

ROYAL CANADIAN NAVY RISES FROM INSIGNIFICANT STATUS TO POSITION OF VAST POWER

War Development Sees Increase of From 16
to Well Over 100 Ships—Many More
Are Being Built

Widespread Duties Full-Time Job For Do-
minion's Sailors—Many Great Feats
Already to Their Credit

(By James N. Crandall, British United Press Staff Correspondent)

Ottawa, Aug. 28.—With the war spreading to all the seven seas, the Royal Canadian Navy is being called upon to play an increasingly important part in the defence of Canada and the Empire. Just a year ago the average Canadian was unaware of the Dominion's naval strength and he did not know of the tremendous detail which had been prepared so that immediate expansion of the nucleus of the sea force could be effected if ever the need arose. That need arose at noon Sunday, September 10, 1939. Within a minute of the formal declaration of war against Germany, officers and ratings of the Royal Navy were at their posts.

Amazing Increase

The navy's strength at that time was 15 ships and only 1,774 men. The navy to-day has 120 vessels and 10,000 officers and men. Within a very few months 215 vessels will be in service and the personnel strength will in all likelihood exceed 15,000.

This rapid growth has, in itself, been an achievement of organization and a lasting credit to those who had laid such thorough plans for its enlargement. While a navy comprising only 215 vessels may seem small when compared with those of the great sea powers, no one can deny that an almost impossible burden would have been placed on the British navy if the Canadian navy did not exist.

Not only was Canada able to commission some of its vessels for service with the Royal Navy during the evacuation of the British expeditionary force from France, and is now aiding in the defence of Britain, but she has been able to arrange convoys for merchant ships and troopships. Canada has also taken over blockade duties in certain parts of the world.

Many in Royal Navy

In addition to the Canadian crews serving on these Canadian vessels now operating under the command of the Royal Navy, a total of more than 450 other Canadians are serving on vessels of the Royal Navy or are being trained for the Royal Navy in England.

The Royal Canadian Navy has had its full share of onerous and dangerous duties since the outbreak of war. Some of the ships are assigned to the Atlantic patrol and have, with conspicuous courage and remarkable efficiency, carried out important work in all sorts of weather. Other vessels have seen duty in the Caribbean. Still others saw duty in the evacuation of troops from France. One of these ships, the H.M.C.S. Fraser, was lost while on duty off the coast of France with the loss of 45 men. That the death toll was not greater was due to the courage and skill of the crew of the H.M.C.S. Restigouche taking on the survivors. A few weeks later the Restigouche again figured in the gallant rescue of the crew and about 700 Italian and German prisoners aboard the Arandora Star, torpedoed in the Atlantic while en route to Canada. All rescue work in submarine-infested waters is dangerous to-day, as due to loss of speed and consequent manoeuvrability the rescuing vessel becomes an easy target.

Heavy Convoy Work

Every ship entering or leaving Canadian Atlantic ports must be convoyed through the danger zones. Munitions, aeroplanes and food stuffs, of vital necessity to England, must be protected and this, since Canada is Britain's source of supply, has been the chief duty of the R.C.N.

Since the outbreak of war, the Royal Canadian Navy has supervised the convoying of more than 16,000,000 tons of cargo with the loss of less than one-quarter of one per cent.

Before a convoy sets out each ship is carefully inspected. Every member of the crew is checked to avoid the possibility of enemy agents being among them. Then on a set day the captains of all the vessels are brought into conference with naval authorities. Each is told the position he is to maintain during the crossing, the route he is to follow and the speed at which he must proceed. The zero hour is given and the captains are returned to their ships to await the deadline. Then they slip quietly out of the harbour with battle grey destroyers, mine sweepers and subchasers of the Royal Canadian Navy flanking them on all sides.

The admiralty in London is notified of the departure and it is sometimes arranged that British warships, convoying vessels coming to Canada, are met at a certain spot. Here the Royal Navy takes over the protection of the eastbound ships while the R.C.N. vessels turn about and guide the west-bound vessels safely into port.

Ceaseless Patrol

One of the most important phases of naval work is the ceaseless patrol which must be maintained along Canada's coasts. Enemy raiders and submarines have plied the Atlantic since the outbreak of war and at any minute they might well enter Canadian waters. They did it in the last war, and with new and speedier vessels, which can

travel great distances without having to put into ports to refuel, they might well do it again. Naval authorities are convinced that they will attempt it, but they are ready for them. No mines, so far as is known, have been laid by the enemy in Canadian waters and the fact that they haven't been is due almost entirely to the fact that Germany knows the close watch which the Canadian navy is keeping along the coasts.

Hour after hour, day after day, month on end, mine sweepers steal out of Canadian harbours in all sorts of weather and sweep thoroughly the channel that is to be used by ships during the next 24 hours. It is a monotonous task, as yet not even enlivened by any sign of enemy action.

It is to the men who go down to the seas in these ships of the Royal Canadian Navy that the credit for keeping the Dominion's shores safe and her merchant ships protected from the enemy is due. Many of these officers and men have served in the Royal Canadian Navy since they were boys; others have been drafted from the Naval Reserve, and still others are skippers, mates and able seamen who sailed the seas in peace-time occupations.

No Limits Exist

But the majority are men who have joined up since the war. The prairies, the farms, inland cities and seacoast towns are all represented.

There is no such thing in the navy as serving for the defence of Canada in Canada. Three-mile territorial limits do not exist, and every one of the 10,000 men now serving in the navy has volunteered for service in any part of the world his superior officers feel he is needed.

The Royal Canadian Navy came into being in 1910 with the passing of the Naval Service act, but it was not until 1914 that its activities became at all intensified. The two cruisers which sailed under Canadian colours then were turned over to the Royal Navy. By 1918, however, there were 123 ships of all types in the R.C.N., and slightly more than 6,000 officers and men.

Demobilization of the R.C.N. was completed in 1919, and all ships were placed and put on the sale list. In 1920 it was decided to abandon the navy, and the necessary orders were given. Twenty-four hours later, however, after consultation with the British government, the orders were countermanded.

From 1922 to 1931 the Canadian Navy had but two destroyers, but during the following year other destroyers were built or purchased, until at the outbreak of the war, last September, it had grown to 15 ships.

From that small beginning it has steadily grown until to-day it is a formidable force. It is steadily growing.

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