

Short Title

The Royal Navy, 1922-1930

The Royal Navy, 1922-1930:
The Search for a Naval Policy
in an Age of Re-adjustment

By

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Introductory Note

At the conclusion of the First World War, Great Britain ranked highest among the world's great maritime Powers, with a fleet materially enriched by the wartime construction of over fifteen hundred vessels and a naval establishment edified by its 1914-1918 experience in the use of the new Navy. Consequently, it was not apparent to other than the most astute observer that the Royal Navy had, in fact, reached the pinnacle of its ascendancy.

The decline of British sea power, which manifested itself after 1918 was not due to any deterioration in the efficiency or even the absolute strength of the Navy but instead to a number of other interrelated factors. During the First World War, the substance of Great Britain's naval strength had been undermined, strategically, by the emergence of two new naval Powers on the periphery of her defensive system and technologically, by the development of the airplane and submarine. The War had revealed, too, grave weaknesses in Britain's outdated industrial and commercial structure, while the rising cost of labour and material, coupled with the increasing complexities of naval architecture, had sent the price of naval armament to an almost prohibitive level. Psychologically, the War had given to a significant part of the nation a spirit tempered with the ideals of the League of Nations, which was unable to see

armament as other than a divisive factor in world relations and which had already made the connection between the origins of war and the military establishment.

It is not the purpose of this paper to recount the waning of British maritime strength, but rather to examine the interaction between the Government and the military establishment in this age of re-adjustment. The very nature of its *raison d'être* made the Admiralty regard the changed strategic position of Great Britain and the necessities imposed upon it by technological advancement as the overriding factors to be considered in the formulation of British naval policy. British statesmen, on the other hand, quite naturally focussed their attention on the pressures of the difficult economic situation and the new temperament of the electorate. These two views were almost, but not quite, incompatible, though the resolution of the inherent conflict called for a new definition of the relationship between the Admiralty and the Government. This the politicians were unwilling to do.

Lacking the official documents of the period under study as a result of the terms of the Public Record Act, the present writer cannot claim to have provided a definitive exposition of these and other problems. Nothing is known, for instance, of the nature of strategic planning in the Twenties on which must surely

be based final judgement of both the Admiralty and the Government. But enough evidence is available to at least formulate questions and to provide a reasonable basis for conjecture in answering them. The first four chapters in the present work, standing together as a whole, deal with the relationship between Government and military establishment with regard to the relative and absolute strength of the Royal Navy, between the publication of the Report of the Committee on National Expenditure in February, 1922, and the signing of the London Naval Treaty in April, 1930. The last two chapters deal with this relationship in two other areas of major importance in the Navy's ability to perform the duties assigned to it.

Chapter I

In Search of a Naval Policy

On November 21st, 1918, Admiral Sir David Beatty, after having interned the German High Seas Fleet in Scapa Flow, cabled its Commander-in-Chief: "The German Flag will be hauled down at sunset today, Thursday, and will not be hoisted again without permission." 1

For the Royal Navy, this event marked the end of the First World War and, in consequence, the end of a period of rapid expansion of Great Britain's maritime resources. Inevitably, the pendulum swung the other way, for the vast naval establishment created to meet the challenge of the German Fleet had lost its very *raison d'être*. As a result, considerable effort was made to secure a formula for gauging the naval requirements of Great Britain in the new-found peace. It was the conclusion of the Government in 1919 that the situation in post-war Europe called for a re-appraisal of Great Britain's defence needs and consequently, it instructed the Services to base their expenditures upon the assumption "that no great war was to be anticipated within the next ten years, although provision should be made for the possible expansion of 2 trained units in the case of an emergency arising."

Using this directive as a guideline for the 1920 Estimates, the Admiralty decided "to suspend all production for the time being and concentrate on assimilating the lessons of the War as regards both 3 personnel and material." In addition, the number of fully commissioned capital ships in the British battlefleet was reduced to twenty, fourteen

of which were assigned to the newly formed Atlantic Fleet, the remainder to the Mediterranean. The strength of the former, according to the First Lord of the Admiralty, Walter Long, had been determined in order to maintain "the possibility of exercises at sea under realistic conditions" and "to have one fleet in which the lessons of war can continually be practiced and new tactical methods devised. . . ."⁴ Along with these announced cutbacks, the First Lord told the House of Commons that the Government firmly adhered to the principle that the British Navy "should not be inferior in strength to the Navy of any other Power."⁵ This 'One Power Standard', however, was not a radical departure from past minimum standards in so far as such standards had been applied only to Europe. In actual fact, Great Britain was maintaining better than a 'Two Power Standard' vis-à-vis the Continental Powers and Long's declaration was meant to imply that Great Britain had tacitly acceded to the principle of naval parity with the United States. But by the autumn of 1920, it had become evident that the United States and Japan were determined to renew naval construction. In a preliminary response to these developments, Long warned the nation, "If we rest on our oars, if we do less than we need do, we shall find, quite apart from any competition, that our Navy is no longer the efficient force it ought to be, because we shall have allowed our ships to become obsolete."⁶

Without losing sight of original goals, additional reductions were proposed by Arthur Lee, the new First Lord, in the 1921 Estimates; the number of capital ships in full commission fell to sixteen. Lee also re-affirmed the 'One Power Standard' and stated quite frankly that America's claim to naval equality was one which Great Britain had never accepted and "never would accept save in connection with a great English-speaking nation which... must ever hold a special place in our regard and confidence." But Lee's interpretation of the 'One Power Standard' was rather more defined than Long's: "that the Navy should be maintained in sufficient strength to ensure the safety of the British Empire and its sea communications against any other Power." To fulfill these requirements, it was announced that the Government would undertake the construction of four super-Hoods, yet with the hope the the Great Powers would, in the future, be able to come to agreement with regard to relative naval strength.

It cannot be too strongly emphasized that in making this long delayed beginning with the replacement of obsolete ships that the Government neither commits itself to, nor contemplates any building 'Programmes' in answer to those of any other Power. Indeed, it trusts that it may be possible, as a result of frank and friendly discussion with the principal naval Powers, to avoid anything approaching competitive building, either now or in the future. But meanwhile, it would be a dereliction of duty on the part of the Admiralty to allow the efficiency of the Royal Navy to deteriorate through the neglect to provide it with the matériel which is equal to the best and in which it can feel confidence. (9)

In a speech to the Society of Naval Architects in March, 1921, Lee further avowed his desire to "discuss frankly with our friends what the future should be." Welcoming the "hint thrown out" in President Harding's inaugural address,¹⁰ he declared that "if an invitation comes from Washington, I am prepared to put aside all other business... in order to take part in a business than which there can be nothing more pressing in the affairs of this world."¹¹

Internally, there were a number of reasons for the Admiralty to want its unilateral accession to the principle of parity with the United States formally embodied in some sort of an agreement. The bottom had fallen out of the post-war boom during the winter of 1920 and 1921 and it was evident that many in the House of Commons were reluctant to accept the responsibilities, both financial and otherwise, of even a 'One Power Standard'. Asquith, for instance, had protested against acquiescence by the Admiralty in any such formula:

The only trustworthy principle which ought to guide our action is that the Navy, in conjunction with those of the Dominions... should always be adequate to secure the safety of our sea-girt Empire and our sea-borne supplies against any reasonable, calculable risk. Beyond contradiction, the 'One Power Standard' suggests renewed competition in armaments. (12)

But the incontrovertible fact was that such competition had already been renewed between the United States and Japan. This could only lead to a direct response on the part of Great Britain in the form

of additional building schemes, a move which the Admiralty viewed as unnecessary within the guidelines established in the 1920 Estimates. Finally, of course, though not of little consequence, was the steady deterioration of the Anglo-American friendship of the past war. It was upon this unwritten entente that many Britishers still hoped the peace and prosperity of the future world could be built.

One great stumbling block, however, remained to any agreement expressing the formal stabilization of relations between the great naval Powers; this barrier was the Anglo-Japanese Alliance. The original object of Great Britain's military partnership with Japan had disappeared with the collapse of the Russian Empire and the forcible elimination of Germany from the Far East. Although the terms of the Treaty made it quite clear that in no way could the United States regard it as a direct threat, the Alliance unquestionably strengthened Japan's political position. Its renewal at this juncture would only have been construed in the United States "as a gesture of British toleration, if not support, of Japanese aggressions in Asia, against which the American political and naval programme in the Pacific was, in some measure, directed." ¹³

When the Imperial Conference met in June, 1921, it became abundantly clear that the Dominions were ready to place Anglo-American friendship over the Anglo-Japanese Alliance. However, rather than disavowing Great Britain's long-standing agreement with Japan, Lloyd George began

exploring the possibilities of transforming the alliance into a broader and less defined commitment which would avoid offence to Japan, satisfy the Dominions, and perhaps include the United States. On July 8th, President Harding issued invitations to Great Britain, Japan, France and Italy, to attend a conference in Washington for the limitation of naval armaments, and following upon a British suggestion formally submitted shortly thereafter, the agenda was widened to include a discussion of Far Eastern affairs on a political level. This indirect approach was, of course, necessitated by the fact that the United States could not be formally linked to the dissolution of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance. The outcome of these negotiations, undertaken during the Washington Conference, was embodied in the Four Power Treaty of December 1921. This innocuous document bound the Contracting Powers, France, Great Britain, Japan and the United States, to respect one another's rights in the Pacific and to communicate with one another whenever developments in that area threatened to have significant political consequences. Of considerably more importance, however, to the stabilization of affairs in the Far East, was Japan's insistence on the formulation of an agreement to prohibit the further development of naval bases in the Pacific. The move, in effect, carved out spheres of control in this area, Japan's naval might being predominant in the Sea of Japan, and the Yellow and East China Seas. In accordance

with Admiralty views, Singapore, which lay athwart the road of Japanese expansion southward, was specifically excluded from any limitation.

The settlement of these subsidiary issues was necessary to the successful outcome of the disarmament negotiations which had been underway since November 21st, 1921. On the occasion of the first sitting of the Washington Conference, the American Secretary of State, Charles Hughes, had outlined a programme of arms limitation which was to guide the assembly through its three months of deliberation.

(1) That all capital ship building programmes, either actual or projected, should be abandoned; (2) That further reduction should be made through the scrapping of older ships; (3) That, in general, regard should be had to the existing naval strength of the Powers concerned; (4) That capital ship tonnage should be used as the measurement of strength for navies and a proportionate allowance of auxiliary combatant craft prescribed. (14)

The British delegation could not be but pleased with these proposals, for they embodied much of what the Admiralty had sought for the last two years. As one observer candidly pointed out, it was quite possible that the British naval staff appreciated Hughes' scheme more than did the General Board of the American Navy. Submitting his formal reply, Arthur Balfour, head of the British delegation, while stressing the unusual structure of the Empire and its particular naval needs, avowed that Great Britain agreed with the American plan both in spirit and in principle. Yet while accepting the ratio of relative fleet strengths as reasonable, he could, however, only question the

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matter of "cruisers... not connected with or required for fleet action."

Balfour also criticized the American scheme with regard to the large tonnage quota (90,000 tons) it had assigned to submarines. The head of the British delegation firmly believed that the submarine had little value for defensive purposes and that its use "led inevitably to 18
acts which are inconsistent with the laws of war and the dictates of humanity."
On December 22nd, in anticipation of French demands for an equal allotment of submarine tonnage, the British delegation launched a frontal attack by proposing total abolition of the vessel. Procedural strategy on this point, however, was directly linked to another problem. Lloyd George had cabled Balfour that the Government recognized:

... that there is little chance of the abolition of submarines being agreed upon and, in this event, we must insist at all costs upon absolute freedom in regard to the character and number of vessels under, say 10,000 tons. We cannot... enter into any agreement fettering our liberty to build whatever number and classes of cruisers and anti-submarine craft we may consider necessary to the maintenance of national and Imperial life... At the cost of complete rupture, we feel certain you will not agree to any restriction in this sphere... (19)

Opposed by the remaining four naval Powers at the Conference, the British had, indeed, little chance of registering a success, but as a result of the defeat of the proposal to abolish the submarine, the British position with regard to auxiliary surface craft was very clearly established. The refusal to place a limitation on auxiliary vessels

remained the proclaimed policy of the Government until 1929 and was more clearly defined during the debates over cruiser construction which recurred annually after 1924.

Since 1919, the Government had sought a means to call a halt to the building competition inherent in the capital ship programmes of the United States and Japan and to effect reductions in the battle-fleets of those two respective Powers comparable to the reductions which they had been forced to undertake for political and fiscal reasons. That they were successful in attaining these ends was in itself reason for satisfaction but the magnitude of the success was amplified by the fact that an agreement had been reached which made little if any impression on the existing naval establishment. Of the capital ships to be scrapped by the Admiralty, four were still on the drawing boards, and of the remaining twenty, sixteen had already²⁰ been slated for disposal. In 1923, Leopold Amery, Lee's successor as First Lord of the Admiralty, estimated the saving which had accrued²¹ to Great Britain at between £15 to £20 million per annum. Furthermore, this saving had been arrived at without any sudden reduction of officers and men over and above those cutbacks which had already been planned. "By leaving the effective fleets untouched, it did not threaten the existing naval establishments, the staffs at naval headquarters, the civil administration or the Government dockyards in so far as they are

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concerned with the repair of ships. "

Indeed a far greater threat was to make itself evident only several days after the signing of the Washington Treaties. With the end of the post-war boom in 1921, the Government attempted to return to the orthodox policies of lowering both income tax and public expenditure. The means to attain these ends were sought by the Committee on National Expenditure, chaired by Sir Eric Geddes, a former First Lord of the Admiralty, and a preliminary report was
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published February 10th, 1922. Among other claims, the Committee called for an immediate reduction in the Navy Estimates of £21 million over and above those savings which naturally result from the signing of the Washington Treaty and from the termination of certain war costs. The Committee derived from its deliberations "that the Estimates provide for manpower on a lavish scale" and that, in fact, the Navy had concealed from the public eye some 33,000 officers and men in excess of normal requirements. It deplored the fact that the Navy was maintaining larger shore establishments than before the War. It noted that expenditure on education and research was completely out of proportion to the financial resources available and concluded that "a judicious substitution of air power ought to result in a
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further reduction of the Navy Estimates. "

Since the Services had been permitted to see the Report before

publication, the Admiralty had the opportunity to draft an official reply to Geddes' allegations of extravagance. If anything, they made clear that the Report was a collection of some rather serious misconceptions about Navy organization. Perhaps the most serious error that had been made was in regard to the excess of 33,000 men, a conclusion which had been arrived at by comparing the ratio of personnel to ships in 1914 with that of the post-war period. The calculation was aptly termed by Amery, then Financial and Parliamentary Secretary to the Admiralty, as a "statistical mare's-nest."

The comparison was irrelevant, because it dealt with two different kinds of navies. The pre-war Navy had a very large reserve fleet, manned in peace by a handful of men, supplemented on mobilization by the reserves and by the personnel of the various training and other shore establishments. Almost all the reserve fleet had been scrapped after the War. But the shore establishments remained as essential as before. So obviously there would be more men in proportion to ships on mobilization. (25)

Furthermore, the Committee's recommendation that expenditure on education and research be curtailed took no notice of the full implications of the 'Ten Year Rule' which had, in fact, been cited to support their claims of Admiralty extravagance. Explicit in that directive was the need to maintain a well trained and highly efficient core of officers and men upon which future expansion could be based should the need arise, and Long had made it clear in 1920 that the Admiralty did not intend to ignore its

responsibilities. A Department of Scientific Research and Experiment was set up to direct and co-ordinate research within the Navy itself and to assure that full opportunity was taken of developments from without. Moreover, having already reduced the Naval Staff in 1919 and re-organized it into more clearly defined directorates, Long announced in 1920 that the new staff college at Greenwich would be enlarged to handle forty officers a year; and, on a broader basis, that at least twenty-five percent of all new sub-lieutenants would have²⁶ university training. Thus it was natural that the Votes for Educational and Scientific Services were among the few effective charges to be²⁷ increased in proportion to the total. In direct contradiction to the recommendations of the Geddes Report, the Admiralty made its position quite clear in the 1922 Estimates:

Whilst anxious to effect every economy in administration, the Admiralty feel that a more drastic cutting of the educational and scientific Votes would be inexcusable at a time when we are forced to rely more and more on the hope that the Navy will make up in quality of personnel and superiority of technique for the lead that has been surrendered in respect of matériel. (28)

The Admiralty had fought a long and bitter struggle to insure defeat of the Geddes Report in the Cabinet. Writing to his wife in late February, 1922, Admiral Sir David Beatty, the First Sea Lord, expressed the feeling that if Churchill and Birkenhead continued to support the Admiralty side, victory would be theirs. If success did

not come, Beatty full realized that "a break in the Cabinet is certain,
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and after that anything might happen." What, in fact, did happen
was that a final decision was deferred until submission of the Weir
Report in 1923, which placed the administration of the Navy in a more
favourable light. But pending the final outcome, the Admiralty ignored
the specific recommendations of the Geddes Report while making every
effort to reduce expenditure on terms which they, themselves, had set.
When the 1922-23 Estimates were presented, there was, in fact, a
reduction of £21 million in the effective Votes, though a considerable
part of this saving was a direct result of the negotiations at Washington.
Yet the Admiralty made it clear that the measures they were taking
could only be considered as the reflection of rather extraordinary
circumstances.

Indeed, the Admiralty have gone further in accepting
drastic economies and consequent risks which could only
be justified on the assumption that the British Fleet will
not be engaged in any great war for many years to come.
On purely naval grounds, such an assumption could not
be justified, but both the financial and international situation
call for an exceptional response and this the Admiralty
have made although they realize that, in this matter, a
very grave responsibility is imposed upon them. (30)

The major problem lay in the varied interpretations given
to the 'Ten Year Rule' and the consequent necessity for the politicians
and Service Chiefs to reach an understanding as to what exactly was
implied in that directive. It is quite clear that, in origin, the 'Rule'

was not an unreasonable hypothesis, but there were some dangerous implications inherent in it, which the difficult political and financial situation of the Twenties would cause to bloom. Perhaps the most dangerous trend fostered was that of regarding the Navy purely as a wartime organization and consequently the partial abandonment of the theory of the fleet-in-being as a deterrent, which had previously been embodied in the Pax Britannica. A very small naval establishment implied that the Navy was to have a relatively small role in the peacetime policies of the Empire.

As was to happen at Chanak in 1922, it became evident that no provision had been made for the use of the Navy in a difficult peacetime situation. One month before the British finally withdrew from Turkey, Italy attacked and occupied the island of Corfu. In considering what action might be taken in response to these events, the British could not overlook the fact that their entire fleet in the Mediterranean was already committed to service in the Straits, and it should have become abundantly clear that the Navy was unable to cope with two critical situations arising simultaneously. Fleet exercises were, of course, cancelled for the year as it was impossible to approach anything close to an efficient tactical unit on which valuable exercises would have to be based. Similar dislocations occurred several years later when internal disorder in China called for the strengthening

of the China Station and the First Lord was forced to announce that "tactical training... has suffered owing to the detachment of units to
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the Far East." It was quite clear that any unusual activity on the Navy's part would necessitate the denuding of one station for the re-inforcement of another. While the Admiralty recognized the dangers explicit in its continuation, the Government persisted in pursuing the policy of trouble only in one area at one time, after events had ceased to justify it. The Government's material allocation to the Navy was largely a reflection of this policy. Consequently, the Admiralty, lacking the material with which to fight a two-ocean war was, of necessity, unable to consider what should have been regarded as the major threat to Great Britain's security.

Amery tried to overcome these tendencies inherent in the Government's fiscal policies by interpreting the reductions made to the Navy as abnormally large, designed specifically to meet unusual circumstances. In presenting the Estimates for 1923, he asked the House to keep clearly in mind, "that these are exceptional Estimates, framed to meet an exceptional financial situation, and that the economies which we have achieved are, in part at any rate, due to the postponement of the necessary expenditure which will have to be
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made up with the return to more normal conditions." Thus, by 1929, when the original 'Ten Year Rule' should have expired, the Navy would

have to be raised to proper peacetime requirements. Yet, as it was, instead of becoming the reasonable basis for post-war defence planning, the 'Rule' became the justification for the popular reduction of the defence Estimates. In 1925, the Service Chiefs were informed that the Treasury regulation should be regarded as applicable until 1935, and during the following two years the 'Rule' was again extended to 1936 and 1937 respectively. Finally, in 1928, under Churchill's instruction and with full Cabinet approval, the order was transformed into a perfectly meaningless policy directive; all plans and Estimates were to be calculated on the basis that the need for readiness might never arrive for the ten year duration of the 'Rule' became what one historian has aptly termed an "ambulatory decade." Lord Hankey, Secretary of the Committee of Imperial Defence, has graphically observed: "When I woke up in the morning, I'd say, 'Good God, the Ten Year Rule starts again this morning!'"

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All these moves were part and parcel of the Treasury's successful reassertion of political control over defence considerations after the War, with the result that planning became subject not only to the economic orthodoxy but also to the personal whims of the Chancellors of the Exchequer. Of the two outstanding men who held this position during the Twenties, Philip Snowden and Winston Churchill, the former was a determined pacifist and the latter sought

to use his influence to re-establish a position of political leadership. Such men, in another era, might not have threatened the security of the Empire to such an extent through their fiscal policies. But they, and other politicians as well, seemed reluctant to admit that the progress of the technological revolution had placed certain limitations on their freedom of decision with regard to defence planning. Yet, as it was, the Treasury insisted not only upon representation on the Committee of Imperial Defence but after 1922, in the Cabinet Secretariat as well, so "that no financial questions might come before the Cabinet without the Chancellor of the Exchequer considering them first. . . ." ³⁴ The unhealthy result was that the Treasury, rather than attempting to understand the full implications of the defence Estimates, took to scrutinizing the detail. "Arms were discussed solely in terms ³⁵ of what they cost, not what they were needed for." What made matters even worse was that both political parties which formed Governments during this period were agreed on the general lack of a defence policy and consequently, there was little criticism to bring matters to public attention.

Working under such groundrules, it is not surprising that Service morale sagged. As one officer has put it:

Economy came to rule the Fleet both in action and in inaction. More time was spent in harbour. . . . Cleanliness remained the watchword and the rivalry between ships for the honour of looking the smartest grew with the greater

proportion of time in the harbour. Officers became loath to indulge in training exercises which would be liable to dirty the ship. A blemish was a serious matter when the stores for making it good were so hard come by. . . . (36)

And perhaps the most striking indictment of all was that officers were forced to turn to their own resources to purchase cleaning materials.

The use of ammunition for practice was strictly limited; most ships were undermanned; the fuel allowance was severe. Battleships designed to steam at twenty-three knots were reduced to twelve knots, destroyers from thirty-five to fifteen. The natural result was that during the short exercises which were held, conditions were so unrealistic as to be of little, if any, benefit at all.

But undoubtedly the most pressing factor working to the detriment of morale was the question of pay. Although the Jerram Committee of 1919 had gone far toward improving the hopelessly out of date scales of pay, they remained far lower than any average on a national wage index would have justified. Then, to make matters worse, the Government formed a new committee in 1923 with a view to lowering existing rates, though its product, the Anderson Report, proved too difficult to implement under the unstable political conditions then prevailing. The election of a Conservative majority in 1925, however, saw the creation of the Gilmour Committee to consider again the question of pay for entrants to the three Services as well as that of marriage allowances for naval officers. So convinced was the Admiralty

that this latter allowance would be approved that the required sum was included in the Estimates for 1925-26 and received the complete sanction of Parliament. The measure did not, however, receive Treasury approval; it most probably became one of the bargaining points in the cruiser controversy and the First Lord, Walter Bridgeman, reluctantly announced to the House that he had been "unable to persuade my colleagues of the strength of the case which
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I felt myself. "

With regard to rates of pay, the Admiralty held firm on the stand that it could not break what it regarded as a contract with the men who had benefitted from the success of the Jerram Committee. The rather peculiar outcome of this deadlock was the decision to institute new, lower rates of pay (about twenty-five percent) for all those who had entered the Service after October 4th, 1924. The inevitable result was aptly summed up in the House by Hore-Belisha:

You have two men in the Navy working side by side, performing exactly the same task, and having similar obligations to discharge in respect of their own welfare and that of their families, and yet getting two different rates of pay. (38)

The Treasury, however, was not entirely satisfied with the results of its work, and persistently tried to have all men placed on the 1925 rates. It finally succeeded on the recommendation of the May Committee in 1931, though the announcement of the reductions, which affected

about seventy-five percent of the men in the Navy, precipitated the tragic Invergordon Mutiny.

Not everyone, however, placed the full brunt of the blame on the Treasury for declining morale, as the doctrine of anti-materialism began to place an equal burden on an Admiralty too dedicated to the material aspects of naval organization. The anti-materialist movement was, in essence, an idealistic reaction to the technological revolution and one finds in the technical arguments of its greatest proponent, Admiral Herbert Richmond, ideas which had little relation to reality in the Twenties. As a supporter of an Imperial Navy, for instance, he completely overlooked the development of nationalism in the
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Dominions. As a supporter of the small capital ship, he completely overlooked the potential development of the airplane and submarine, both of which he held in very low regard. Yet it is not to Richmond but to one of his disciples, Bernard Ackworth, that we must look to see the full development of the anti-materialist school. Ackworth criticized the Naval Staff, the emphasis placed on education and scientific research, and indeed every development which had taken place to cope with the increasingly complex technical nature of the new Navy. In a remarkable resumé of the extremes of the anti-materialist philosophy, Ackworth declared:

Until yesterday, we lived in secular affairs, according to the Gospel of Tradition, the Gospel of the Greeks and Romans, the Gospel of our forefathers and thus of civilization

itself. Today, we live and act according to the Gospel of Darwin, in mechanical, secular and religious matters. Until yesterday, the world acknowledged absolute standards as the sallying-point, so to speak, of action and true progress. . . . Today, on the other hand, the absolute and unchanging nature of truth, in all its infinite aspects, is discredited by the evolutionary conception, with the result that the possibility of progress. . . is believed to be illimitable, though incapable of definition and without finality. . . . Finality in any particular means of obtaining an object is laughed out of court because progress in a particular machine is conceived to be as possible and as assured as is the progress and improvement of living species believed, humourously enough, to be proceeding steadily and automatically through eternity. (40)

The anti-materialists quite rightly recognized that there were dangers to the individual inherent in the advance of technical knowledge, but the solution they offered, that of turning back the clock, showed only their reluctance to tackle the problem at all.

It was not the task of the Admiralty, however, to provide for other than the best defence of the Empire it possibly could. With greater resources, it might well have been able to cope with the problems of the individual within the Navy, but with the limited resources at its command, the Board wisely looked with greatest attention to the material with which it would have to fight its battles. While the actions of the individual still counted a great deal, it was far more difficult than it had ever been in the past for the inferior force to win an engagement. The Twenties should have been, as the Admiralty hoped, devoted to learning the lessons of the First War, both technical and otherwise,

yet instead, because of the Government's refusal to look at the problems of defence in their broadest perspective, the Admiralty was forced to turn to playing politics with the Treasury in order to ensure even the modest attention which it did receive.

Notes on Chapter I

1

W. S. Chalmers, The Life and Letters of David, Earl Beatty (London, 1951), p. 349.

2

"First Interim Report of the Committee on National Expenditure", Cmd. 1581, 1922, p. 6.

3

"Statement of the First Lord of the Admiralty explanatory of the Navy Estimates, 1920-1921", Cmd. 619, 1920, p. 4.

4

Ibid., p. 4.

5

126 H. C. Deb., 5s., col. 2301

6

"The Times", December 6th, 1920.

7

139 H. C. Deb., 5s., col. 1766-67. It is interesting to note that Arthur Lee, as military attaché in Washington under the Embassy of Lord Pauncefoot, had become a friend of Theodore Roosevelt and was an honorary member of the Rough Riders. His wife was an American. While it is doubtful that Lee's background made a positive contribution to eventual Anglo-American agreement, neither did it make a negative one.

8

"Statement of the First Lord of the Admiralty explanatory of the Navy Estimates, 1921-1922", Cmd. 1191, 1921, p. 2.

9

Ibid., p. 3.

10

We are ready to associate ourselves with the nations of the world, great and small, for countenance, for counsel; to seek the expressed views of world opinion; to recommend a way to approximate disarmament and relieve the crushing burden of military and naval establishments. Cited in Harold and Margaret Sprout, Toward a New Order of Sea Power: American Naval Power and the World Scene, 1919-1922 (Princeton, 1940), p. 129.

11

"The Times", March 17th, 1921.

12

"The Times", August 3rd, 1921.

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H. and M. Sprout, 'Toward a New Order of Sea Power', p. 132.
- 14
"Conference on the Limitation of Armament", Washington, 1922, p. 60.
- 15
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"Conference on the Limitation of Armament", pp. 96-102.
- 18
Rolland A. Chaput, Disarmament in British Foreign Policy
(London, 1935), p. 120.
- 19
238 H. C. Deb., 5s., col. 2099.
- 20
"Commonwealth", "Agamemnon", "Bellerophon", "St. Vincent",
"Inflexible", "Superb", "Neptune", "Hercules", "Indomitable",
"Temeraire", "New Zealand", "Australia", "Agincourt", "Erin",
"Dreadnought", "Princess Royal", "Lion", "Conqueror", "Monarch",
and "Orion" were scrapped. Only the last four were not on the
disposal list.
- 21
161 H. C. Deb., 5s., col. 1084.
- 22
Archibald Hurd, "Washington Naval Standards", Fortnightly Review,
CXII (1922), pp. 106-121.
- 23
Cmd. 1581, 1922.
- 24
Ibid., pp. 31-32.
- 25
Leopold S. Amery, My Political Life, II, War and Peace, 1914-1929
(London, 1953), p. 218.
- 26
Cmd.619, 1920; "Notes on Naval Policy", para. 15-23, 25-35, 53-74
provide a description of the organizational developments in staff,
education and research; see also Appendix II of the same paper,
"Organization to secure for the Navy the full advantage of scientific
research and advice".
- 27
See Appendix III.

28

"Statement of the First Lord of the Admiralty explanatory of the Navy Estimates, 1922-1923", Cmd. 1603, 1922, p. 10.

29

W. S. Chalmers, "Beatty", p. 371.

30

Cmd. 1603, 1922, pp. 3-4.

31

"Statement of the First Lord of the Admiralty explanatory of the Navy Estimates, 1927-1928", Cmd. 2816, 1927, p. 10.

32

161 H. C. Deb., 5s., col. 1090-91.

33

Franklyn A. Johnson, Defence by Committee: The British Committee of Imperial Defence, 1885-1959 (London, 1960), p. 199 f.n.

34

Ibid., p. 187.

35

Kenneth Edwards, The Grey Diplomats (London, 1938), p. 97.

36

A. J. P. Taylor, English History, 1914-1945 (Oxford, 1965), p. 232.

37

193 H. C. Deb., 5s., col. 942.

38

Ibid., col. 938.

39

Richmond advocated a 6,500 ton battleship, with an armament of nine six-inch guns, a speed of twenty-four knots and an endurance of about 7,500 miles at fifteen knots. See, for instance, Herbert Richmond, Economy and Naval Security (London, 1931), p. 121.

40

Bernard Ackworth, The Navies of Today and Tomorrow: A Study of the Naval Crisis from Within (London, 1930), p. 138.

In accordance with the provisions of the Washington Treaty, Parliament was asked in the 1923 Estimates to provide for the construction of two new battleships. These vessels represented the first new construction the Admiralty had undertaken since 1919. It was not unreasonable that there should have been a delay in laying down new vessels after the War, for the naval establishment was far in excess of that which would be needed in peacetime. Until reductions had been made and the material characteristics of the new Navy determined, such construction would only have been wasteful in the extreme. Furthermore, it was also necessary to determine what technical lessons had been learned from the War that would have a significant effect on naval architecture. Just as it would have been wasteful to build ships in excess of those needed for the peacetime establishment, so it would have been equally wasteful to build ships into which the lessons of war had not been incorporated. The third reason for the delay was financial. The Admiralty realized that severe strains had been placed on the Treasury to wind up as quickly as possible those war costs which it had to meet. Shortly after the presentation of the 1923 Estimates, Beatty expressed his approval of the relationship between the Treasury and the Admiralty on this point:

The navy Estimates were completed and laid on the table of the House of Commons. They were very well received and

at last our efforts in the direction of economy are being really appreciated. It is well because we have reached rock bottom and can go no lower, and in fact they must increase from now on. It has always been represented to us by a succession of Chancellors of the Exchequer that the Financial Year 1923-24 was the critical one, that is, the one in which we should have greater difficulty than in any other to make the Budget meet. . . . We have two principles accepted and that is the great thing and two battleships laid down and commenced and next year we must begin on a Light Cruiser programme. (1)

Thus it was abundantly clear on both sides that some replacement would have to be made as soon as possible, particularly of those cruisers which had felt the strains of the severe conditions of wartime use. But as a result of the inflated building programmes of the War and the consequent fact that a large number of ships would fall due for replacement during a relatively short period of time, it was desirable that such replacement should be spread out so as not to place too heavy a demand on the resources of the Treasury.

Furthermore, in the broadest perspective, the question was something more than mere replacement. The eighty cruisers which had been regarded as essential by the Naval Staff after the War had fallen, as a result of cutbacks made to battlefleet strength, to an 'irreducible' minimum of seventy. Of these, at least sixty were not² to be above the fifteen year age limit. In calculating this figure, account had to be taken of the threefold nature of the cruiser's

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function in naval warfare. The first of these functions was to serve the battlefleet, both in determining position, course and speed of the opposing fleet, and also in destroying those auxiliary craft which were attempting to secure similar information for the enemy or which were posing a direct threat to one's own main force.

Two factors were present in calculating the number of cruisers required to perform these services. The main consideration was the size of the battlefleet to be served, but it was also necessary to include in this calculation the probable number of cruisers available to an enemy battlefleet. Under existing conditions, the Admiralty calculated its needs on the basis of five cruisers for every three capital ships and thus, to assist in the action of fifteen capital ships, which was the maximum number allowed under the terms of the Washington Treaty, at least twenty-five cruisers were required.

The second function of the cruiser, and one often performed in conjunction with the battlefleet, was that of preventing the enemy use of the sea for purposes of trade. This was dependent on the location, nature and volume of one's enemy's commerce.

The third function of the cruiser was the protection of commerce, the patrolling of trade routes, the guarding of the converging or focal points of these routes, and convoying. Unlike the relative factors used to determine the strength of the cruiser

force attached to the battlefleet, those governing the protection of the Empire's trade routes were absolute, unrelated to the strength of the enemy, but rather dependent upon the vast distances which had to be guarded, and the exceptionally large volume of trade which passed along them. In wartime, it would be possible for very small forces to cut into the lines of supply and do extensive damage. The forces needed to protect these lines would bear no relation whatever to the raiding bodies. "The number needed (would be) that which could provide those guards to the objectives open to the enemy's attack. Insofar as relativity enter(s) into the matter, there must be at every point at which an attack might be made, a force sufficient to defeat it." ⁴ In practice, this could be best achieved through the use of convoys, yet it is evident that the Admiralty, in calculating its requirements, was thinking more in terms of denying the enemy's raiders access to the seas. One of the reasons for this was the tendency to underrate, with the continued development of ASDIC, the danger of the submarine as a commerce raider, the result being that the destroyer, as an escort vessel, was overlooked in the building programmes of the Twenties. Whatever view the Admiralty took, however, cruisers still formed an essential part of the Empire's defence force.

The Navy had emerged from the War with 104 cruisers and had been in a far better strategic position then than it could hope for in a war in the Far East. Its decision to allot forty-five cruisers to the job of commerce protection was thus undoubtedly conservative if it possessed the determination to prevent the losses of its 1914-1918 experience. It realized that it could not maintain a peacetime force equivalent to this wartime establishment and settled on the total figure of seventy as the most reasonable it could achieve under existing conditions. While the figure was undoubtedly of an arbitrary nature, the Admiralty saw fit to continue using it as the basis of its policy until the London Naval Conference. Thus, it retained its faith in the absolute nature of British defence requirements, in spite of the building programmes undertaken by the other naval Powers. Nevertheless, it must be obvious that the principle could not have been upheld in the face of unlimited construction on their part. As such a contingency never arose, the Admiralty did not see fit to formulate a response to it, though it did eventually recognize the benefits to be gained from an arms limitation treaty in ensuring the formula's continued success.

The Admiralty possessed only forty-seven cruisers in 1923. It accordingly submitted to the Government a modest programme
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for the construction of such vessels armed with six inch guns. Its

probable aim was to secure the figure of seventy before the expiration of the 'Ten Year Rule' in 1930. During 1923, however, it became clear that the other naval Powers intended to build cruisers conforming to the limitations laid down at Washington, i. e. vessels of 10,000 tons, armed with eight-inch guns. The vast differences between the capabilities of the six-inch gun and the eight-inch gun in range and power of penetration made Beatty insistent on the fact that Great Britain should not be outclassed by these heavier vessels.

The first public indication of the Government's concern over the cruiser question occurred in October, 1923, when Prime Minister Baldwin intimated that the old "County" class of 1901, which had been designed for commerce protection, would have to be replaced. This was echoed by Beatty in an address to the Guildhall Banquet in early November and eventually became a plank in the Conservative election platform. In his election address, issued November 17th, Baldwin avowed that a substantial proportion of the seventeen cruisers required during the next few years would have to be laid down as soon as the designs were available.

The return of a minority Government, however, did not augur well for Beatty's building programme and, as it became evident that a coalition between Labour and Liberal would form the next Government, Amery, in an act of defiance, told the House on the penultimate day of its sitting that, during the next twelve years, Great Britain's entire

cruiser force would fall due for replacement.

To replace them, and to maintain our cruiser establishment in strength to meet the requirements of our Fleet and of the protection of commerce, we shall have to lay down in the course of the next ten years a total of some fifty-two cruisers in all, in other words, an average of five a year. There will, moreover, be a particularly heavy drop in the next six years and to prevent a serious deficiency from arising in 1929, we ought to lay down as many above the average as is reasonably possible in the next three years. (6)

Unjustified though such fears would prove to be, most Conservatives felt that the necessity for an adequate defence policy would not be at all understood by the new Labour Administration. Amery's statement of the defence needs of the nation can only be interpreted as an attempt to alert the public to the increasing urgency of the situation and as a warning to the incoming Government that this matter would require careful consideration.

Realizing the precarious nature of his political position, MacDonald chose his defence advisors carefully, placing Haldane at the head of the Committee of Imperial Defence and Lord Chelmsford, a Conservative, in the Admiralty. The latter actually secured Baldwin's
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permission before accepting the appointment. Even the two Labour members attached to the Board soon came to appreciate the Admiralty's position and proved to be extremely helpful in placating the Party's
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junior M. P. 's. In spite of such support, the Cabinet as a whole, and the Chancellor of the Exchequer in particular, had yet to be convinced

of the justice of the Admiralty's stand. Somewhat in a tone of despair, Beatty described the situation to his wife in the following letter of early February, 1924:

The First Lord has supported me nobly, but he is very pessimistic and has just informed me that he did not see how he could possibly stay on in a Cabinet with the views expressed by Mr. Snowden. Of course, if that is the case, there will be a debacle and I do not see how anybody can continue to attempt to administer the Navy under such conditions. (9)

Beatty wisely warned the Cabinet, however, that they could not fail to comply with the Admiralty's requests without explaining their position to the nation. Amery's declaration of January 21st had strengthened Beatty's position enormously, for the Admiralty had been able to inform the public of precisely where it stood on this point. This would not have been possible otherwise except through its own resignation. Nevertheless, Snowden kept the fires of opposition burning and Beatty felt he would "do away with the Navy altogether if he had half a chance. I told them if they wanted to be defeated in the House, they were going about it in the right way." ¹⁰ Haldane, however, who had earned a great deal of MacDonald's respect, gave the Navy all the support he could and eventually a decision was taken in favour of the Admiralty.

The Prime Minister, probably fearing a revolt from his backbenchers, decided to present the case to Parliament himself. He announced in the House that the Government had decided to undertake the construction of five cruisers to replace the old "County" class.

The figure was three less than that proposed by the previous administration. The matter of a long term programme would be
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subject to further examination.

The decision strengthened the Admiralty's position considerably, in that, as Hore-Belisha pointed out:

Two successive Governments, differing in principle and personnel and opposed in theory, particularly in the theory of defence, have successively put forward the same policy. . . . To my mind, that is the most conclusive of arguments, that these two political parties, being supported and guided by the same advisors, having access to the same information, should lay an identical policy before the House. . . . (12)

Beatty was, of course, elated at the decision and regarded it to a great extent as the personal victory which indeed it was. Yet he was well aware that it had not been a careful consideration of defence factors, but rather the realization of a delicate political situation, which had won the case for him. Writing to his wife the day after the House had voted to accept the Estimates for 1924-1925, he could not help but express his mixed feelings:

It is extraordinary to note the result of the division in the House of Commons on the question of cruisers. Only 73 Liberal Members supported the Motion, that is, voted against the Admiralty. Over 20 Liberal Members and the whole of the Labour Party and the whole of the Conservative Party supported the Admiralty, including extremists of every description. . . . It is really a very remarkable result and one which gives ample food for thought. The Prime Minister must see. . . what an immensely strong position it puts him in. Who would have thought a few years or even months ago that we would see an overwhelming majority in the House support the proposition of a strong Navy. (13)

Snowden had undoubtedly suffered a defeat in the Cabinet but in his determination to keep the Estimates at a low level, he turned instead to more artificial means and instituted what became known as the 'shadow cut'. In preparing its Estimates in the past, the Admiralty had tended to err on the safe side because of the awkwardness of a Supplementary Estimate. As a result, the money requested for the material votes was seldom spent. As labour disputes became more common and the general decrease in industrial productivity more pronounced, the surplus gap continued to increase. In the official language of the Estimates, Snowden announced that for the financial year 1924-25, "His Majesty's Government have decided to discount these various causes of possible delay in advance and the provision under the contract subheads has been correspondingly reduced." ¹⁴ What, in effect, this amounted to was a reduction of about £2 million per year in the total vote, though it was clearly understood that the Treasury would sponsor the supplementary vote if the delays predicted by the Chancellor did not come about and the Admiralty ¹⁵ found itself short of money.

The Admiralty managed to survive the remainder of the Labour Administration reasonably unscathed. Beatty lost out over Singapore, but he realized that his case was somewhat weaker here, both technically and politically. A Naval Review was held in July,

the first since 1914, and was hailed as a great success. "The members of the Cabinet, from Prime Minister down, enthused 16 tremendously and pledged themselves never to let the Navy down. "

There was a flurry of excitement in October with regard to the Geneva Protocol and Beatty sent the later First Sea Lord, Dudley Pound, to represent the Navy's interests, realizing that the Fleet could not be pledged to uphold the decisions of the League of Nations, 17 whatever they might be. The matter did not cause Beatty too much concern, however, for the Liberals shortly withdrew their support of the Government and the results of the ensuing General Election guaranteed the failure of the controversial agreement. The Conservatives re-assumed power in November.

The Navy had many friends in the new Government, but despite this, the Cabinet was to prove far less amenable than had been the case with its Labour counterpart. The struggle to secure a comprehensive building programme, which was to last some six months, began to take shape in January of 1925, with Beatty and Churchill as the main protagonists. It was the First Sea Lord's intention to lay down six cruisers for the financial year 1925-26, but clearly, he had not yet measured the strength of his opposition.

I do not think that we shall have difficulty in making a really strong case, but the Economists have got their minds on a reduction of the Income Tax for which they anticipate receiving much applause. If they persist, it will show how penny-wise and pound-foolish our legislators are.... (18)

Indeed, toward the end of January, Beatty was proclaiming his anticipated success, though he was to receive a bitter shock when Churchill managed to re-open the matter in the Cabinet with an increased vigour.

That extraordinary fellow Winston has gone mad. Economically mad, and no sacrifice is too great to achieve what in his short-sightedness is the panacea for all evils — to take 1s. off the Income Tax. Nobody outside a lunatic asylum expects a shilling off the Income Tax this Budget. But he has made up his mind it is the only thing he can do to justify his appointment as Chancellor of the Exchequer. . . . It's then a case of Winston coming off his perch or a split in the Govt. followed by the resignation of the Board of Admiralty. (19)

The forcefulness with which the new Chancellor presented his case was a matter of grave concern to Beatty and he was soon proved justified in his fears that the Government would propose not to
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build any cruisers at all during 1925. Beatty summoned together the full force of his arguments, and employing all his political acumen, he even used Curzon's personal dislike of Churchill in
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order to find support for the Admiralty's case. By the middle of February, he was able to write:

I think I have overcome them all and saved the situation. My meeting yesterday with the Prime Minister and the Chancellor was very fruitful, and the way is clear for an understanding which will preserve the issues for which I have been struggling. (22)

Although Bridgeman was compelled to announce in the House that no construction would be provided for at that point, a Cabinet

committee under Lord Birkenhead was to be formed to examine the whole question of a comprehensive building programme. This measure created a temporary lull in the bitter dialogue between Admiralty and Treasury and the matter did not reach a crisis level until July, after the committee had met some twenty-five to ²³ thirty times. The outbreak of trouble in China, however, and the consequent strengthening of the China Station, heightened the Admiralty's determination to have its requirements met. The Government's intransigence in formulating a construction policy brought forth the threat of resignation from Bridgeman and Beatty. The latter advised the other members of the Board to remain on ²⁴ to continue the administration of the Navy, but they too felt that they must resign unless given the opportunity to present the full strength of their case to Parliament as a whole. Thus faced with the possibility of the resignation of the entire Board of Admiralty, the Government was forced to give in, though not without first declaring that a substantial proportion of the cost of the new programme should be met by the reduction of other naval votes. The plans laid before Parliament called for the laying down of four cruisers in the financial year 1925-26 and three every year thereafter until 1929-30, of one flotilla of destroyers per annum commencing in 1927-28, of six submarines a year from 1926-27 on,

and a number of smaller craft. The total cost of the scheme was
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estimated at £ 58 million.

Looking for a moment at the cruiser and destroyer figures,
one can immediately see where the inadequacies in this programme
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lay. While the Admiralty would possess by the end of 1929, i. e.
at the end of the natural life span of the Parliament then sitting, a
reasonable approximation to the Admiralty's formula of sixty
underage and ten overage cruisers, two years later, having allowed
for the scrapping of only four vessels, these figures would become
forty-eight and twenty-two respectively. To maintain a balanced
programme of replacement over a fifteen year period, the Admiralty
should have been laying down four cruisers a year. But the
discrepancy is even greater with regard to destroyer construction.
Of these vessels, the Navy would possess at the close of 1929, a total
of 120, in addition to whatever proportion of overage tonnage it might
see fit to retain. By the end of 1931, however, a further 101 would
pass the age limit, of which only sixteen were to be replaced, thus
leaving a total of thirty-five underage destroyers. Compared to the
figure of 521 which Great Britain possessed on November 11th, 1918,
the destroyer programme can only be considered grossly inadequate.

While it is true that the Admiralty stood liable to the charge
of ignoring the lessons of the First War, it was forced to establish,

because of the Government's financial stringency, what could be termed construction priorities, and in view of the relatively short period of time required for building destroyers, it fell back on the hope that its inadequacies could be made up by emergency wartime programmes. But the challenge of having to meet much of the cost of the proposed scheme internally was to lay the Admiralty open to the equally serious charges of the anti-materialist school. The institution of new pay rates and the decision to deny officers a marriage allowance were among the sacrifices which had to be made, and in fact, every vote at all connected with personnel was to see a slight decline in its proportionate share of the total budget. On the other hand, knowledge of the number of new ships to be available in the future was, in itself, a way of being able to make considerable savings on current expenditure.

If you know what replacements to expect, it is very much easier to make economical arrangements with regard to your existing fleet and to take risks which otherwise would not be justified, whereas if you are living in a state of uncertainty as to new ships to be built, you cannot risk getting rid of ships which you have, not knowing what you may get in the future. You must retain old ships whose usefulness is well nigh passed; and you must not only retain them but you must spend money on refitting and retubing them which is really not justified by their fighting value. (27)

The cost of repairs fell considerably and whereas in the past, political pressure had made the Admiralty reluctant to close down certain of the Royal Dockyards, it now chose to ignore such pressure. In late 1925,

Pembroke and Rosyth were placed on a 'care and maintenance' basis and further savings effected through a new scheme of repair at sea which saw a ship coming in for refit only once every two and a half years.

Needless to say, the Navy appreciated the victory for which Beatty had so valiantly struggled. The material contribution which he had made was great, but more important, he had secured a recognition, elusive though it may have been, of the necessity of maintaining an efficient naval force in time of peace. In response to the Government's inability to define precisely what Great Britain's military commitments were, the Admiralty turned instead to the creation of absolute standards to gauge its requirements, standards which had little direct relation to foreign policy, but which reflected the potential material threat to the continued existence of the British Fleet. There were few precedents for such a policy, but Beatty realized that the strategic and, more important, the technological changes of the past twenty years had altered substantially the relationship between Government and military establishment, significantly reducing the former's freedom of action. In expressing its displeasure at the new situation, the Government tended to ignore the urgent pleas of its naval advisors rather than attempting to find a positive resolution to the problem. The result was that the Admiralty found itself thrust

on to the political stage in order that it might secure the material which it regarded as essential to the security of the Empire. It is clear that neither the Conservative nor the Labour Administrations attempted to formulate a comprehensive defence policy and that both resented the fact that they should be forced to consider the question at all. But during 1924 and 1925, it became evident that some attempt would have to be made to maintain the Fleet on a constant relative level to the great naval Powers of the world. Part of the response appeared in the modest construction programme of 1925.

Notes on Chapter II

1

W. S. Chalmers, "Beatty", p. 393. Beatty to Ethel Beatty, March 9th, 1923.

2

The early post-war figure of eighty appears in Herbert W. Richmond, The Navy (London, 1937), p. 50; the figure of sixty plus ten in Frederick C. Dreyer, The Sea Heritage; A Study of Maritime Warfare (London, 1955), p. 271.

3

See, for instance, W. H. D'Oyley, "Cruisers and Naval Warfare", Brassey's Navy and Shipping Annual, 1923, pp. 111-121, and H. G. Thursfield, "The Function of the Cruiser in Relation to Imperial Needs", Journal of the Royal United Services Institute, 1927, pp. 101-121.

4

H. W. Richmond, "The Navy", p. 48. Richmond's aim at this point was to draw an analogy between the protection of lines of supply in the Boer War and the protection of commerce at sea. For the sake of convenience, the quote is taken out of context, though its meaning remains the same.

5

W. S. Chalmers, "Beatty", p. 372.

6

169 H. C. Deb., 5s., col. 607-08.

7

A. J. P. Taylor, "English History", p. 209 f. n.

8

William James, A Great Seaman: The Life of Admiral of the Fleet Sir Henry F. Oliver (London, 1956), p. 174; see also W. S. Chalmers, "Beatty", p. 396. Beatty to Ethel Beatty, February 15th, 1924.

9

W. S. Chalmers, "Beatty", p. 395. Beatty to Ethel Beatty, February 3rd, 1924.

10

Ibid., p. 396. Beatty to Ethel Beatty, February 9th, 1924.

11

169 H. C. Deb., 5s., col. 1971.

12

169 H. C. Deb., 5s., col. 2141.

13

W. S. Chalmers, "Beatty", p. 372. Beatty to Ethel Beatty, February 23rd, 1924.

14

"Statement of the First Lord of the Admiralty explanatory of the Navy Estimates, 1924-1925", Cmd. 2071, 1924, p. 3.

15

A. Ernle M. Chatfield, It Might Happen Again (London, 1947), p. 26.

16

W. S. Chalmers, "Beatty", p. 399. Beatty to Ethel Beatty, July 28th, 1924.

17

Ibid., p. 400. Beatty to Ethel Beatty, October 4th, 1924.

18

Ibid., p. 402. Beatty to Ethel Beatty, January 10th, 1925.

19

Ibid., pp. 403-404. Beatty to Ethel Beatty, January 26th, 1925.

20

Ibid., p. 405. Beatty to Ethel Beatty, February 1st, 1925.

21

Ibid., p. 406. Beatty to Ethel Beatty, February 5th, 1925.

22

Ibid., p. 406. Beatty to Ethel Beatty, February 14th, 1925.

23

187 H. C. Deb., 5s., col. 482.

24

A. E. M. Chatfield, "It Might Happen Again", p. 42.

25

"Programme of New Construction", Cmd. 2476, 1925, p. 2.

26

See Appendix V.

27

192 H. C. Deb., 5s., col. 2639.

Chapter III

The Conservative Concept of Disarmament

It was also during 1925 that the efforts of the League of Nations to achieve the aims of Article VIII of the Covenant finally took a concrete form in the creation of the Preparatory Commission¹ for the Disarmament Conference. The same strategic principles, which had guided the Admiralty in drawing up a programme of construction, were to guide the Government in its initial attempts to achieve a measure of disarmament. It was the intention of the Conservative Cabinet to achieve such reductions by combining its desire for peace based on security with its policy of public economy.

The trend of the deliberations of a sub-committee of the Committee of Imperial Defence, chaired by Lord Cecil, may be seen in the British position at the First Session of the Preparatory Commission held in 1926. At that gathering Cecil avowed:

... that the number of cruisers in the British Navy is... largely a question of overseas commitments and not the size of foreign navies.... While the number of cruisers may therefore not come within the scope of the question, their size undoubtedly does, and there is no reason why, by general agreement, their size should not be limited. (2)

Such views undoubtedly embodied the Admiralty's distinction between the Navy's relative and absolute requirements, which had also been forwarded by Balfour at the Washington Conference, and favoured also the qualitative limitation of cruisers essential to Great Britain's economic and strategic needs. If any further quantitative limitations were to be imposed on the Navy, they would have to be based on the

theory of limitation by class of ships, which would preserve the status quo in relative naval strength, as opposed to the French³ theory of limitation by global tonnage. The latter scheme, while leaving it to the discretion of the individual Powers to build such vessels as they required, would not necessarily have lessened British fears of being overpowered by a concentration of submarines, for example, in any particular fleet. Discussion in the Preparatory Commission was to reach an impasse on this particular divergence of opinion and the deadlock persisted until circumvented by the calling of the Geneva Naval Conference.

In the United States, Congressional pressure had been evident since 1923 to close the gap left by the Washington settlement in the limitation of auxiliary craft. The Executive's reluctance to acquiesce under such pressure was probably the result of the hope that a new conference would be unnecessary. But the insistent demands of the Navy Department's General Board to attain a ship for ship equality with Great Britain, made a naval conference seem the easiest way to avoid further building schemes or the possibility of a naval race which might develop. The issue had not gone unexamined in Great Britain, though the Admiralty was anxious to first attain Parliamentary recognition of the absolute standards of British defence and to initiate construction to fulfill these

requirements, before beginning to study the question of extending further the Washington limitations. Yet, because the seventy cruiser formula had remained unchanged in the face of limited construction by the other naval Powers, the Admiralty tended to ignore the possibility of an arms race and, reflecting the Government's concern with economy, concentrated almost entirely on the creation of qualitative limitations on further building. For several months prior to the issuing of the invitations to the Geneva Conference, the Admiralty moulded the principles which Bridgeman would present at the disarmament tables.

On February 10th, 1927, a week after the Admiralty had submitted its proposals to the Cabinet for approval, President Coolidge addressed the Contracting Powers of the Washington Treaty with a view to arranging a conference, in conjunction with the meeting of the Preparatory Commission, for the further limitation of naval armament. Consequent upon the acceptance of President Coolidge's proposal, the Admiralty announced the postponement of the 1927 phase of its building programme until the outcome of the forthcoming deliberations should be determined. Nevertheless, in presenting the Estimates for that year, Bridgeman made clear that the Admiralty had not changed its concept of the unique requirements of British defence policy:

There are special circumstances with regard to our Navy which are totally different from those of any other

country. Our obligation is to maintain a fleet equal in naval strength to that of any other Power, and provide reasonable security for safeguarding trade and communications. (4)

The pre-Conference period was marked by a lack of discussion between the participating Powers and this fact was later blamed for the failure of the negotiations. The result was that when the three powers met in June, France and Italy having refused to participate in any official capacity, three quite individual and conflicting positions came to light. The position taken by the United States delegation called for the extension of the principles and ratios of the Washington agreement to cruisers, destroyers and submarines. The Americans defined the first to include all surface vessels between 3,000 and 10,000 tons, the second to include vessels between 600 and 3,000 tons and having a speed over seventeen knots, and the third to include all vessels designed to operate below the surface of the sea. With regard to total tonnage, the United States allotted 250,000 to 300,000 tons for cruisers, 200,000 to 250,000 tons for destroyers, and 60,000 to 90,000 tons for submarines, the ages for replacement being twenty years, fifteen to seventeen years, and twelve to thirteen years respectively. It is evident from these proposals that the American delegation desired a parity based on mathematical equality rather than a parity of security. They undoubtedly favoured a quantitative limitation and left an opening for very wide margins of difference

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within each class of vessel defined.

The British proposals, unlike the American, aimed specifically at economy, being for the most part qualitative limitations geared to save money in the replacement of obsolete vessels. It was hoped that the capital ship building holiday could be extended by increasing the age of this type of vessel from twenty to twenty-six years, with a reduction in the size of replacements to 30,000 tons and in armament to 13.5-inch guns. The destroyer's life was placed at twenty years, its size at 1,400 tons (1,750 tons for the flotilla leader), and its armament at a five-inch gun. While the abolition of the submarine was still prominent in Great Britain's disarmament scheme, it was realized that such a possibility was unlikely. Consequently, it was suggested that submarines be divided into two classes, ocean-going vessels limited to 1,600 tons and coastal vessels to 600 tons. The only quantitative limitation embodied in the British programme was the application of the 5:5:3 ratio to cruisers mounting eight-inch guns. The Admiralty viewed this move as essential to avoid the far greater cost of these larger ships and to prevent the *déclassement* of Great Britain's existing cruiser fleet. All remaining cruisers were to be limited to 7,500 tons and six-inch guns.

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The proposals of the Japanese differed little in practical

application from those submitted by the United States but were immersed in a wording so general as to permit extremely wide interpretation.

The delegations, having each presented their respective programmes, were quick to come to agreement on a number of qualitative limitations. Destroyers were to have an age limit of sixteen years, a maximum displacement of 1,500 tons and armament no greater than the five-inch gun. Sixteen percent of total destroyer tonnage could be used for flotilla leaders of 1,850 tons, which took into account the British practice of allotting one of these vessels to each of its flotillas of eight destroyers. Submarines were to be limited to a maximum surface displacement of 1,800 tons and were
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given a life span of thirteen years. The United States refused to consider further limitation of capital ships until the cruiser question had been amicably settled and, in fact, subordinated all decisions to this matter. In order to meet British demands for seventy cruisers, the Americans were prepared to extend total cruiser tonnage to 400,000 tons and avowed that, for the duration of the convention, they would maintain no more than twenty-five 10,000 ton, eight-inch gun cruisers. Since the Admiralty, however, would have to match this figure to maintain the 5:3 ratio with Japan, the proposal was unrealistic. Even in the light of the Admiralty's

desire for fifteen large cruisers, the remaining tonnage would⁹
have proved inadequate in fulfilling the seventy cruiser figure.

An attempt to circumvent the American position was embodied in an Anglo-Japanese memorandum of July 18th, in which it was agreed to group together the total tonnage of all surface auxiliary vessels, instead of placing limitations on each individual class. The Japanese also agreed to a limitation of eight-inch gun cruisers in the ratio of¹⁰ twelve to eight. This step represented a considerable divergence from the original British stand in that it accepted not only the quantitative limitations at first avoided but also, in a limited way, the French concept of global tonnage. The Americans, however, refused to relinquish their freedom to build eight-inch gun cruisers and the British delegation was recalled to London for further consultation with the Cabinet. It would seem that Robert Cecil was particularly upset with what he considered to be the Admiralty's refusal to make greater sacrifices in the cause of peace. Undoubtedly his threat of resignation caused considerable concern in the Cabinet, but in the final analysis, it could not but support the Admiralty's position.

Returning to Geneva, the British delegation made one final plea for recognition by the United States of its special defence requirements. On July 28th, it placed before the Conference a new set of proposals embodying the essential material of the Anglo-

Japanese agreement, but adding submarines to a global tonnage of 590,000 tons plus twenty-five percent of that figure in overage vessels. Cruisers were divided into two classes. Those possessing eight-inch guns were to have an eighteen year age limit, with both the United States and the United Kingdom being restricted to twelve each. Six-inch gun cruisers were to have a maximum displacement of 6,000 tons and an age limit of sixteen years. Destroyers were to be limited according to the principles already agreed upon and further definition was given to the limitation of submarines. Although included in global tonnage figures, submarine tonnage was not to exceed 90,000 tons, of which not more than two-thirds was to include ocean-going vessels of between 1,000 and 1,800 tons. ¹¹

A brief examination of these figures shows that within the tonnage stated, Great Britain would have been able to maintain twelve 10,000 ton, eight-inch gun cruisers, fifty-eight 6,000 ton cruisers, thirteen destroyer flotillas of maximum tonnage and 90,000 tons of submarines. Using the original figure of 60,000 tons for undersea craft proposed by Admiral Field in the Anglo-Japanese memorandum, two additional destroyer flotillas could be provided. These proposals represented, in principle, a considerable change in policy, when viewed in the light of Bridgeman's original and almost purely qualitative programme for the limitation of naval armament,

yet they obviously did not represent a departure from what the Admiralty considered to be its absolute standard of defence. No consideration was given to the suggestion that Great Britain might lower its formula of seventy cruisers.

The United States might have understood Great Britain's need for a larger number of cruisers, but it absolutely failed to see the need to place a limitation on eight-inch gun cruisers within the total tonnage proposed. The necessity for this, however, was clear enough to the Admiralty. The eight-inch gun cruiser severely outclassed the six-inch gun cruiser as a combat vessel and, with American freedom to build any number of the larger class it desired and the consequent Japanese response, the Navy would have found itself in a position of having to construct a great number of vessels which it considered unnecessarily large for the job of commerce protection.

It was ironic that the Japanese, against whom the American and British naval programmes were, in some measure, directed, should have escaped the recriminations which became evident after the Conference had failed. But this was because the United States refused to realize that its insistent plea for parity was an inherently dangerous stand to take. As Lord Grey pointed out in August, 1927:

The rock on which the Conference was wrecked at Geneva is the theory of 'parity' between the British and American navies; this theory is working badly and there is every

evidence that it will cause friction and not harmony between the two countries. . . . 'Parity', which is designed to avoid competition, does, in fact, imply rivalry. It means, it is true, that neither country is to have a bigger navy than the other, but it also means that each country must have as large as navy as the other.

Is it not possible to get back to the axiom on which the British Government tacitly acted before the War—that of not taking account of the American Navy in calculating the requirements of the British Empire ? (12)

The unfortunate fact was that it was not possible, unless the United States Government abandoned its concept of parity, meaning mathematical equality, and realized that the utter dependence of Great Britain on overseas commerce and the difficulty of protecting an Imperial trade network, called for a re-interpretation of parity in terms of defence rather than offence. As Churchill pointed out:

"But after all, the fundamental cause which prevented agreement¹³ lay in the different views taken of what constitutes naval equality."

There can be no doubt that, during the course of the Conference at Geneva, considerable pressure had been exercised on the Government to discount the views of the Admiralty. That this did not happen can, in large part, be attributed to Beatty's ability to convince Cabinet members of the justice of the Admiralty's case. But this was to be Beatty's last victory; after holding office for almost eight years, he had decided to retire. He was succeeded in office by Sir Charles Madden, Jellicoe's brother-in-law, a man of excellent naval ability, but lacking the political finesse so necessary for the direction of

the Navy in the Twenties.

The change in leadership at the Admiralty and the increasing pressure on the Government due to the failure of the Geneva negotiations were probably among the principal reasons leading to Bridgeman's announcement in the House, on November 16th, 1927, that two of the three cruisers which should have been laid down in 1927 were to be cancelled. Further, on January 20th, 1928, it was announced that one of the three vessels slated for construction in 1928 had also been cancelled. Both moves were rather costly gestures aimed at securing similar unilateral reductions elsewhere; neither had any effect other than to hold the Estimates down. Nevertheless, the presentation of the Fifteen Cruiser Bill in the United States House of Representatives strengthened the Government's determination to come to some accord with the great naval Powers and to avoid a new naval race.

In an attempt to clear away some of the outstanding differences about naval material with France, Austen Chamberlain approached Briand, shortly before the opening of the 1928 spring session of the Preparatory Commission, with a view to beginning private negotiations with the French. The discussions were carried on mainly between Admiral Kelly and Vice-Admiral Violette and saw the Admiralty return to a more orthodox position than had been evident at the close

of the Geneva Conference. In return for an agreement from Great Britain to withdraw opposition to the matter of trained reserves, the French were prepared to accept specific limitations on eight-inch gun cruisers and on submarines of over 600 tons. They also attempted to remove the uncertainty inherent in their global tonnage concept by re-affirming the position taken by the French delegation in 1927, that the Powers should submit their building plans to one another on the basis of one year's notification of change.¹⁶ When the Anglo-French compromise, as the negotiations came to be known, was submitted to the great naval Powers for consideration, Italy and the United States rejected it, though the former was not particularly concerned with the content of the note but rather the question of parity with France which it wanted settled before agreeing to come to the conference table.

This attempt to circumvent the American stand by securing the agreement of all the other naval Powers thus almost succeeded, but brought forth such bitter recriminations from the United States as to induce grave caution on the part of British statesmen in pursuing the matter any further. As Lord Cushendun was to explain: "It is not easy to see what we can do if, whenever we manage to come to an agreement with any Power on this complex question, we are to be denounced as furtive conspirators or hopeless blunderers for not

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having achieved more. " Thus, when Jonkheer Loudon, Chairman of the Preparatory Commission, suggested in the autumn of 1928, that the five naval Powers meet in London to discuss their differences, Cushendun could only reply that such a step would merely anticipate the 1931 conference called for under the Washington agreement, and that in these matters, it was better to proceed slowly. Similarly, Mr. Baldwin, in December, turned down a proposal from the Chairman of the Naval Committee of the House of Representatives to secure an interparliamentary conference in Canada on the question of naval

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disarmament. Undoubtedly, the Government had no intention of ignoring the matter entirely, although when Esmé Howard, British Ambassador to the United States, intimated that new proposals would be forthcoming, the Foreign Office denied that there would be any change of policy. The most overt act taken was the announcement by the First Lord that two of the three cruisers provided for in 1929

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would possess six-inch rather than eight-inch guns.

In the opinion of the Foreign Office, the only possibility of success lay in direct negotiation with the United States but, in view of the Presidential election and the Senate debate on the Fifteen Cruiser Bill, it was "decided by the Cabinet that no initiative should be taken by His Majesty's Government until the new President had assumed office and our own General Election had taken place. "

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When the Sixth Session of the Preparatory Commission opened at Geneva on April 15th, 1929, the British delegates had been instructed to avoid any public discussion which might renew old controversies. Private discussions, however, found the United States delegation in a far more conciliatory mood and on April 22nd, Hugh Gibson expressed to the assembly a vital change in American foreign policy. Referring favourably to the French Transactional Proposal of 1927, which had combined global tonnage with limitation by category by permitting a certain percentage of transfer, he avowed his Government's desire:

... to give full and friendly consideration to any supplementary methods of limitation which may be calculated to make our proposals, the French thesis, or any other acceptable to other Powers and, if such a course is desirable, my Government will be prepared to give consideration to a method of estimating equivalent naval values which take account of other factors than displacement tonnage alone. In order to arrive at a basis of comparison in the case of categories in which there are marked variations as to unit characteristics, it may be desirable in arriving at a formula for estimating equivalent tonnage to consider certain factors which produce these variations, such as age, unit displacement and calibre of guns. (21)

In the course of private conversations during the remainder of the session, Gibson made clear the President's desire to come to an agreement with regard to cruisers and of Hoover's willingness to recognize the unusual requirements of British defence. On May 1st, Esmé Howard was instructed to inform the American Government

of Great Britain's confidence in their combined ability to arrive "at a standard of parity which allowed sufficient latitude to meet the special needs of each." Stressing their desire to keep the matter as confidential as possible, His Majesty's Government would be willing to supply the United States Government with its own calculations of parity, taking into account the factors suggested by Gibson, but felt the "speedier and more practical plan" would be to have American calculations presented for their consideration. 22 Howard received nothing but a courtesy reply to this communication, Parliament adjourned for the General Election, and further discussion would have to wait the arrival of the newly appointed American Ambassador, General Charles Dawes.

It must be stressed that the Conservative Government had not changed, nor did it contemplate changing, the disarmament policy to which it had clung through the difficult years of 1927 and 1928. That policy, conceived prior to the Washington Conference of 1921, had combined the Government's desire for a parity based on security and its concern with public economy. Instead, it interpreted Gibson's declaration as an indication that the United States was about to concede to Great Britain's point of view and that a formula had been calculated which would justify American acceptance of Great Britain's larger cruiser needs. But the facts were that no such formula existed, that

the General Board of the Navy had never been consulted on the matter, and that Gibson's speech was merely intended to indicate that the new Administration was open to consideration of other points of view. Unfortunately, similar misunderstandings were to occur throughout the whole course of the ensuing negotiations between the two governments. All too often, British statesmen were to find themselves committed to a position on the basis of an unreal assessment of the nature of the American proposals. All too often, British statesmen would be forced to concede an essential point in the edifice of their concept of parity with security, because the principle of disarmament had become more important politically than the means by which it could be obtained militarily.

Notes on Chapter III

1

Article VIII of the Covenant reads: The members of the League recognize that the maintenance of peace requires the reduction of national armaments to the lowest level consistent with national safety and the enforcement by common action of international obligations. The Council, taking account of the geographical situation and circumstances of each state, shall formulate plans for such reduction for the consideration and action of the several Governments. . . . The members of the League undertake to interchange full and frank information as to the scale of their armaments, their military and naval programmes, and the condition of such of their industries as are adaptable to warlike purposes.

2

"Documents of the Preparatory Commission for the Disarmament Conference, Series II," p. 14. Cited in Rolland A. Chaput, Disarmament in British Foreign Policy (London, 1935), p. 138.

3

Qualitative limitations are restrictions placed on construction with regard to the tonnage, armament and age for replacement. Quantitative limitations take no account of the characteristics of an individual vessel but are restrictions applied to the number or total tonnage of ships any Power might possess.

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203 H. C. Deb., 5s., col. 1683-84.

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Mathematical equality meant naval equality calculated ship for ship, ton for ton; a parity of security meant naval equality calculated on the basis of the defensive requirements of the nations concerned.

6

R. A. Chaput, "Disarmament", pp. 156.

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"Geneva Conference for the Limitation of Naval Armaments, June-August, 1927: Speeches in Plenary Session by the Right Hon. W. C. Bridgeman, M. P., First Lord of the Admiralty", Cmd. 2964, 1927, pp. 4-5.

8

R. A. Chaput, "Disarmament", pp. 159-160.

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Bearing in mind the Admiralty's figure of 7,500 tons for six-inch gun cruisers, a total of twenty-five large and forty-five small vessels would have required a minimum tonnage aggregate of 587,500 tons. Fifteen large and fifty-five small vessels would have required an aggregate of 562,500 tons.

- 10 R. A. Chaput, "Disarmament", p. 161.
- 11 Cmd. 2964, 1927, p. 19.
- 12 "The Times", August 11th, 1927.
- 13 "The Times", August 8th, 1927.
- 14 210 H. C. Deb., 5s., col. 1013.
- 15 213 H. C. Deb., 5s., col. 845.
- 16 "Miscellaneous No. 6 (1928), Papers regarding the Limitation of Naval Armaments", Cmd. 3211, 1928, p. 26.
- 17 "Brassey's", 1929, p. 91.
- 18 R. A. Chaput, "Disarmament", p. 172.
- 19 226 H. C. Deb., 5s., col. 1310.
- 20 Foreign Office Memorandum of June 10th, 1929. Cited in Introductory Note to "Documents on British Foreign Policy, Second Series", Volume I, edited by E. L. Woodward and Rohan Butler, p. 3.
- 21 Ibid., p. 4.
- 22 Ibid., p. 6.

Chapter IV

Labour and the London Conference

On June 7th, 1929, Ramsay MacDonald formed a Labour Government; seven days later, General Charles Dawes arrived in England to take up his appointment as Ambassador of the United States to the Court of St. James. These two men first met on June 16th to initiate the discussions which would form the basis of the London Naval Treaty. Neither fully understood more than the basic principles of what their conversations would entail but both were deeply committed to their ultimate success. Neither had, in fact, consulted their respective naval advisors, though the Prime Minister indicated that he believed the Admiralty would be more¹ co-operative than it had in the past. In the United States, the President and the Secretary of State had just begun to look for the yardstick which the British believed Dawes had brought with him. When the General Board of the Navy was finally consulted, it informed the President that it was highly improbable that any formula would be found to equate the combat values of different² cruisers. Consequently, this first meeting between Dawes and MacDonald produced very little other than a tacit agreement that the question of freedom of the seas would be forgotten for the moment and that the other naval Powers should be assured they would not be presented with the fait accompli of an Anglo-American³ accord. The irony of the situation was that the British would find

themselves presented with this very same fait accompli, even though they were a party to the negotiations.

The fault did not lie entirely with the Foreign Office, however, for the nature of the American proposals tended to be very misleading to minds nurtured in the concepts of a policy of disarmament with security. Thus when Hugh Gibson made the following suggestion, it was taken for granted that the United States Government was finally willing to concede to the British point of view:

... that it might be found when we actually got to work that there would be no necessity to utilize a yardstick in order to achieve agreement between the two Powers as to what constitutes parity. If, for instance, His Majesty's Government were able to state confidentially to the American Government that, given a disposition on the part of the Japanese, French and Italian Governments to reduce *pari passu*, British naval strength could be reduced to such a minimum, the United States Government would then be able to reply by indicating the minimum to which they themselves would go. It would probably be found that these two minima could be taken as constituting parity between the two countries and that the yardstick could be made to fit in with the results thus achieved. (4)

On the basis of what the Foreign Office believed to be a complete understanding by the Americans of British disarmament policy as formulated over the past several years, this statement was interpreted as an acceptance of the concept of parity in terms of security rather than mathematical equality. Even the Admiralty realized that substantial reductions on the part of the other naval Powers would permit a reconsideration of the absolute standard of defence to which it adhered. But any contemplated reduction

on the part of Great Britain would have to be applied only to that standard and not to the inadequate naval establishment that then existed. Thus, the tendency was to regard any future agreement as being based upon existing relative naval strength with the yardstick calculated to accomodate the apparent mathematical differences. Should any reduction be contemplated, it would merely be an application of the formula achieved as a result of this process.

The outcome of this tentative exploration led the Prime Minister to urge that the American formula be revealed to the Admiralty for immediate study. It was MacDonald's intention to call a conference as early as possible and he even attempted to initiate discussion of the wording of the invitations. Caught completely off gaurd, the American Administration cautioned Dawes to slow down the pace of the negotiations. It also advised him to inform the Prime Minister that it hoped the Admiralty would arrive at a formula of its own, taking into consideration⁵ the factors of displacement, guns and age. The United States Ambassador did, however, agree to the possibility of concluding a disarmament treaty covering all combatant ships, in categories, with limited right of transfer, though capital ships and aircraft carriers were to be considered only with a view to deferment of replacement. While MacDonald insisted that technical points

should not be allowed "to override the great public issues involved
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in our being able to come to an agreement, " it was to technical
detail that attention was now turned.

The Prime Minister agreed that parity in destroyers and
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submarines would constitute mathematical equality and welcomed
the American offer to attain this end by reducing to reach the
British level. But Dawes made clear that "such energetic action
by America as to submarines and destroyers (was) predicated on
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energetic action as to cruisers on the part of Great Britain, " and
he finally asked that the British make known at what level they were
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willing to set cruiser tonnage.

There can be no doubt that MacDonald was much disturbed
by the introduction of this element in the discussions and extremely
disheartened by the American inference that Great Britain should
have to narrow the gap in cruisers before the yardstick could be
10
applied. In a sympathetic note to the American Ambassador, he
expressed the view:

... that it will not be helpful for either of us to begin
by stating the absolute limits, but rather to examine the
present conditions, work out parity within it, total the
results and see what happens, examine the total and if it
be satisfactory, take it as the absolute limit, if it be
unsatisfactory, return to an examination of why it is so
and continue till we are satisfied. For I will not assume
that there is any doubt about our agreeing. (11)

Nor could MacDonald afford any doubt in this respect, for

he had already committed himself both to the public and, perhaps more seriously, to the party to arrive at an agreement whatever the price. Already a decision had been taken to suspend work on "Surrey" and "Northumberland", the two "County" class cruisers remaining from the 1928 programme and to await the outcome of the present negotiations before beginning the 1929 programme. The Americans, however, refused to reconsider their stand and MacDonald, having been backed into a corner, was forced to produce the figures. The British Government was willing to accept fifteen large cruisers as opposed to eighteen for the United States; the British Government would ask for forty-five six-inch gun cruisers; the "Hawkins" class were to be regarded as six-inch gun cruisers and would be so replaced; in order to achieve parity, the United States could construct ten small cruisers and the yardstick would be thus adjusted.

The American Government refused unequivocally to accept these figures as the basis of discussion, let alone agreement. Returning to the Admiralty, MacDonald pressed for a lower standard. Madden informed the Prime Minister that, while the Naval Staff still insisted that Britain's full defence requirement was seventy cruisers, the figure of fifty could be accepted for a limited period of time, providing the other naval Powers made comparable reductions and the Government pledged itself to a strict programme of cruiser

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replacement. Thus, on August 8th, General Dawes was informed that, dependent upon international agreement, Great Britain might consider aiming for a figure of fifty, to be achieved by 1936. The Prime Minister added: "The constant reference to absolute tonnage in your recent messages stands in the way of a clear vision of
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either quantitative or qualitative negotiations. "

It soon became obvious, however, that the United States was contemplating a large increase rather than a reduction of its cruiser force and MacDonald could not but exclaim his disappointment that the yardstick would not make much difference in the calculation of total displacement tonnage. "We seem to be like the fox and the stork who invited each other to dinner which each served up in
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utensils from which only one could eat. " Realizing that the other naval Powers would demand their rightful proportion of the American figures and that the inevitable result would be a general increase in cruiser tonnage for each, negotiations should have been called to a halt at this point. But MacDonald was totally unwilling to beat a path of retreat. Instead, he conceded the fact that final agreement would be based on what was essentially parity in terms of mathematical equality, only to then discover that the Americans were dissatisfied with the detail of the British proposals as well.

Early in September, MacDonald once again set down, in somewhat

greater detail, the nature of his Government's plans:

I have agreed to a standard number of fifty cruisers in 1936 and this is how that number is reached:—

The present strength of the British Cruiser Fleet, built and building, but for the purposes of 1936, assumed to be built, is fifty-eight. Between now and 1936, fifteen of these will disappear on account of age, reducing us to forty-three. I have proposed to scrap the four "Hawkins" group, bringing us down to thirty-nine. I explained to you in a previous note (that because of the large number of vessels to be scrapped between 1936 and 1940) I proposed to scrap prematurely a number of these aged cruisers solely in order to stabilize average building. I have now fixed that number to be scrapped previous to 1936 at three. That reduces us to thirty-six. Now, I propose to build between now and 1936 fourteen, by way of replacement, and that brings us to the fifty standard. (19)

The aggregate displacement of the new cruisers would total 91,000 tons or, in other words, fourteen vessels of 6,500 tons each, and MacDonald agreed to build not more than this amount for the duration of the Treaty. But it must be noted, that in making his calculations, the Prime Minister was working on the basis of a twenty year age limit. When the Japanese, during the course of the conference, were to insist upon a sixteen year figure, this prior British commitment again put the Admiralty at a disadvantage by making, relatively speaking, a further fourteen of its vessels obsolete. Moreover, the strict limitation of vessels to 6,500 tons was based on an expected agreement from the other naval Powers to place a qualitative limitation of this nature on construction of their own. Although MacDonald had declared, in making his proposals,

that he had, in fact, reached "rock bottom" and that they exposed him to risks "which only the co-operative good-will of other nations" would justify him in taking, ²⁰ the fact of the matter was that failure to achieve this figure at the conference tables and the resulting construction of heavier vessels by the United States and Japan, was to make it impossible for Great Britain to attain even its fifty cruiser ²¹ standard. While MacDonald and his advisors cannot be justly criticized for failing to predict the course of future events, it should have been made clear by the Prime Minister that ultimate agreement would have to be based on the fulfillment of certain aforesaid calculations.

On the basis of the new British proposals, Hoover called the General Board of the Navy to the White House for the purpose of arriving at a figure which represented the American concept of parity. It was then made clear that the Board's estimate of twenty-one eight-inch gun cruisers and ten old, plus eight new, six-inch gun cruisers had not been calculated on the basis of the yardstick. Hoover asked for a reconsideration of the figure and the Board responded by reducing the number of new cruisers to five. In tonnage, this represented twenty-one 10,000 ton vessels and fifteen 7,000 ton vessels, for ²² a total of 315,000 tons. It is interesting to note that the General Board's original proposal, which would have totalled 336,000 tons,

was as close as one could come to the British total displacement of 339,000 tons without exceeding it, and that the President's naval advisors considered their second figure merely an application of the yardstick, not their conception of parity. For its part, the British Government felt the American figures to be too high. The Prime Minister proposed instead eighteen 10,000 ton cruisers,²³ retention of the ten "Omahas", and fifty thousand tons in new six-inch guns construction, for a total of 300,000 tons. Yet, as has been mentioned, MacDonald had already accepted the principle of parity meaning mathematical equality and he went on to say:

The difference between us is only 15,000 tons or two 7,500 tons cruisers and I am prepared to leave this for adjustment. . . . The figures of the Navy Board as regards eight-inch cruisers would present insuperable difficulties especially in view of international ratios. (24)

With only three cruisers separating Great Britain and the United States from agreement, Secretary of State Stimson announced his Government's readiness to come to the conference tables with²⁵ the hope that such differences could be easily resolved. Essentially, this spelled the end of the Anglo-American discussions, though one formality was yet to be acted out. On September 30th, MacDonald sailed for the United States to meet with Hoover at Rapidan, the President's country home.

The meeting defies analysis in terms of specific accomplishment and in this respect it could be considered

a failure. In other respects, and these may have been more important, the visit was a success, for MacDonald made himself popular with the President, the Secretary of State and the American public. (26)

Of some significance, however, was the Prime Minister's acceptance of 150,000 tons for destroyers with the added stipulation that, if France could not be induced to lower her submarine tonnage below 90,000 tons, Great Britain would have to insist upon a destroyer
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figure of 200,000 tons. It scarcely need be said that this stipulation went unheeded in the conclusion of the final agreement. Conversations between the United States and Great Britain continued after the Prime Minister's visit but were almost exclusively confined to the proposed agenda. However, in view of the problems with which he had been confronted by the other Powers, MacDonald was to insist that the two delegations meet prior to the formal opening of the conference to resolve what few differences still remained between
28
them.

By far the most difficult problem faced by the Prime Minister during the pre-conference period was France's refusal to agree to
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naval parity with Italy, and French intimation that the only possible
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solution lay in some sort of security pact for the Mediterranean. The French position arose out of concern for the protection of the Marseilles-Algiers crossing, which they regarded as an internal line of mobilization, and the feeling that: "No settlement must for

this reason prevent France from being able, with full allowance
for her commitments in other seas, to concentrate in the Mediterranean
a force sufficient. . . to put the defence of this crossing beyond doubt. " ³¹

In theory, the French would have been quite willing to concede parity to Italy in the Mediterranean, had their only naval commitments been in this southern sea. France could not, however, overlook the defence needs of her colonial empire and she insisted upon regarding the German Navy as a possible threat. Italy, for her part, remained firmly attached to her demands for parity and refused to consider any other alternative. That the two positions were incompatible and inherently dangerous to Great Britain's position in Europe should have been more fully realized by MacDonald but, instead, he unwisely persisted in hoping that the force of public opinion would necessitate a diminution of French demands toward the conclusion of a five-Power treaty.

The position of Japan, while difficult to resolve, was really only a question of detail and not principle. Both a change in existing ratios and the Japanese claim to parity in submarines had been accepted by Great Britain at the Geneva Conference.

Shortly after the opening of the Conference on January 21st, the United States delegation began a reconsideration of its demand for twenty-one eight-inch gun cruisers. While it seems likely that

the decision to reduce this figure to eighteen was taken as early as January 26th, several of the naval advisors to the delegation refused to accept the lower estimates. ³² Thus when the British and American delegations met on February 3rd, the latter still adhered to the figure of twenty-one. MacDonald countered by insisting that the Admiralty would never accept so large a cruiser force and suggested instead fifteen. The obvious and intended result was a compromise at eighteen which was duly arrived at during the course of the conversation, though in return MacDonald conceded an additional 27,000 in total cruiser displacement over the original British figure of 300,000 tons.

Having finally cleared away the last major obstacle to an Anglo-American agreement, the British delegation now began the even greater task of preparing the way for the inclusion of the other naval Powers into a five-Power treaty. In a major statement of policy on February 7th, Great Britain proposed the institution of qualitative and quantitative limitations based upon a combination of total tonnage and tonnage by category, with limited transfer, except in the case of capital ships, aircraft carriers and submarines. The smaller naval Powers, however, were to be permitted considerably more freedom in their rights of transfer than could be accepted with regard to the United States, Japan and the United Kingdom. In the

matter of capital ships, the British Government advocated an immediate adherence to the 15:15:9 ratio established at Washington, which would not have been achieved until 1936, and proposed a capital ship building holiday extended to 1935. It is clear that
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MacDonald favoured total abolition of this class of vessel, but that the Admiralty was reluctant to take any such action. It was further proposed that displacement of the battleship be reduced to 25,000 tons and its armament to the twelve-inch gun. With regard to aircraft carriers, the British delegation suggested a reduction of 25,000 tons to a total displacement of 100,000 tons, a move which would have limited the United States and other naval Powers, in their respective proportions, not to exceed present British tonnage in this vessel. Auxiliary tonnage was to be limited, quantitatively, according to the already established understanding with the United States, and qualitatively, according to the limitations established
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at the Geneva Conference of 1927. As had been the case, both at Washington and Geneva, the abolition of the submarine was desired or, failing this, strict limitations regarding size and
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numbers.

Following upon an informal understanding with the United States, by which the British delegation was to secure French adherence to the Anglo-American agreement, in return for similar

diplomatic action by the Americans with regard to Japan, and accepting the possibility of a Franco-Italian accord on the matter of parity, an attempt was made to ascertain the nature of French defence requirements. These were stated quite clearly by the French delegation to be 100,000 tons in eight-inch gun cruisers, 24,850 tons in small cruisers, 258,597 tons in destroyers, and 99,629 tons in submarines. In total displacement, this represented 483,076 tons or almost ninety percent of the total British figure, and was far in excess of anything the Admiralty deemed even negotiable. If the Italians reserved the right to equal this figure, and undoubtedly they would, the maintenance of a 'Two Power Standard' in European waters, which had guided the Admiralty for over forty years, would have been impossible to attain within the framework of any five-Power agreement. While it is true that the French demands were quite in accordance with the "Statut Naval" of 1924, which had been the basis of the post-war re-organization of the French Navy, the reason for their introduction at this point was that these high figures might lead to a consultative pact for the Mediterranean similar to the Four-Power Pact formulated at the Washington Conference. Initially, British reaction to such a pact had been to regard it as unnecessary, since all the potential Contracting Powers were members of the

League of Nations. But it was soon evident that French intentions were to tie the pact so closely to any reduction of naval armament on their part, that its signators would be obliged to come to France's aid, if she were threatened by another naval Power. MacDonald opposed this new attempt on the part of France to force a continental entanglement upon Britain. He was firmly supported by Snowden in the Cabinet and prevented his Foreign Minister, Arthur Henderson, ³⁷ from making any concession to the French.

The last phase of the British attempt to accomodate French views took the form of guiding Franco-Italian negotiations toward the conclusion of an accord with regard to parity. The discussions were carried on well after the formal conclusion of the London Conference on April 22nd, MacDonald's hopes for their ultimate success being used to justify Great Britain's acquiescence to a three-Power settlement. In order to still the criticism of the Opposition, however, the Prime Minister insisted that the final agreement include what became known as the Escalator Clause. This provision took account of the possibility that any nation not a party to the Three-Power Treaty might imperil the security of one of the contracting parties. Should such a contingency arise, the party so threatened could, after informing the others of its reasons and plans, expand its naval forces to meet the threat.

The clause was impractical, however, as it called for a direct accusation on the part of the Power wishing to utilize it, that another Power was endangering its security. In fact, Macdonald admitted in 1933 that he had been unable, during the previous year, to accede to the Admiralty's advice in applying the clause. 38

For its part, the United States delegation found a far easier task in bringing the Japanese into the Anglo-American accord. Since 1929, the State Department had considered it improbable 39 that the Philippines would be defended in a war against Japan, and consequently, the Administration was able to accept risks which otherwise would not have been justified. Both Japan's demands for a 10:7 ratio and for parity in submarines were acceded to, though in the latter case, the final figure of 52,700 tons was well below the original Japanese proposal of 80,000 tons. With regard to eight-inch gun cruisers, Japan accepted Great Britain's original proposal of twelve. However, the average unit tonnage of the Japanese eight-inch gun cruiser was somewhat less than the 10,000 ton maximum allowed for this vessel. As a result, Japan's tonnage figure was only sixty percent of the American total in heavy cruisers. In order to maintain a fair ratio, the United States agreed to maintain prior to 1935, only fifteen such vessels, the sixteenth being laid down in 1933, the seventeenth in 1934 and the eighteenth in 1935. With an allotment of 100,450 tons in

six-inch gun cruisers and 105,500 tons in destroyers, the total displacement of Japan's auxiliary fleet came to 367,050 tons, or sixty-eight percent of Great Britain's figure of 541,700 tons and seventy percent of the American figure of 536,200 tons. A ten percent right of transfer was permitted between six-inch gun cruisers
40
and destroyers.

Among other questions discussed at the Conference was the abolition of submarines. Supported by the United States and Italy, the First Lord of the Admiralty, A. V. Alexander, again stated the British position which had been made at Washington and many times since then. Both the French and Japanese delegations, however, refused to even discuss the matter and attention turned instead to the imposition of qualitative limitations on submarine construction. A readily agreeable unit figure was found at 2,000 tons which would accomodate most such vessels then in existence, though each of the contracting Powers was permitted to maintain three vessels not exceeding 2,800 tons, consideration being given to "V4", "V5" and "V6" in the United States, "X1" in Great Britain, and "Surcouf" in France. These limitations were embodied in Part II of the Treaty which applied to all the Powers present at the Conference. General agreement was also obtained to delay capital ship replacement until 1936, and in order to reach the levels foreseen at Washington for 1936, it was decided that Great Britain would dispose of five capital

ships ("Benbow", "Iron Duke", "Emperor of India", "Marlborough" and "Tiger"), the United States three ("Florida", "Utah", and "Arkansas" or "Wyoming"), and Japan one ("Hiyei").

Among other qualitative limitations arrived at were the application of the maximum tonnage figures, decided upon at Geneva, limiting destroyers to 1,500 tons, and flotilla leaders to 1,850 tons, with only sixteen percent of total destroyer tonnage to be made up by the larger vessels. It was also decided upon to establish new age limits for auxiliary vessels: cruisers at twenty years (sixteen years if laid down before January 1st, 1920), destroyers at sixteen years (twelve years if laid down before January 1st, 1921), and submarines at thirteen years. As has already been mentioned, Great Britain failed to achieve any qualitative limitation for light cruisers and also failed to secure a reduction in total tonnage for aircraft carriers or a reduction in the size of the battleship to 25,000 tons. In all other respects, if one could accept the Escalator Clause as a suitable alternative for a five-Power treaty, the British programme proposed on February 7th had been attained. That one could not do so was fully realized immediately by the critics of the Treaty, and later even by its proponents, who saw it to be, at best, an extremely awkward provision to apply.

On a number of technical points, the Treaty was clearly

detrimental to the interests of the Royal Navy. As a result of the British failure to obtain a qualitative limitation on all six-inch gun construction, the total British cruiser displacement of 339,000 tons was soon to prove inadequate to maintain even a fifty cruiser standard and, in the event of a renewal of the Treaty, a substantial upward revision would have been necessary. Furthermore, the calculation of replacement age on a sixteen year basis meant that in 1936 Great Britain would have, relatively speaking, fourteen obsolete vessels more than it had anticipated. With regard to capital ships, the decision to extend the building holiday a further five years meant that by 1935, when all but three such vessels of Great Britain's battlefleet would be approaching obsolescence, any Power desirous of challenging British maritime supremacy would have the distinct advantage of equality in new vessels.

But among the criticisms levelled at the Government, the one which carried the most force was that, in agreeing to reduce the standard of its auxiliary defences, it had sorely misjudged Great Britain's ability to safeguard the Imperial trade network, particularly in the light of the exclusion of France and Italy from the Treaty and the appearance of Germany and Spain as potential naval Powers. From a figure of eighteen flotillas in 1929, Great

Britain's destroyer tonnage was limited to a possible eleven, if full advantage were to be taken of the new qualitative limitations. In the matter of cruisers, the figure of seventy, which had guided Admiralty policy throughout the Twenties, and which had been based on a very conservative estimate of Great Britain's needs with regard to her battlefleet and the protection of commerce, was reduced to⁴¹ fifty. Since her battlefleet requirements remained at twenty-five, only twenty-five remained to serve the protection of commerce, and since seven of these would probably be away at any given time refitting and refueling, the number fell again to eighteen. The Opposition quite rightly asked, "Whether in consequence of the reduction announced in the number of cruisers to be maintained, the Admiralty (had) been relieved in any way of its responsibilities⁴² for defence." While it is quite true that the Admiralty had, itself, agreed to the lower figure, it had done so in expectation of a general agreement for the limitation of naval armaments. As Viscount Bridgeman pointed out: "We thought that unless the other Powers produced some adequate limitation, we should be exonerated from⁴³ cutting down to fifty." Stating his views quite bluntly and perfectly reflecting the views taken by the Opposition, Admiral Jellicoe could not but admit that "the reductions that are now proposed go⁴⁴ beyond the limit of security." In the face of such formidable

criticism, one member of the Cabinet retorted, "it is absurd to
suppose that seventy cruisers would be enough to make us secure....",⁴⁵
the illogical conclusion being that if the Conservative's figure of
seventy was inadequate, Labour's figure of fifty did not really
represent a change in policy. In a somewhat more formal tone,
the official Government position was that the reduction could be
made because "conditions have altered as regards... the general
peace outlook in the world."⁴⁶ — referring, of course, to the
conclusion of the Kellogg-Briand Pact in 1928, on which the London
negotiations had been theoretically based. But as one Member of
Parliament aptly pointed out, in spite of the fact that the Peace
Pact was of very dubious value, the question of the size of the
Navy could not be affected by the question of the frequency of war,
particularly in an age when material was of such tremendous
importance. "If the misfortune of war should occur, even though
it be unlikely, the fact that it is unlikely does not make an inadequate
Navy better able to fulfill a task which is beyond it."⁴⁷

Two positive achievements were to be drawn from the London
Conference, the qualitative limitation of submarines and the quantitative
limitation of eight-inch gun cruisers, but even in these two instances
the victory was ephemeral. In the first case, the limitation imposed
was far too high to have any significant effect. In the second case,

the Admiralty's aims of preventing the *déclassement* of its cruiser force and of reducing the expenses of further building were completely side-stepped by the construction, in the United States and Japan, of vessels as large as their eight-inch gun cruisers and armed with as many as fifteen six-inch guns.

MacDonald, however, remained deeply committed to the idea of parity with the United States, whatever the cost. In addressing the American Senate, he declared: "What is all this bother about parity ? Parity ? Take it, without reserve, heaped up and flowing
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over. " Any member of the Opposition would have agreed wholeheartedly, but would have added a stipulation which MacDonald was unwilling to make, "provided that we get the minimum which is necessary
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for our security. " Realizing the fact that the Prime Minister had been misled by the United States as to its intentions, his refusal to break a commitment to the public and to his political supporters, only demonstrated further his inability to understand the needs of British defence in the modern world. As was aptly pointed out by Beatty in an impassioned plea to the House of Lords:

Never in the history of the world has a great nation rendered itself impotent and incapable of defending itself by treaty. They have succumbed against other and stronger Powers, but it has been left to the British Empire to surrender its place in the world because we have not the determination to fulfill our destiny. If we have not the money to provide for our national defence as in the past, if we have not the courage to make sacrifices, let us at least have the common sense to keep ourselves free and untrammelled by a treaty. . . . (50)

Notes on Chapter IV

- 1
Charles G. Dawes, Journal as Ambassador to Great Britain
(New York, 1939), p. 15.
- 2
Raymond G. O'Connor, Perilous Equilibrium: The United States and
the London Naval Conference of 1930 (Lawrence, Kansas, 1962), p. 33.
- 3
"Documents on British Foreign Policy", No. 3, pp. 8-10.
Henderson to Howard, June 24th, 1929.
- 4
Ibid., No. 7, p. 15. Memorandum by Mr. Craigie on a conversation
with Mr. Gibson, June 27th, 1929.
- 5
Ibid., No. 16, p. 22. Dawes to MacDonald, July 12th, 1929.
- 6
Ibid., No. 19, p. 24. MacDonald to Dawes, July 17th, 1929.
- 7
Ibid., p. 25.
- 8
Ibid., No. 20, p. 26. Dawes to MacDonald, July 22nd, 1929.
- 9
Ibid., p. 27.
- 10
Ibid., No. 21, p. 28. MacDonald to Dawes, July 23rd, 1929.
- 11
Ibid., p. 30.
- 12
230 H. C. Deb., 5s., col. 1504. These ships were eventually cancelled
which meant that between 1927 and 1929, only two out of a projected
nine were laid down.
- 13
The "Hawkins" class were experimental vessels laid down during
the war. For their specifications, see Appendix V.
- 14
"Documents on British Foreign Policy", No. 25, p. 33.
Memorandum by the Prime Minister, July 29th, 1929.
- 15
Ibid., p. 36 f. n.
- 16
F. C. Dreyer, "The Sea Heritage", p. 273.

- 17
"Documents on British Foreign Policy", No. 28, pp. 36-38.
MacDonald to Dawes, August 8th, 1929.
- 18
Ibid., No. 35, p. 47. MacDonald to Dawes, August 23rd, 1929.
- 19
Ibid., No. 49, p. 70. MacDonald to Dawes, September 9th, 1929.
- 20
Ibid., p. 71.
- 21
In 1931, Japan began construction of the "Mogami" class, vessels of 8,500 tons, possessing fifteen six-inch guns. The United States responded in 1933 with the "Brooklyn" class, 9,700 tons with fifteen six-inch guns. Great Britain answered in 1934 with the "Newcastle" class of 9,100 tons with twelve six-inch guns.
- 22
R. G. O'Connor, "Perilous Equilibrium", p. 43.
- 23
The "Omaha" class was built shortly after the conclusion of the First World War. It consisted of ten vessels of 7,000 tons each armed with six-inch guns.
- 24
"Documents on British Foreign Policy", No. 58, p. 79.
MacDonald to Dawes, September 13th, 1929.
- 25
"The Times", September 14th, 1929.
- 26
R. G. O'Connor, "Perilous Equilibrium", p. 50.
- 27
"Documents on British Foreign Policy", No. 77, p. 108.
Memorandum by the Prime Minister respecting conversations with President Hoover, October 4th-10th, 1929, circulated to the Cabinet.
- 28
Ibid., No. 121, p. 171. Henderson to Howard, December 20th, 1929.
- 29
Ibid., No. 89, p. 137. Henderson to Tyrell, November 15th, 1929.
- 30
Ibid., No. 120, p. 168. Memorandum by Mr. Craigie on a conversation with M. Massigli, December 18th, 1929.
- 31
Ibid., No. 139, p. 201. Tyrell to Henderson, January 15th, 1930.
- 32
Gerald E. Wheeler, Prelude to Pearl Harbor: the United States Navy and the Far East, 1921-1931 (Columbia, Missouri, 1963), p. 171.

33

"Documents on British Foreign Policy", No. 102, p. 150.
Henderson to Campbell, November 26th, 1929.

34

See above, p. 50.

35

"Memorandum on the Position at the London Naval Conference, 1930, of His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom", Cmd. 3485, 1930. See also "Proceedings of the London Naval Conference", pp. 234-238.

36

R. G. O'Connor, "Perilous Equilibrium", p. 88.

37

J. M. Kenworthy, Sailors, Statesmen—and Others: An Autobiography (London, 1933), p. 256.

38

Hector C. Bywater, A Searchlight on the Navy (London, 1935), p. 11.

39

G. E. Wheeler, "Prelude to Pearl Harbor", p. 175.

40

"Documents on British Foreign Policy", No. 175, p. 287.
Notes of a Meeting of the Delegations of the United States of America, the United Kingdom and Japan, April 2nd, 1930.

41

The original calculation had been made on the basis of a battlefleet of fifteen vessels.

42

75 H. L. Deb., 5s., col. 1467-68.

43

77 H. L. Deb., 5s., col. 441.

44

77 H. L. Deb., 5s., col. 458.

45

Lord Thomson, Secretary of State for Air. 78 H. L. Deb., 5s., col. 228.

46

77 H. L. Deb., 5s., col. 474.

47

236 H. C. Deb., 5s., col. 1840.

48

Esmé Howard, Theatre of Life (Boston, 1936), p. 453.

49

77 H. L. Deb., 5s., col. 442.

50

77 H. L. Deb., 5s., col. 195-96.

Chapter V

The Struggle for Control of the Fleet Air Arm

Two major issues in the formulation of British naval policy yet remain to be discussed—control of the Fleet Air Arm and construction of the Singapore Naval Base. Neither fits coherently within the scope of the central narrative, but both reflect and emphasize the theme of conflict between Government and military establishment throughout the Twenties. The first of these two questions, it is true, deals essentially with an inter-Service conflict for control of those air units working in co-operation with the Fleet. Yet, since resolution of the conflict rested constitutionally with the Government, the decision arrived at would necessarily reflect the politician's concern with public economy. The main protagonists were the Navy and the Air Ministry, the former upholding that aircraft, in reconnaissance, fire control and tactical support in battle, had become an integral part of naval operations, and the latter, possessed with a missionary zeal and convinced that anything that flew fell wholly within its jurisdiction

As early as 1911, with the division of the British Aeronautical Service into the Royal Flying Corps and the Royal Naval Air Service, it was realized that "the sea role of air power was fundamentally different from the land role, involving a different application, different tasks, even different machines." ¹ That this was true was amply demonstrated by the events of the First War. Yet by 1916, it had

also become evident that constant bickering between the Army and Navy, with regard to the production of aircraft and the allocation of funds, had been detrimental to aerial development in general. The resulting public outcry led to the creation of a succession of co-ordination committees. The first of these was the Derby Committee, which hoped to increase production through the co-ordination of design. It was, unfortunately, bereft of all executive power and failed to reconcile the two conflicting positions, soon giving way to the Curzon Air Board, and this, in turn, to the Cowdray Air Board. This latter body recommended that a department "would have to be formed on the general lines of the Admiralty and War Office, with a full staff, and with full responsibility for war in the air." Realizing that air contingents would still be required to give tactical support to ground and sea operations, the committee did not, however, feel any necessity "that such contingents should be composed of military or naval personnel; any suggestion of that kind would only prolong the situation of divided responsibility. . . ." (2)

The creation of the Royal Air Force was given Royal assent in November, 1917, and when in the following April, the Air Ministry was officially established, the Admiralty was forced to surrender to it some 55,000 officers and men as well as almost 3,000 aircraft. An Air Division was created for the Navy for purposes of liaison

in operations with the Fleet, but in spite of this, the Admiralty's worst fears soon proved justified. For example, the total lack of aerial support for operations against the Belgian Coast, in May 1918, led Roger Keyes to write to the Admiralty:

The formulation of the Royal Air Force has, up to the present, resulted most detrimentally as regards the naval forces under my command. . . . I am very strongly of the opinion that the present situation is thoroughly unsatisfactory. . . . The General Officer Commanding the R. A. F. in the field. . . does not seem to understand the elements of the naval requirements on the Belgian Coast, or the great importance of its bearing on the general conduct of the war. (3)

While the Admiralty tended to regard the Air Ministry solely as a wartime expedient, the presence of Churchill at the head of that organ, insured its continued existence after the War. In September, 1919, the Air Division at the Admiralty was transferred to the Air Ministry's Coastal Area Organization, which took over the administration and supply of the air units working with the Navy, and assumed the office of advisor to the Admiralty on naval aerial policy. The personnel of the Fleet Air Arm was drawn almost entirely from the Royal Air Force, with a few 'seconded' naval officers. By the end of 1919, all Fleet air units had come under the operational and disciplinary control of the Admiralty when at sea only, that body thus having been divested of the final traces of executive authority. The Admiralty remained relatively silent throughout 1919 and 1920, patiently awaiting what it deemed would be the propitious moment

for the Government to return control of the Fleet Air Arm to itself. By 1921, however, it became evident, in view of the successes of the Air Force in Aden, Somaliland and Iraq, that the Air Ministry was gathering strong evidence for its continued independent existence. Thus in October, before leaving for Washington, Beatty appointed Roger Keyes as Deputy Chief of the Naval Staff. Even Hugh Trenchard, Chief of the Air Staff, was prepared to recognize that Keyes was "practically the only officer of flag rank with any first-hand experience of air command. . . ."

Both in Parliament and in the Press, questions regarding control of the Fleet Air Arm became common and, in March, 1922, at the insistence of Churchill, Chamberlain made an official statement of the Government's position:

. . . our view is that the objections to the re-absorption of the Air Force by the Army and Navy are far greater than any objections which can be raised against the existence of a separate Air Ministry and Staff. . . . Sailors and soldiers would continue to think of the force in terms of their own Service and would not pursue—and could not be expected to pursue—its development as an independent force. These are the conclusions at which we have arrived. In the first place, that the Air Force must be autonomous in matters of administration and education. Second, that in the case of defence against air-raids, the Army and Navy must play a secondary role. Third, that in the case of military operations by land or sea, the Air Force must be in strict subordination to the General or Admiral in supreme command. Fourth, that in other cases, such as the protection of commerce and attacks on enemy harbours and inland towns, the relations between the Air Force and

the other Services shall be regarded rather as a matter of co-operation than of strict subordination which is necessary when aeroplanes are acting as mere auxiliaries of other arms. " (5)

The Government was quite right in insisting on the maintenance of a separate Air Force to meet the needs of the air defence of Great Britain and was also correct in assuming that the Admiralty would never consider the development of air power as an independent force. But what guaranteed the development of the Fleet Air Arm as an integral part of the Navy ? Put quite bluntly, the Admiralty realized that there was no "essential tactical connection between the operational work of the Fleet Air Arm as a weapon and the R. A. F. ,
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except that they both fly. "

The matter continued to be discussed, though was increasingly overshadowed by the developing crisis in the Middle East. The fall of Lloyd George, however, once again brought the matter to the fore. His successor, Bonar Law, under the influence of the disillusioned ex-Chief of the Air Staff, Sir Frederick Sykes, decidedly favoured dissolution of the R. A. F. Samuel Hoare, Conservative Air Minister throughout the Twenties, gives the following account of the meeting during which the Prime Minister first asked him to take office.

"Will you take it?"—these were his words as I noted them after the interview. "But before you answer, I must tell you that the post may be abolished in a few weeks. Sykes tells me that the Independent Air Force and the Air

Ministry cost too much, and that there is everything to be said, in peacetime, for going back to the old plan of Navy and Army control. I agree with him. . . . I ought to add that the post will not be a Cabinet post. " (7)

Leopold Amery, the new First Lord of the Admiralty, admitted, on the other hand, to being a convinced believer in "the need for a separate Air Force fulfilling its own strategic
8
function both for home defence and oversea attack. " Consequently, he tended to take a compromising stand, seeing the danger inherent in the Air Ministry's surrendering close to one-seventh of its strength to the Admiralty. Hoare and Amery met in late February, 1923, the latter proposing, in order to uphold "the outward integrity of the Air Force, " that naval units, manned mainly by naval personnel, should be placed on the lists of both Services and that the Admiralty make a grant-in-aid to the Air Ministry
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for their maintenance. Both the results of this meeting and one between Hoare and Beatty shortly thereafter, proved totally unacceptable to Trenchard, and Amery felt that the situation had gone too far to be settled internally. Consequently, he and the Secretary of State for Air agreed that the matter might best be dealt with by the Committee of Imperial Defence, "on condition that the proposed committee of enquiry examined the controversy
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from the point of view of national defence as a whole. . . . "

The Admiralty's stipulation found expression in the creation

of the Subcommittee of the Committee of Imperial Defence chaired by Lord Salisbury. Included on it were all the Ministers of significant position, Baldwin, Curzon, Devonshire, the Colonial Secretary, Peel, the Indian Secretary, Derby, Hoare, Amery, Balfour and Weir, a former Secretary of State for Air. Sides were quickly taken on the question of control of the Fleet Air Arm and to avoid a split in the Cabinet, three uncommitted members, Balfour, Peel and Weir, were delegated to form a special committee, the main body being left to consider the questions of the organization of the C. I. D., the Chiefs of Staff Committee, and the role of air power in national defence.

The case which Beatty put before the Balfour Committee rested on the principle that the Admiralty alone could bear responsibility for the efficiency of the Fleet. Since the Fleet Air Arm had become an integral part of naval operations, as necessary as cruisers, destroyers or submarines, and since the Admiralty did not have full control of its use, this fundamental principle was destroyed.

Aerial reconnaissance and aerial spotting are as strictly naval operations as gunnery, torpedo work and wireless telegraphy. It seems (to the Admiralty) intolerable that, while they are responsible for the safety and success of our battlefleets, the air work on which that safety and success in large measure depend should be performed by persons belonging to another Service." (11)

Although under the then existing system, naval air policy was theoretically the concerted effort of the Air Staff and Admiralty War Staff, naval officers of high rank had little opportunity of obtaining experience or training in air matters to fit them for this work. Beatty consequently felt that any good results arising out of the system "had been achieved not because of it but in spite of it. . . ."¹²

Nevertheless, by May, 1923, Peel and Weir had decided that the Air Ministry had "made every effort to ensure success for the existing system. . . ."¹³ Balfour, however, on whom the final decision rested, felt otherwise and drafted a report favouring the Navy's case. Hankey, the Secretary of the Committee and a firm supporter of the Air Force side, then intervened and suggested to Balfour that his decision was not based on sufficient evidence and that it would be wise to accept Weir's plan of making unannounced visits to the aircraft carriers "Argus" and "Eagle", at Portsmouth. Bedridden with phlebitis, Balfour was unable to accept and designated Hankey to go in his place. All three members of the visiting party found the existing dual system working well on the lower level. Bearing in mind Balfour's belief in the need for a separate Air Force, the intervention of the War Office at this point, demanding the complete dissolution of the new Service Ministry, put the Admiralty at a

disadvantage. This factor, coupled with the increased cost which the duplication of certain services would entail, led to the Committee's unanimous recommendation "to leave the Fleet air units as an integral part of the Air Force, and the supply of personnel, coastal stations, training, design and research needed for them under the Air Ministry. "

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In spite of the apparent finality of the Balfour Report or perhaps because of it, the conflict between the two Ministries became even more intolerable. In 1924, Beatty asked the Labour Cabinet to reconsider the situation. Haldane, the Prime Minister's defence advisor, looked into the matter and invited both Beatty and Trenchard to explain why there had been no joint meetings to stimulate "the good will on both sides" which Balfour had described
15
as the root of the misunderstanding. The two men were given three months to settle their differences, Beatty designating Keyes to represent him in the ensuing discussions. The negotiations, which continued until the summer of 1924, resulted in the drafting of the Trenchard-Keyes Agreement, regulating every practical point of contact between the two Services on land and at sea. As a first step, the agreement ensured that no air units could be withdrawn from the Fleet without Admiralty or Cabinet approval, thus providing some degree of stability to the Fleet Air Arm. Although Keyes secured the Admiralty's claim that Fleet squadron costs be included

in the Navy Estimates, he could not obtain a revision of the manning figures which provided that at least thirty percent of all pilots aboard carriers be Air Force personnel. Trenchard recognized the effort for what it was, an attempt, as he termed it, "to develop as units of a floating Trojan Horse from which the Sea Lords would debouch one day, when the mood of conciliation had passed, to present some other Government with the accomplished fact of a Fleet Air Arm already established in all but name." ¹⁶ Pilots were to hold R. A. F. ranks even though they were, in fact, 'seconded' naval officers, but all observers and telegraphist/air gunners were to be naval ¹⁷ men. Although it was originally intended to have mixed plane crews, in 1926, for purposes of economy, all R. A. F. hands were replaced by naval ratings who could be called upon, when the need arose, to perform other ship duties.

In spite of the Trenchard-Keyes Agreement, Beatty never lost an opportunity to try to re-open the matter of where ultimate control should lie. At his insistence, the question was deemed to be within the scope of the Colwyn Committee, which was reviewing all defence spending. To his disappointment, however, the Committee failed to see his point of view and came down firmly behind the Air Force. Yet the Government's enquiry into defence economy did severely curtail the planned expansion of the R. A. F. to fifty-two squadrons, proposed by the Salisbury Committee.

Thus when the Admiralty requested an allocation for the Fleet Air Arm £200,000 greater than the figure recommended by Colwyn, Trenchard complained vehemently and the Admiralty was compelled to lower its estimate. Again Beatty raised the cry for a separate Fleet Air Arm, though a decision was postponed because of the General Strike. In July, 1926, Baldwin severely reprimanded both sides for not honouring the spirit of the 1924 accord. Beatty had sought the right to pack certain naval squadrons with a total complement of naval officers, while still maintaining the seventy percent figure which he was permitted on an overall basis. The move would have had the effect of creating a core of purely naval squadrons, working toward Beatty's aim of a naval air arm in all but name. But the move was prevented by Baldwin who clung firmly to the decisions of the Salisbury Report. Also denied were Beatty's hopes of extending the seventy percent quota to shore bases and of obtaining control of land based aircraft which were employed in tactical co-operation with the Home Fleet, both being areas which Beatty believed to be integral to the operations of the Navy. The Prime Minister quite rightly made clear that it was impossible "to achieve progress if the decisions of the Government are to be put in question at every opportunity." But the solution he found was unrealistic: "The Air Force must regard it as an obligation of

honour to give the Navy a Fleet Air Arm of the highest attainable

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efficiency. " With the exception of a brief attempt by Madden to

re-open the case in 1928, the relative position of the two Services

remained unchanged until 1935. The ensuing struggle was won by the

Admiralty, but not in time to prepare the Fleet Air Arm for war.

It was ironic that Samuel Hoare was then First Lord of the Admiralty.

While Beatty tended to exaggerate the inability of the two forces to work together at lower levels and indeed did little to foster the co-operation for which the Government was so eagerly striving, he did so out of recognition of the fact that little could be gained by smoothing over the fundamental differences which existed between the Admiralty and Air Ministry. It is quite possible that, had conditions between the two Services been artificially improved, the Government would have adopted a policy of letting sleeping dogs lie. The Admiralty, quite rightly, realized the irrefutable logic of Balfour's claim that only the Air Force could be responsible for the air defence of Great Britain, but it seemed to them equally axiomatic that only the Navy could be responsible for the island's sea defence. Moreover, included in its claims and as equally justifiable, were not only control of carrier-borne aircraft but also those shore-based aircraft which would work tactically with the Fleet or in the protection of coastal commerce. The former claim

was recognized by 1937, though the latter required the experience of war to be properly understood.

It cannot be denied that, by 1930, Great Britain possessed the most efficient and capable Fleet Air Arm then in existence, but it is equally true that many in the Royal Navy would have liked to employ the great potential of the Fleet's air units in overcoming the material deficiencies of the Navy in other respects. Yet, as it was, the Admiralty found itself compelled to maintain its spending on the Fleet Air Arm at a figure of between six and seven percent of the total Air Ministry Vote and to restrict what should have been the natural growth of this new weapon.

Although a number of the supporters of the Air Ministry's case avowed a recognition of the justice of the Admiralty's position, they claimed their ultimate decision lay in the fear that withdrawal of the air units supporting the Fleet from Air Force control would lead to the eventual dissolution of the R. A. F., in that the pressures from the War Office would be too great to overcome. Implicit in such an avowal would of course be a realization of the particular application of air power at sea, yet in 1925, when the decision was made to slow down the progress of R. A. F. expansion, a drastic reduction was made in the funds allotted to the Fleet Air Arm. Since the responsibilities of the Navy remained unchanged, the one cutback

was obviously an unjustified reflection of the other and, at best, the workings of political expediency. The inevitable result was that, in all aspects, Air Force control of the Navy's air arm proved detrimental to the general efficiency of the Fleet. The Air Ministry's insistence on maintaining at least a thirty percent ratio of Air Force personnel, meant, in essence, a reduction of thirty percent in the Fleet Air Arm's effective manpower, for the Navy wanted more than men who could fly. The good naval pilot would have to be able to distinguish, at a distance, the difference between a battleship and a cruiser, to estimate accurately courses and speeds, to know the capabilities and limitations of ships of different classes, and to understand the intricacies of naval tactics and the effect of naval weapons. 19 Moreover, one can be quite certain that the practice of regarding service with the Fleet Air Arm as merely another tour of duty was injurious to both discipline and efficiency.

In matériel, for lack of funds and lack of interest on the part of the Air Staff, the development of aircraft particularly suited to the needs of naval warfare was not undertaken. In policy, the Air Ministry failed to realize the strategic and tactical potentialities of aircraft carriers, not only within the realm of combat at sea, but also in their capacity of giving added mobility to its own forces in the air defence of the Empire. It seems remarkable that Trenchard

did not realize, given the flight limitations of then existing aircraft, that without fostering an effective Fleet Air Arm, the deterrent which he envisaged was only applicable to France. Thus it was that one author could graphically describe the Fleet Air Arm in the Twenties, "a sort of Cinderella, starved, neglected, and nearly forgotten."

Notes on Chapter V

- 1
Peter K. Kemp, The Fleet Air Arm (London, 1954), p. 103.
- 2
Ibid., p. 105.
- 3
Cecil Aspinall-Oglander, Roger Keyes, Being the Biography of Admiral of the Fleet Lord Keyes of Zeebrugge and Dover (London, 1951), p. 247.
- 4
Andrew Boyle, Trenchard (London, 1962), p. 407.
- 5
Ibid., p. 415.
- 6
A. E. M. Chatfield, "It Might Happen Again", p. 102.
- 7
Samuel Hoare, Empire of the Air: The Advent of the Air Age, 1922-1929 (London, 1957), p. 36.
- 8
L. S. Amery, "My Political Life, II", p. 264.
- 9
A. Boyle, "Trenchard", p. 461.
- 10
Ibid., p. 463.
- 11
"Recommendations of the National and Imperial Defence Committee as approved by His Majesty's Government upon (I) The Relations of the Navy and the Air Force (II) The Co-ordination of the Defence Forces", Cmd. 1938, 1923, p. 4. Cmd. 1938 is included in the "Report of the Sub-committee of the Committee of Imperial Defence on National and Imperial Defence", Cmd. 2029, 1924, pp. 16-18, pp. 28-36.
- 12
A. Boyle, "Trenchard", p. 480.
- 13
Ibid., p. 481.
- 14
Samuel Hoare, "Empire of the Air", p. 64.
- 15
A. Boyle, "Trenchard", p. 503.
- 16
Ibid., p. 505.

17

F. M. G. Willson, The Organization of British Central Government, 1914-1956 (London, 1957), p. 214.

18

A. Boyle, "Trenchard", p. 550.

19

P. K. Kemp, "The Fleet Air Arm", p. 103.

20

Andrew B. Cunningham, A Sailor's Odyssey (London, 1951), p. 115.

Chapter VI

The Singapore Project

Upon the conclusion of the First War, Admiral Jellicoe was invested with the task of formulating a naval policy for the Pacific to meet the new challenge of a Japanese Navy strengthened, materially, by an inflated wartime building programme and, strategically, by the acquisition of Germany's former island colonies in the Far East. On the completion of an extended tour of India, New Zealand, Australia, and Canada, Jellicoe recommended the creation of a Fleet of eight battleships, eight battle cruisers and four aircraft carriers to be based at Singapore.¹ However, the estimated annual cost to provision such a fleet approached £20 million, considerably beyond any figure the Admiralty could hope to secure from the Treasury.

Attention was therefore focussed solely on the development of Singapore, connected to the Home Fleet by a chain of oil stations in the Indian Ocean. Singapore had been used as a naval base since 1882 but both Fisher, before the War, and Jellicoe, after, had realized its inadequacies in accomodating a fleet of any size. Immediately prior to the meeting of the Imperial Conference in 1921, the Admiralty decided to undertake improvement of Singapore's dockyard and arsenal, and the project secured the firm endorsement of the Dominions. The port was very carefully excluded from the limiting provisions of the Non-Fortification Treaty, signed at Washington in 1922, but it was not until February of the following year that a detailed plan was submitted

to the Cabinet for consideration.

The projected development called for an expenditure of about £10.5 million, though no provision was made for the military² and aerial defences which would be required. Formal announcement that work would begin was given in the 1923 Estimates, although³ only £200,000 was requested for preparatory work on the site.

The project came under heavy criticism in Parliament from both the Labour and Liberal parties, consistent with their continued criticism of all defence spending. Not only was the Singapore project a blatant extravagance of public funds, but it also seemed without regard to the hope for a new world order resting on the League of Nations, and in view of the recently concluded agreements at Washington, a denial of the further possibility of the limitation of naval armaments. "England should therefore discontinue this scheme which was an insult to Japan, a provocative, costly and totally unnecessary undertaking⁴ inspired by the Admiralty mentality. "

The Government answered the charges of extravagance by referring to the very real economies which would accrue from being able to repair ships in the Far East and from the increased efficiency of any fleet operating in these waters, as a result of such services. The very fact that vessels had to make the long trip to and from Singapore, without being able to undergo repairs, shortened the

effective life of any ship working out of this station. In response to the charge that the base represented a threat, either actual or implied, to the Japanese, one Conservative Member of Parliament pointed out:

It seems ridiculous to assume that because we are going to establish a base three thousand miles away from Japan, the Japanese should think we intend it for the purpose of fighting them. One might as well say that if we were to develop Plymouth, America should get nervous lest we were establishing a base from which to launch attacks against her. (6)

The comment was ludicrous in the extreme, in the light of Jellicoe's proposals of 1920, and merely reflected the fact that neither the Government nor the Opposition understood the full implications of Great Britain's defence policy in the Twenties. Since the port was capable of launching an attack against Japanese territory, the Japanese admirals could only regard it as a potential threat. Fortunately, they did not press the point and Curzon was able to declare:

On the only occasion on which the Japanese Ambassador came to see me about the question, he remarked to me that he thoroughly understood our policy, that it was in consonance with what he knew to be our policy, that he himself did not and his Government did not share the apprehension to which I am referring, and that he had no complaint whatever to make. (7)

The very exclusion of Singapore from the Non-Fortification Agreement implied an understanding on the part of the other naval Powers that the port would, in fact, be improved.

On a more positive note, the major considerations for the development of Singapore centered around an eventual threat to British interests in the Far East and the necessity of protecting Imperial commerce in this area, valued at close to £900 million⁸ annually. But the safety of overseas territories and the unity of the Empire, no less than the defence of trade, were, from the first, primary considerations as well, and were put forward with particular reference to Australia and New Zealand. Both of these Dominions, with their exclusive immigration laws, view the existence of the Japanese Navy with particular fear, and regarded the Singapore project as one the Home Government was bound to fulfill and the presence of an efficient Fleet in Far Eastern waters as the greatest guarantee for continued world peace. When the first Labour Government decided to suspend the project in 1924, Churchill could not help but reflect the anxiety which was voiced in these Dominions.

Disguise it as we would, wrap it up in a cloak of smooth pretense, cover it with a layer of excuses, hide it in a fog of technicalities, the stubborn, brutal fact remained that the decision to abandon the Singapore base left Australia and New Zealand to whatever fate an anxious and inscrutable future might have in store. . . . (9)

Far more difficult to refute were the technical arguments against the development of the port, for such arguments were based on the possible form of the conflict in which the Far East might or might not become embroiled. Would, in fact, a fleet based in Singapore

be capable of protecting the area's commerce or of preventing an opposing fleet from launching an undetected attack into the South Pacific or Indian Oceans ? Would, in fact, there be any base from which to work if it was necessary to await the arrival of a fleet from Home waters ? And would, in fact, there be any fleet free for action in this part of the world ? The answers, of course, could not be given, for the variables were far too numerous to allow conclusive reasoning of the nature demanded by the critics of the project.

Given the instance of a conventional naval war in the Pacific against a Japan unallied to any European Power, the Admiralty's estimation of Singapore's capabilities was certainly justified. It was quite clear that under such circumstances, no other port in the area was as equally qualified for the role it was designated to fulfill. While it is true that the Admiralty tended to overrate Singapore's capabilities when other considerations were brought into view, it did so in anticipation of the maintenance of what it envisaged to be the adequate material standards for the British Fleet, and on the basis of the information it received from the other Services with regard to the defensibility of the base. Unless and until the defence of the Far East was to be written off as impractical under existing circumstances, the Admiralty was determined that it should have an effective base from which to work. In the light of what the Admiralty considered

to be the most probable course of events in a war in the Far East, £10 million seemed a small premium to pay.

The Government of the Straits Settlements indicated its confidence in the new project by donating the site to the Admiralty, 469 acres of land expropriated from a rubber company at a cost of \$225,000. In January, 1924, it was reported that preliminary work had been started, communications were being opened up, and arrangements had been made for the construction of the water supply, residences and workmen's quarters. Liabilities of about £150,000
10 had been incurred. But with the accession of the Labour Government to power in February, continuation of the work was seriously questioned. In answer to the queries of the Opposition, the Government replied that it was making an examination of the merits of the case before announcing a decision.

On February 20th, a telegram was sent to the Dominions stating that, for the time being, no further expenditure would be incurred on the base and that a Cabinet committee had been formed
11 to study the whole question. On March 5th, the Dominions were informed that the Cabinet committee had made a report favouring abandonment of the scheme and were invited to express their views on the matter. Only the Union of South Africa accepted the report; Canada and the Irish Free State were non-committal but Australia,

New Zealand and Newfoundland were emphatic in their assertions that it would be unwise to abandon the project. On March 17th, MacDonald informed the Dominions that the Government still felt bound to carry out the policy of suspending the work on the base and on the following day, the Financial Secretary to the Admiralty made a formal announcement concerning the Government's decision.

MacDonald, in reviewing the situation, referred to the Government's fundamental aims as being "the development of an enlarged League of Nations, the encouragement of international co-operation, the settlement of disputes by conciliation and the creation of conditions which would make possible a comprehensive limitation of armaments." These ends could only be achieved through "the establishment of confidence and the elimination of international
12
suspicions and anxieties." But the Prime Minister's argument was extremely weak here, in view of the fact that he had only recently announced plans to expand the Royal Air Force to fifty-two squadrons and to begin the replacement of obsolete cruisers. Thus it was obvious that the Opposition should charge him with employing a political expedient in the consideration of defence policy.

This is not a large gesture to the world; it is a backward nod to the people who sit behind him. It is a sop to the Pacificists who gave him their votes, on the grounds that he

was going to scrap armaments, and who are now getting restless because they see the change in policy in his naval and air preparations. (13)

So between January and November, 1924, that is until the return of the Conservatives to power, no work was done at Singapore and, in fact, the plant and materials were put up for sale. On December 9th, in the course of the opening address to the new Parliament, it was announced that work would resume on the base, though new estimates and a re-arrangement of plans were first
14
necessary. It was eventually discovered that a considerable indirect loss, which could not be correctly estimated, had resulted from the cessation of work under the Labour Administration.

"In addition to the fruitless employment of staff, the cost of their passage out and home and compensation to local firms for cancelled contracts, some work—such as anti-malaria precautions and the
15
erection of temporary buildings—had to be done over again. . . ."

During the next few years, contributions totalling over £3 millions were received from the Commonwealth and in 1927, the original estimate of £10 million was reduced to £7 million, a cutback made possible, according to Bridgeman, "by a more careful study on the ground of what is necessary and also leaving out certain facilities for storage and repair work which are not absolutely necessary and which if, unfortunately, the political outlook were to become clouded,

16

could be erected in a very short time. " The revision did not, however, include the cost of a new floating dock nor of an air station at Singapore, neither of which was provided for in the original estimates, but which were now considered essential.

By March 14th, 1929, the preliminary clearing of the site had been completed, the floating dock successfully towed to Singapore, and the contracts let for the larger engineering works and the graving dock, all of which were to be completed within seven years. Total expenditure as of March 31st was £1.5million of which £900,000 was for the floating dock; only £200,000 had been allotted from the Navy Estimates, the rest coming from those Commonwealth countries who had pledged their support for the project.

In June, 1929, MacDonald was again Prime Minister and in November, the new First Lord of the Admiralty, A. V. Alexander, told the House of Commons that the Government had decided that the work already contracted for would be slowed down as much as possible, that all work that could be suspended would be held up, and that no new work would be commenced pending the decisions

17

of the Five-Power Conference. The Conservative Opposition, however, quite rightly professed to see no connection between the progress of work on the base and the decisions of the London

Conference. If the Conference failed in securing its avowed end, the need for Singapore would remain the same; if there were a reduction in the strength of the Navy, the base would be all the more important as the requirements of defence in the Far East would be that much more difficult to fulfill.

It was obvious that MacDonald favoured suspension of the project, but his hands were partially tied by the large investment which some of the Commonwealth countries had made toward its fulfillment. The fate of Singapore, therefore, remained undecided until a compromise was achieved at the Imperial Conference of 1930. As a result of discussions between the representatives of Australia, New Zealand and the United Kingdom, it was recommended that:

... the present policy of the ultimate establishment of a defended naval base at Singapore should be maintained and that the Jackson Contract (for the graving dock) should be continued. It was, however, also recommended that, apart from the latter expenditure and such as will be required for the completion of the air base on the scale at present contemplated, the remaining expenditure, that is, that required for the completing of the docks and for defence works, should be postponed for the next five years when the matter could be again reviewed in the light of relevant conditions then prevailing. (18)

The Japanese invasion of Manchuria led, in 1932, to a resumption of work at Singapore, the Government finally bowing to the exigencies of world power. But with all the other pressing needs for European defence in the Thirties, the Government, clearly,

could not devote as much time and money to the project as it required. With the developing world crisis, completion of the base became an absolute necessity. The opportunity for a studied evolution of the base , which the Twenties had presented, had been lost.

Notes on Chapter VI

1

Jellicoe's official biographer, Reginald Bacon, has very little to say with regard to the Admiral's Empire tour. The best source is Frederick Dreyer's, "The Sea Heritage".

2

The figure was broken down as follows: (1) wharves, basins, railways, roads, dredging, berth for floating dock, £5,100,000, (2) graving dock, £1,000,000, (3) offices, dwellings, and other buildings, £420,000, (4) workshops, storehouses, magazines, £1,780,000, (5) contingencies, £1,200,000, and (6) machinery, £1,100,000.

171 H. C. Deb., 5s., col. 924.

3

"Statment of the First Lord of the Admiralty explanatory of the Navy Estimates, 1923-1924", Cmd. 1818, 1923, p. 7.

4

Eugene H. Miller, Strategy at Singapore (New York, 1942), p. 29. This book remains, to date, the best comprehensive work on the Singapore project and will probably remain so until the terms of the Public Record Act release the official papers for the Twenties.

5

For example, by the time the "Hood" reached Sydney from England, her speed was reduced four knots due to the accretion of marine growth on her hull and a further two knots by the time she reached North American waters. Eugene H. Miller, "Strategy at Singapore", p. 30.

6

166 H. C. Deb., 5s., col. 2574.

7

56 H. L. Deb., 5s., col. 826-27.

8

97% of all tea, 97% of the jute, 96% of the zinc ore, 90% of the rubber, 89% of the wool, 86% of the nitrate of soda, 77% of the hemp, 76% of the manganese ore, and 71% of the tin ore required by Great Britain was shipped through waters defendable from Singapore. Hector Bywater, "Navies and Nations", p. 86.

9

"The Times", March 29th, 1924.

10

169 H. C. Deb., 5s., col 275.

11

The correspondence with regard to the base, which passed between the Dominions and the Government, was published in the form of a Command Paper, following upon Opposition accusations that the Dominions had not been properly consulted on the matter. The appearance of this correspondence merely justified the Opposition's claim, for it revealed that the Dominions had been consulted only after a Cabinet committee had decided to suspend development of the base. See "Correspondence with the Self-Governing Dominions and India regarding the Development of the Singapore Naval Base", Cmd. 2083, 1924.

12

171 H. C. Deb., 5s., col. 319.

13

171 H. C. Deb., 5s., col. 1194. (Sir Robert Horne).

14

179 H. C. Deb., 5s., col. 49.

15

E. H. Miller, "Strategy at Singapore", p. 96.

16

203 H. C. Deb., 5s., col 1680.

17

231 H. C. Deb., 5s., col 2012.

18

"Imperial Conference, 1930", Ottawa edition, p. 38. Cited in E. H. Miller, "Strategy at Singapore", p. 102.

Conclusion

For over four years, the German High Seas Fleet had stood, in war, as a dagger poised to sever Great Britain's umbilical connection with the Americas and the Pacific. On November 21st, 1918, the dagger was placed in sheath at Scapa Flow, as the conclusion of the First World War witnessed the abrupt termination of German sea power. The end of the War naturally brought with it the demobilization of a large part of the Royal Navy, though even in demobilization, the Admiralty turned to look for new standards upon which to base the calculation of Great Britain's defence requirements in time of peace.

In accordance with the provisions of the "Ten Year Rule", the Admiralty knew that it had at least ten years during which to re-adjust to new conditions. Consequently, it was able to make reductions which otherwise might not have been justified and, in essence, to create a nucleus fleet upon which future expansion could be based should the nature of the new world order so require it. One immediate consideration, however, was the matter of relative fleet strength vis-à-vis the United States, which had, throughout 1919, been a major cause of friction between the two Governments. The Admiralty's solution was an abundantly simple one and merely a further definition of a policy evolved before the War; no objection would be raised and no response formulated to a United States Fleet equal in strength to the Royal Navy. But this solution, surprisingly, took no account of the possibility of

continued American expansion. Circumstances would see the 'One Power Standard', as this policy came to be termed, transformed from a harmless concession into an awesome commitment. Unfortunately, the realization that the American and Japanese building programmes would necessitate a material response on the part of the Royal Navy coincided with the collapse of the post-war boom, and though the Admiralty did announce plans for the construction of four super-"Hoods", it knew the ultimate solution lay only in the formal stabilization of the world's relative naval strengths. For indeed, British concern focussed not on the expansion of the United States Navy but rather on the relative changes which would inevitably take place in the relationship between the British and Japanese Fleets.

A satisfactory solution was achieved at the Washington Naval Conference, at which Great Britain obtained a standard of superiority of sixty percent over Japan, the same standard which had guided Admiralty policy vis-à-vis Germany before the War. Of course, there could be no question of comparison, when the Anglo-Japanese relationship was viewed in the light of the changed strategic and political circumstances, but as long as Great Britain maintained the freedom to build such auxiliary vessels as the Admiralty deemed necessary, it seemed a reasonable peacetime equation. Yet this freedom was to be challenged both internally and externally.

From within, the threat came as a result of the termination of an artificial period of post-war prosperity and the Government's inability to recognize that revitalization of Great Britain's industrial and commercial structure could not be sought through the orthodoxies of public economy and lower income tax. While the detail of the Geddes Report could be successfully refuted by the Admiralty, the attitude which the Report engendered in political circles could not be stamped out. Although the Admiralty had tended to regard the contingencies of the 'Ten Year Rule' as being of a temporary nature, its provisions were seized upon by British statesmen as justification for the irrational reduction of defence expenditure.

As the ever-growing web of Treasury control enveloped considerations of defence, morale in the Navy naturally declined, but more important, the material deficiencies of the Fleet severely restricted the strategic and tactical planning which should have been undertaken to meet the material challenge of the other naval Powers. Also implicit in the Government's fiscal policies was the abandonment of the concept of the essential role for the Navy in peacetime, which had previously been embodied in the 'Pax Britannica'. It is certainly a most striking indictment of the statesmen who led Great Britain in the Twenties that, through five successive administrations, Parliament proved neither willing nor able to arrive at any adequate definition of

the Empire's defence requirements in time of peace. Indeed, statesmen seemed neither willing nor able to understand that such a definition was necessary at all.

It was in the absence of such definition that the Admiralty turned to the creation of absolute standards, not based on Great Britain's foreign policy, but to a large degree, on the strategic and material position in which it found itself. Taking advantage of a difficult political situation (in one instance, the debility of the first Labour Government, and only a year later, the internal division of the Conservative Cabinet), the Admiralty did manage to secure at least a temporary recognition of the need to maintain an adequate degree of naval efficiency in time of peace. But the construction programmes gained were begrudgingly given and ignored, whenever the opportunity presented itself. Furthermore, the demands made on the Admiralty to meet much of the cost internally laid the Navy open, quite justly, to the charges of the anti-materialist school, so that the victory gained was, at most, a very elusive one.

Externally, the challenge came from the continued American demand for recognition of a mathematical parity on all levels, based on the premise that such parity could be achieved on a level suitable to their own strategic needs. The demand seemed absurd in the extreme to the Admiralty, for it presupposed that the political and strategic factors determining defence requirements were identical for both the

United States and Great Britain. To the American naval mind, however, the Admiralty's insistence on a 'parity plus' formula to achieve naval equality appeared similarly unrealistic, and was indeed poor arithmetic. The United States Executive realized that the absence of a formal agreement with Great Britain with regard to the stabilization of auxiliary fleet strength would necessitate a concession to the demands of the General Board of the American Navy for additional cruiser construction. Consequently, it thought the time propitious for the calling of a new naval conference. The Admiralty, too, felt that gains could be achieved through the process of negotiation but sought instead merely qualitative limitations favourable to Great Britain's strategic position and geared solely to economy in further construction.

On one issue alone was a quantitative limitation sought, the application of the 5:3 ratio to the construction of eight-inch gun cruisers, which the Admiralty regarded as essential to avoid the far great cost of these larger ships and to prevent the *déclassement* of Great Britain's existing cruiser fleet. The fundamental differences which separated the Americans and the British at the Geneva Naval Conference in 1927 led to the failure of the negotiations and the resulting tension between the two Governments was to prevent a renewal of the discussions until 1929.

The appearance, however, of Hoover's administration in Washington and the change in American policy apparent at the spring

session of the Preparatory Commission rekindled British interest in the limitation of naval armament. Several months of negotiation were to pass before the British realized that the Americans had not envisaged any substantial concession to their point of view but, by that time, the Prime Minister had personally committed himself, both to the public and to his party, to arrive at an agreement with the United States whatever the cost might be.

Yet MacDonald's faith in the durability of the new world order, strengthened by the conclusion of the Kellogg-Briand Pact of 1928, and coupled with his inability to comprehend the logic of his military advisors, blinded him to a realization of the price he would have to pay. Technically, there were many aspects of the London Treaty which placed the Admiralty at a disadvantage. But the fundamental injustice done was in assuming that the Royal Navy would be capable of safeguarding the Imperial trade network without the superior auxiliary fleet inherent in the principle of parity based on security. This assumption formed the basis of the conflict between the Government and the military establishment throughout the Twenties. British statesmen proved unable to understand the magnitude of the potential material threat to Great Britain's security. If the experience of the First War had impressed anything upon the mind of the Admiralty, it was not that it had to prevent another war, for that was the duty of the Government, but that it had to

prevent the losses which Great Britain had then suffered from ever recurring in another conflict. Yet, in the flux of the political situation of the Twenties, such determination on the part of the Admiralty seemed totally unrealistic to the politicians. The Government based its final judgement on the paramount need for economy and denied the inevitable consequences of such a policy. The result was that "measures, whose value was not dependent on the direction from which attack might come,¹ were postponed until the cumulative cost became prohibitive."

¹

Basil Collier, The Defence of the United Kingdom (London, 1957), p. 8.

Appendices

Appendix I

The Admiralty and the Dominions

It was most probably with a view to meeting the material challenge of naval defence that the Admiralty discarded its concept of an Imperial Navy and adopted instead the principle that each of the Dominions should be responsible for its own naval policy. During the course of the Imperial Conference of 1923, Amery expressed his desire for "the building up in each part of the Empire of a naval spirit, a naval tradition, a navy, small though it may be, but rooted in the life of each of the Nations of the Empire." Realizing full well that in the long run, "one could not defend a world-wide Empire against contingencies, which may be equally world-wide, from one small island in the North Sea..." Amery continued:

It is essential that the Dominion Navies, as they grow, should be national in spirit, national in organization, but not local. No Navy can attain real efficiency that is tied down to local waters.... We also feel that the more complete the political and administrative independence of those Navies, the more essential it is that in their organization, in their training and in their types of design, they should endeavour so to work by a progressive policy, that in the hour of danger, they can work together as one. (1)

But this plea for material assistance, which would be repeated at the Imperial Conference of 1926, proved of little avail in raising the per capita spending of each of the Dominions to any reasonable level. Only Australia, whose spending rose to slightly over fifty percent of the British per capita figure, proved willing to afford recognition to her responsibilities as an equal member of the Commonwealth of Nations in the defence of the Empire.

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L.S. Amery, "My Political Life, II", pp. 274-275.

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Appendix II, Defence and National Expenditure

Year	Air	Army	Navy	Defence	National
1913		£32,128,828 40%	£48,732,621 60%	£80,861,449 41%	£197,492,969
1914		247,619,738 71%	103,301,862 29%	350,921,600 62%	560,473,533
1915		526,712,664 72%	205,733,597 28%	732,446,261 47%	1,559,158,377
1916	4,434	587,796,567 74%	209,877,218 26%	797,678,219 36%	2,198,112,710
1917	2,531,974	725,832,879 76%	227,388,891 24%	955,753,744 36%	2,696,221,405
1918	84,406,445 7%	824,759,300 66%	334,091,227 27%	1,243,256,972 48%	2,579,301,188
1919	54,282,064 9%	411,835,607 66%	154,084,044 25%	620,201,715 37%	1,665,772,928
1920	20,699,268 7%	164,677,549 60%	92,505,290 33%	277,882,007 23%	1,195,427,877
1921	13,624,049 8%	86,035,942 49%	75,986,141 43%	175,646,132 16%	1,079,186,627
1922	8,982,900 8%	50,205,724 43%	58,492,389 49%	117,680,013 15%	812,469,604
1923	10,505,303 9%	46,229,680 42%	54,064,350 49%	110,799,333 14%	788,840,211
1924	14,559,821 13%	43,853,630 38%	55,693,787 49%	114,106,238 14%	795,776,711
1925	15,540,332 13%	44,783,329 37%	60,004,548 50%	120,328,209 15%	826,099,778
1926	15,401,270 13%	43,367,951 37%	57,142,862 50%	115,912,083 14%	842,395,027
1927	15,123,285 13%	43,928,662 38%	57,139,146 49%	116,191,093 14%	838,585,341
1928	16,091,935 14%	41,075,926 38%	58,123,257 48%	115,291,118 14%	818,040,525
1929	16,880,564 15%	41,232,870 36%	55,987,770 49%	114,101,204 14%	829,493,543
1930	17,631,673 16%	40,243,238 37%	52,247,186 47%	110,149,097 13%	881,036,905
1931	17,868,948 17%	38,623,757 36%	51,014,752 47%	107,507,457 13%	851,117,944
1932	17,057,371 17%	36,137,277 34%	50,164,453 49%	103,360,101 12%	859,310,173
1933	16,700,794 16%	37,540,428 35%	53,443,545 49%	107,684,767 14%	778,231,289
1934	17,670,893 16%	39,691,602 35%	56,616,010 49%	113,987,505 14%	797,067,170
1935	27,515,185 20%	44,654,483 33%	64,887,613 47%	137,057,281 16%	841,834,442
1936	49,995,697 27%	55,015,395 30%	80,976,124 43%	185,987,216 21%	902,193,385

Percentages after Service expenditures are based on total Defence.
Percentages after Defence expenditures are based on total National.

Appendix III

Actual Naval Expenditure (Percentage Figures)

Vote	1922-23	1923-24	1924-25	1925-26	1926-27
1) Wages etc. of Officers etc.	27.4%	26.2%	27.4%	24.3%	25.0%
2) Victualling & Clothing	8.3	7.7	7.5	7.1	7.4
3) Medical Establishments	.9	.8	.8	.7	.8
4) Civilians on Fleet Service	.5	.4	.3	2.2	1.2
5) Educational Services	.7	.6	.6	.5	.6
6) Scientific Services	.6	.7	.7	.7	.7
7) Royal Navy Reserves	.7	.9	.8	.8	.8
8) Construction:					
Personnel	12.3	12.5	13.4	13.2	13.1
Matériel	6.7	10.2	10.0	11.5	9.5
Contract Work	5.6	8.2	9.7	10.7	12.7
9) Naval Armament	6.4	7.1	6.3	7.1	6.3
10) Works	6.2	6.0	5.7	4.0	3.7
11) Miscellaneous	3.7	1.8	1.9	1.4	1.6
12) Admiralty Office	2.4	2.3	2.4	2.2	2.1
13) Non-Effective, Officers	6.4	5.3	5.2	4.7	5.1
14) Non-Effective, Men	9.5	7.8	7.8	7.4	7.8
15) Civil Super-annuation	1.7	1.5	1.5	1.5	1.6
Total	£58,492,389	£54,064,350	£55,693,787	£60,004,548	£58,123,257

Vote 4 becomes Fleet Air Arm in 1925-26.

Appendix III, continued

Vote	1927-28	1928-29	1929-30	1930-31	1931-32
1) Wages etc. of Officers etc.	25.0%	25.3%	25.5%	26.8%	26.4%
2) Victualling & Clothing	7.2	7.0	6.9	6.7	6.2
3) Medical Establishments	.7	.7	.8	.8	.7
4) Fleet Air Arm	1.5	1.7	1.9	2.4	2.2
5) Educational Services	.4	.4	.4	.4	.4
6) Scientific Services	.7	.7	.8	.9	.9
7) Royal Navy Reserves	.7	.7	.7	.8	.8
8) Construction:					
Personnel	12.2	11.8	11.8	11.9	12.4
Matériel	8.0	8.9	8.9	8.0	8.8
Contract Work	15.2	14.4	13.0	10.6	9.2
9) Naval Armaments	6.9	6.8	6.9	6.8	6.5
10) Works	3.3	3.4	3.7	3.7	4.7
11) Miscellaneous	1.5	1.3	1.3	1.3	1.3
12) Admiralty Office	2.1	2.1	2.1	2.2	2.2
13) Non-Effective, Officers	5.1	5.2	5.5	6.0	6.1
14) Non-Effective, Men	7.8	7.9	8.1	8.8	9.1
15) Civil Super-annuation	1.7	1.7	1.7	1.9	2.0
Total	£58,123,257	£57,139,146	£55,987,770	£52,274,186	£51,014,752

Appendix IV

The Admiralty Board, 1922-1930

	First Lord of the Admiralty	First Sea Lord Chief of the Naval Staff	Second Sea Lord Chief of Naval Personnel	Third Sea Lord Controller
1922	Lee	Beatty	Oliver	Field
1923	Amery	Beatty	Oliver	Field
1924	Chelmsford	Beatty	Oliver	Fuller
1925	Bridgeman	Beatty	Seymour	Fuller
1926	Bridgeman	Beatty	Brand	Chatfield
1927	Bridgeman	Beatty	Brand	Chatfield
1928	Bridgeman	Madden	Hodges	Chatfield
1929	Bridgeman	Madden	Hodges	Backhouse
1930	Alexander	Madden	Hodges	Backhouse

	Fourth Sea Lord Chief of Supplies	Deputy Chief of the Naval Staff	Assistant Chief of the Naval Staff
1922	Boyle	Keyes	Chatfield
1923	Boyle	Keyes	Fuller
1924	Boyle	Keyes	Waistell
1925	Kelly	Keyes	Dreyer
1926	Kelly	Field	Dreyer
1927	Fisher	Field	Dreyer
1928	Haggard	Field	Pound
1929	Haggard	Fisher	Pound
1930		Fisher	—

	Parliamentary and Financial Secretary	Civil Lord	Permanent Secretary
1922	Amery	Monsell	Murray
1923	Monsell	Linlithgow	Murray
1924	Ammon	Hodges	Murray
1925	Davidson	Stanhope	Murray
1926	Davidson	Stanhope	Murray
1927	Headlam	Stanhope	Murray
1928	Headlam	Stanhope	Murray
1929	Headlam	Stanhope	Murray
1930	Hall	Ammon	Murray

Appendix V

The Fleet, 1922-1930

Battleships:

	Completed	Scrapped	Tonnage	H/P	Armament
Nelson	1927		33,500	45,000 @	9-16", 12-6", 6-4.7" A.A.
Rodney	1927		35,000	23 knots	28 smaller guns, 2 tubes
Royal Sovereign	1916		25,750	40,000 @	8-15", 14-6", 2-3" A.A.
Royal Oak	1916			23 knots	20 smaller guns, 4 tubes
Revenge	1916				
Resolution	1916				
Ramilles	1917				
Malaya	1916		27,500	75,000 @	8-15", 12-6", 2-3" A.A.
Valiant	1916			25 knots	20 smaller guns, 4 tubes
Barham	1915				
Queen Elizabeth	1915				
Warspite	1915				
Benbow	1914	1931	25,000	29,000 @	10-13.5", 12-4", 2-3" A.A.
Emperor of India	1914	1931		21 knots	20 smaller guns, 4 tubes
Marlborough	1914	1931			
Iron Duke	1914	1931			
Ajax	1913	1927	23,000	27,000 @	10-13.5", 12-4", 2-3" A.A.
Centurion	1913	1927		21 knots	20 smaller guns, 2 tubes
King George V	1912	1927			
Thunderer	1912	1927	22,500	27,000 @	10-13.5", 8-4", 1-4" & 1-3" A.A., 20 smaller guns 2 tubes

Battle Cruisers

Hood	1920		41,200	144,000 @	8-15", 12-5.5", 4-4" A.A. 20 smaller guns, 6 tubes
				31 knots	
Renown	1916		26,500	112,000 @	6-15", 17-4", 2-3" A.A.
Repulse	1916			31.5 knots	20 smaller guns, 2 tubes (10 tubes on Repulse)
Tiger	1914	1931	28,500	108,000 @	8-13.5", 12-6", 2-3" A.A. 20 smaller guns, 4 tubes
				30 knots	

Appendix V, continued

Aircraft Carriers:

	Completed	Scrapped	Tonnage	H/P	Armament
Glorious	1930		22,500	90,000 @ 31 knots	16-4.7", 54 smaller guns
Courageous	1928				
Albatross (Aust.)	1929		5,000	12,000 @ 21 knots	4-4.7", 32 smaller guns (seaplane carrier)
Hermes	1924		10,950	40,000 @ 25 knots	7-5.5", 4-4" A.A. 4-3 pounders
Eagle	1924		22,790	50,000 @ 24 knots	9-6", 5-4" A.A. 15 smaller guns
Argus	1918		14,450	20,000 @ 21 knots	2-4", 4-4" A.A. 15 smaller guns
Furious	1917		19,100	90,000 @ 31 knots	10-5.5", 5-3" A.A. 17 smaller guns
Pegasus	1917	1928	3,070	9,500 @ 20 knots	19 smaller guns
Ark Royal	1914		7,080	3,000 @ 11 knots	19 smaller guns

Cruisers:

York	1930		8,400	80,000 @ 32 knots	6-8", 4-4", 20 smaller guns, 8 tubes
Dorsetshire	1930		10,000	80,000 @ 31.5 knots	8-8", 4-4", 20 smaller guns, 8 tubes
Norfolk	1930				
Devonshire	1929				
Sussex	1929				
Shropshire	1929				
London	1929				
Canberra (Aust.)	1928		10,000	80,000 @ 31.5 knots	8-8", 4-4" A.A. 20 smaller guns, 8 tubes
Australia (Aust.)	28				
Berwick	1928				
Kent	1928				
Suffolk	1928				
Cornwall	1928				
Cumberland	1927				
Emerald	1926		7,100	80,000 @ 33 knots	7-6", 3-4" A.A. 16 smaller guns, 12 tubes
Enterprise	1925				

Appendix V, continued

	Completed	Scrapped	Tonnage	H/P	Armament
Adelaide (Aust.)	1922		5,560	25,000 @ 25 knots	9-6", 1-3" A.A. 7 smaller guns, 2 tubes
Diomede	1922		4,765	40,000 @	6-6", 2-4" A.A.
Despatch	1922			29 knots	16 smaller guns, 12 tubes
Durban	1921		4,650	40,000 @	6-6", 2-3" A.A.
Delhi	1919			29 knots	16 smaller guns, 12 tubes
Dunedin	1919				
Danae	1918				
Dauntless	1918				
Dragon	1918				
Effingham	1925		9,750	65,000 @	7-7.5", 4-3" A.A.
Frobisher	1924			30.5 knots	13 smaller guns, 6 tubes
Raleigh	1921	1923			
Hawkins	1919		-	60,000 @	
Vindictive	1918		-	30 knots	
Capetown	1922		4,190	40,000 @	5-6", 2-3" A.A.
Cairo	1919			29 knots	16 smaller guns, 8 tubes
Calcutta	1919				
Carlisle	1918				
Colombo	1919				
Cardiff	1917				
Coventry	1917				
Curlew	1917				
Ceres	1917				
Curacoa	1917				
Caledon	1916		4,120	40,000 @	5-6", 2-3" A.A.
Calypso	1917			29 knots	16 smaller guns, 8 tubes
Caredoc	1916				
Concord	1916		3,750	40,000 @	5-6", 2-3" A.A.
Centaur	1916			29 knots	8 smaller guns, 2 tubes
Cambrian	1916		3,750	40,000 @	4-6", 2-3" A.A.
Canterbury	1916			29 knots	15 smaller guns, 2 tubes
Constance	1916				
Castor	1915				
Champion	1915		3,750	40,000 @	4-6", 1-4" A.A.
Cleopatra	1915			29 knots	11 smaller guns, 2 tubes (Cleopatra, 2-4" A.A.)
Carysfort	1915		3,750	40,000 @	4-6", 2-3" A.A.
Conquest	1915	1929		29 knots	11 smaller guns, 4 tubes

Appendix V, continued

	Completed	Scrapped	Tonnage	H/P	Armament
Caroline	1914	1923	3,750	40,000 @	4-6", 2-3" A.A.
Cordelia	1915	1923		29 knots	15 smaller guns, 4 tubes
Comus	1915				(Calliope, 2 tubes)
Calliope	1915	1931			
Royalist	1915	1923	3,500	40,000 @	3-6", 4-4", 2-3" A.A.
Inconstant	1915	1923		29 knots	11 smaller guns, 8 tubes
Phaeton	1915	1923			
Undaunted	1914	1923			
Aurora (Can.)	1914	1926			
Birmingham	1914	1931	5,440	25,000 @	9-6", (8 on Southampton
Lowestoft	1914	1931		25 knots	and Dublin), 1-3" A.A.
Southampton	1912	1926			14 smaller guns, 2 tubes
Dublin	1913	1926			
Brisbane (Aust.)	1916		5,400	25,000 @	8-6", 1-3" A.A.
Sydney (Aust.)	1913	1930		25 knots	9 smaller guns, 2 tubes
Melbourne (Aust.)	1913	1929			
Chatham (N.Z.)	1912	1926			
Yarmouth	1912	1929	5,250	22,000 @	8-6", 1-3" A.A.
Dartmouth	1911	1931		25 knots	15 smaller guns, 2 tubes
Weymouth	1911	1928			

Appendix VI

Fleets of the World: Numerical Summary

Battleships

	1922	1923	1924	1925	1926	1927	1928	1929	1930	1931
Great Britain	22	18	18	18	18	14	16	16	16	14
United States	31	18	18	18	18	18	18	18	18	18
Japan	11	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6
France	10	9	9	9	9	9	9	9	9	9
Italy	9	9	7	7	7	6	5	4	4	4

Battle Cruisers

Great Britain	8	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4
United States	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Japan	7	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4
France	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Italy	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

Aircraft Carriers

Great Britain	4	4	6	6	6	6	6	7	8	8
United States	1	1	2	2	1	1	3	3	3	3
Japan	1	1	1	2	2	4	4	5	5	5
France	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1	1	1
Italy	-	-	-	-	1	1	1	1	1	1

Cruisers

Great Britain	51	48	48	49	47	48	49	52	54	53
United States	9	9	15	31	32	32	32	32	14	19
Japan	12	15	17	28	31	33	35	34	37	37
France	5	5	5	16	15	16	16	15	17	16
Italy	10	10	10	13	14	14	13	14	13	13

Flotilla Leaders

Great Britain	16	16	16	17	17	17	17	16	16	16
United States	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Japan	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
France	1	1	1	1	2	5	7	7	9	13
Italy	8	8	8	9	11	11	11	11	20	19

Destroyers

Great Britain	185	186	186	189	172	157	150	140	134	132
United States	316	317	309	309	309	309	309	309	309	309
Japan	58	71	78	101	109	109	114	101	106	105
France	53	50	48	54	54	49	45	54	58	60
Italy	58	51	51	53	52	60	64	65	63	65

Submarines

Great Britain	93	66	61	63	56	55	55	52	53	59
United States	104	104	115	118	120	121	121	122	122	107
Japan	24	40	44	51	53	65	69	64	64	67
France	50	47	48	46	45	44	44	52	52	54
Italy	43	43	43	43	43	42	45	45	43	40

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