

Admiralty Orders for Canadian Shipyards: Trawlers, Drifters, and the Urgency of Coastal Defence during the Great War

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La perturbation des importations transatlantiques de Grande-Bretagne par les sous-marins allemands pendant la Grande Guerre a conduit l'Amirauté à construire de petits navires et dragueurs de patrouille côtière, dont 60 chalutiers en acier et 100 dériveurs en bois construits au Canada. Géré par le ministère du Service naval du Canada, ces ordres ont été remplis par les chantiers navals sur la rivière des Grands Lacs et du Saint-Laurent entre 1917 et 1919. Bien que ce programme ait contribué au développement de l'industrie de la construction navale au Canada, la concurrence sur l'acier et la main-d'œuvre qualifiée a eu un impact significatif sur la productivité et les relations de travail.

After years of building dreadnoughts in anticipation of pitched battles on the North Sea, naval hostilities during the First World War were dominated by localized engagements intended to sever supply lines, erode the will to fight, and bring an end to protracted conflict on the continent. In response to Britain's blockade of its ports, German submarines attacked Allied and Neutral merchant ships to prevent imports of over 60 percent of Britain's food, and 80 percent of its wheat.² By September 1915, Germany had sunk about 570,000 gross tons of shipping. A year later, British losses had risen to almost 640 merchant vessels with a capacity of 2,295,329 gross tons, and losses by allies and neutral countries added over 1,000 ships and more than 1,563,650 gross tons to these totals.³ By May 1916, Germany had developed U-cruisers that could cover 12,000 nautical miles and would take the campaign against Allied commerce to the coast of the Americas. The shortage of merchant ships and expansion of the German submarine fleet created a serious challenge to feeding

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² L. Margaret Barnett, *British Food Policy During The First World War* (Boston, 1985), xiv.

³ Norman Friedman, *Fighting the Great War at Sea: Strategy, Tactics and Technology* (Barnsley, 2014), 70; Christopher Addison, *Politics from Within, 1911-1918, Including Some Records of a Great National Effort*, vol. 2 (London, 1924), 9-10.