staff in Ottawa at the direction of Kingsmill as head of the Canadian Naval Service.¹¹⁸ This work was conducted throughout 1919 and addressed the range of issues the Canadian government also enquired of Jellicoe ahead of his visit. It is evident that Jellicoe's opinion was to be assessed against work already done by the fledgling RCN staff in the months immediately after the Great War.¹¹⁹ Occasional Paper No. 2 addressed

¹¹⁵ These numbers have been summarised from Chapter 1 in Jellicoe's main report to the Canadian government. See Patterson, *Jellicoe Papers, Vol. II*, 374-5.

¹¹⁶ See Tucker, *Naval Service of Canada*, 311-313 for a summary of these options.

¹¹⁷ See *Report...on Naval Mission to the Dominion of Canada*, 27-8; Patterson, *Jellicoe Papers, Vol. II*, 384-6.

¹¹⁸ The RAN's able Captain W.H. Thring, also prepared some material for the post-war RAN, but not to the same extent or detail of the RCN papers. See David Stevens, "Australian Naval Defence: Selections from the Papers and Correspondence of Captain W.H.C.S. Thring, 1913-34," in *The Naval Miscellany*, Vol. VII, Naval Records Society, Vol. 153, ed. Susan Rose (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008), 415 and 441-6.

¹¹⁹ There were some 36 papers prepared, dating from May 1919 to July 1921, which have been collated into a single file at the National Archives Canada. The papers addressed questions such as the matter of a "Canadian Naval Base in the North Pacific" (Occasional Paper 1), that is the Prince Rupert question alluded to above, to a review of the "Naval Situation on the Great Lakes" (Occasional Paper 36). Approximately 23 of the papers had been completed by December 1919, which was then followed by Jellicoe's report in the Archives file, and then the balance of the papers over the succeeding 18 months. See RCN Occasional Papers, 1919-21 (hereafter *RCN Occasional Papers, 1919-21*), RG 24, vol. 5696, NS 1017-31-2/4, Library and Archives Canada

the issue of RCN's scale in the years to come.¹²⁰ Reference was made to the Imperial War Conference of 1917 and its resolution regarding the appropriate form of imperial naval defence in the post-war world. There were four basic options delineated in the paper largely divided by financial commitment. The first option involved the provision of docking and port facilities for the Imperial Navy alone (i.e. the RN). The second, at a slightly higher level of financial commitment, was the provision of a local defence force, while the third was the maintenance of a fleet unit as defined before the Great War. As a fourth option, the paper suggested the establishment of well-rounded fleet with all appropriate shipbuilding and ship repair facilities on both coasts.¹²¹ It was noted that the first option was the level with which Canada entered the Great War, but that as the war developed local defences were ultimately provided by the RCN and hence the conclusion was immediately drawn that the minimum was the second option. In the event this was an overly sanguine assessment.

The RCN analysis has relevance in that it adopted much of the thinking present at the Admiralty in the prewar years. The conclusion was reached that as the British investment in the Royal Navy in the last prewar year was approximately £46.3 million, with the value of British Foreign trade calculated at £1,294 million, the Royal Navy was thus some 3.5% of the value of British trade and conceptually represented an insurance policy premium.¹²² Canadian trade for the same year was \$1,130 million, implying a naval budget of \$39.5 million if the RCN investment was to be the same ratio as the RN.¹²³ The conclusion drawn was that the third, more modest, level of investment was appropriate, but that eventually, perhaps, this larger and more ambitious level of expenditure might be contemplated. In a follow on discussion as to the potential investment in capital ships, a class much endorsed by Jellicoe, it was concluded that the cost was prohibitive, Canadian yards were incapable

(LAC).

¹²⁰ *RCN Occasional Papers, 1919-21*, Occasional Paper 2, "Proposals for Canadian Naval Expansion," 3 July 1919.

¹²¹ *RCN Occasional Papers, 1919-21*, Occasional Paper 2, 2.

¹²² The rationale for this calculation of an "appropriate" insurance premium was never articulated. The percentage was an artifact of statistical analysis and represented no overt or deliberate policy position of the British Government. The appropriate figure, in abstract, is to determine what objectives the RCN (or RN) was to achieve, what force was required to accomplish those objectives, and then the cost of providing those forces. Whether this is affordable is, of course, a political decision and if not requires a revisit of the objectives. This second step is rarely performed.

¹²³ *RCN Occasional Papers, 1919-21*, Occasional Paper 2, 4. See also, Cd. 1299 *1902 Colonial Conference Papers*, 17-20; and Cd. 3523 *1907 Colonial Conference Minutes*, 128-132 for comments along similar lines from Sir Joseph Chamberlain, colonial secretary for the former and Lord Tweedmouth, first lord of the Admiralty for the latter.

of constructing such sophisticated warships, and that there simply was not the necessary number of officers and men in the RCN capable of successfully crewing and operating such vessels.¹²⁴ The fourth option, no matter how desirable from the perspective of Imperial Naval Defence, was as infeasible in the post-war world as it had been in the pre.

The balance of the RCN assessment of what force it should consider was a combination of financial calculations, the appropriate types of warships for Canadian circumstances, and a plea for a long-term national policy that could survive unchanged the vagaries of Federal politics and elections.¹²⁵ This analysis was, in fact, very similar to the advice Jellicoe provided not only to Canada but also to Australia and New Zealand. The RCN proposal encapsulated in its paper was ambitious. It called for a fourteen-year programme, taking it to 1934, with shipbuilding expenditures totalling approximately \$58 million over that period. At its conclusion, the RCN would consist of seven cruisers, twelve destroyers, six submarines and eighteen patrol boats (or torpedo boats in prewar parlance), crewed by 8500 officers and men, and costing some \$16 million per annum in running costs.¹²⁶ Jellicoe's report therefore can be seen to align with the RCN's own assessment as to what was required and suitable for the future. The RCN entered the Second World War with six destroyers, seven smaller vessels and less than 2,000 officers and men.¹²⁷

The visit to Canada ended Jellicoe's Naval Mission. He returned to Portsmouth in HMS *New Zealand*, arriving on 2 February 1920, nearly a year after his departure. The South African leg was formally abandoned

¹²⁴ *RCN Occasional Papers, 1919-21*, Occasional Paper 2, 4-5.

¹²⁵ This latter hope remains evergreen to this day. *RCN Occasional Papers, 1919-21*, Occasional Paper 2, 5-26. See also Johnston, Gimblett et al., *Seabound Coast*, 735, where it was noted the desire for stability in terms of plans and expectations was a major motivation for this analysis.

¹²⁶ *RCN Occasional Papers, 1919-21*, Occasional Paper 2, 12-13, 19-20, and 26. Note this was about half of the annual "insurance policy" approach suggested against the value of Canadian (prewar) trade. The paper also touched on the matter of inflation resulting from the Great War. It noted that a battleship had been estimated to cost some \$11-12 million in 1914 as per Sir Robert Borden's 1912 three dreadnought proposal, but now would be in the \$25-30 million range each (page 5). The cost of cruisers had also nearly tripled making the acquisition of sufficiently powerful cruisers daunting financially as they now cost what a prewar battlecruiser had (page 27).

¹²⁷ The immediate fallout from Jellicoe's report occurred in April 1920 at a Cabinet meeting where a modest post-war navy had been recommended by Ballantyne but was rejected by caucus. In the end, an even smaller force, entirely based on gifts of warships from Great Britain, was established. Further economies were imposed in the 1920s, with the RCN barely surviving. However, the RN links were retained as were exchange programmes, training standards and so on. See Johnstone, Gimblett et al., *Seabound Coast*, 740-742; and, Marc Milner's trenchant observation that the RCN was on life support between the wars. Milner, *Canada's Navy: The First Century*, 58.

prior to departure for home.¹²⁸ Jellicoe provided a summary to the Admiralty with some general observations regarding the utility of his expedition. He pointed out that politics in all three of the dominions were in varying degrees of ferment accompanying the end of the war. Elections were held, or were contemplated, in all three and consequently no immediate action was taken with his recommendations.¹²⁹ Nonetheless, Jellicoe was confident that while no Imperial Navy was feasible, particularly in the case of Canada and Australia, he had managed to secure consensus as to the wisdom of the dominion navies mirroring the Royal Navy in as many features as possible – particularly in terms of policy, administration, training, personnel, and materiel. He also was hopeful that his recommendations and basic approach would survive dominion party politics and develop into consistent policy over time.¹³⁰ Jellicoe also acerbically observed that his geopolitical assessment had been, perforce, personal as he had not been afforded a copy of the CID and Admiralty views. This lack of cooperation from London undermined his honest efforts and was evidently a source of some exasperation. The first lord, Walter Long, apologised for the oversight, explaining it as a result of overwork and the challenges of transition from war to peace. This is certainly genuine in sentiment, likely in fact, but indisputably very poor staff work.¹³¹

Conclusion

What are we to make of Jellicoe's Naval Mission? Was it a futile and fruitless effort to whip the dominions into line as far as naval imperial defence was concerned? Or was it simply a polite series of visits by a prominent but eclipsed admiral to keep him gainfully employed pending his expected appointment as governor general to New Zealand? Or was it the reluctant completion of an inconvenient commitment made at the 1917 Imperial War Conference with no expectation of material result? Or was it a sincere and serious effort at addressing a reasonable question by the dominions regarding naval imperial defence that generated serious answers to the matters at hand and that was a useful milestone in the development of the dominion navies?

¹²⁸ See note at foot of Patterson, *Jellicoe Papers, Vol. II*, 369.

¹²⁹ The key portion of his memorandum to the Admiralty is at Tracy, *Collective Naval Defence*, 273-4.

¹³⁰ Jellicoe's confidence in this aspect of his mission was well placed. See James Goldrick, "From Fleets to Navies: The Evolution of Dominion Fleets into Independent Navies of the Commonwealth," *The Northern Mariner* XXIV, no. 3 & 4 (2014): 6-9. See also the conclusion of a recent book covering the career of HMS *New Zealand*: Wright, *The Battlecruiser New Zealand*, 196.

¹³¹ Jellicoe to Secretary of the Admiralty, 3 February 1920. Patterson, *Jellicoe Papers, Vol. II*, 391-94. Long's apology is at page 393.

The standard interpretation is a combination of the first three options listed above. The evidence mustered in support of such conclusions is that in the end no dominion took Jellicoe's recommendations and fully implemented them. Indeed, Jellicoe's assessment as to what was required to deliver a robust naval defence in Empire interests was sound in material and strategic terms, but naïve financially and socially. No one wanted to think about another war in 1919 given the severe military and naval losses, as well as the sobering and dispiriting influence of the Spanish Flu pandemic raging at the time. Additionally, the capacity to embark on the levels of expenditure inherent in Jellicoe's reports was absent in all the dominions as well as Great Britain itself. The hard truth was that the Great War represented the apogee of British global power and economic overstretch now extracted its price. What the Great War made plain was completed by the *de facto* bankruptcy that succeeded the Second World War. Evidence of the absence of financial wherewithal was not long in coming as the Geddes Axe took its toll on British pretensions, and the 1922 Washington Treaty made the Royal Navy's global decline apparent for all to see who had eyes. Much the same occurred in the dominions with none making anywhere near the level of commitment and expenditure recommended by Jellicoe.

While all these caveats are certainly true, the value of the Jellicoe Naval Mission lay in its identifying comprehensively the foundations for the development of competent and viable dominion navies. His recommendations regarding the organisation of effective naval forces were sound and largely followed in fact and in spirit by all three dominions to a greater or lesser extent. That there were two decades of under investment and a woeful lack of preparedness for the Second World War was political and financial in origin. The senior naval officers in both the RCN and the RAN took the recommendations to heart and did their best with the resources made available to them by parsimonious and uninterested governments, and it must be said, citizenry, in Ottawa and Canberra. Parsimony also profoundly affected the Royal Navy in the inter-war years which, in combination to the similar state of the dominion navies, made for very difficult early war years (1939-42). The foundation laid out by Jellicoe in 1919, however, was essentially completed during the Second World War and led to highly effective dominion navies, including that of New Zealand, by 1945. The imperial partnership envisioned by Royal Navy was not achieved in fact but was effectively accomplished in practice and spirit. Not only did this include interoperability capabilities and common operating standards, it also resulted in the global control of shipping system, convoys, and trade protection as well as a global intelligence network. These fruits were harvested during the Second World War, in the post-war decades, and linger into the present day. Jellicoe is given little credit for his

contribution, an oversight needing refinement.

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