

*Coast* focused on operational demands for patrols that led to the program, criticism of the Admiralty's decision to build small, slow vessels instead of faster destroyers, and the impact of defective construction upon coastal defence.<sup>16</sup> However, the impact of Admiralty orders upon Canadian shipyards is largely missing from these studies. An analysis of the trawler and drifter program using records from the shipyards in Port Arthur, Collingwood, and Kingston, as well as correspondence between other shipbuilders and the Department of Naval Service, offers useful insights into the relationship between procurement management and corporate ownership, the industrial capacity of Canada during the Great War, and the impact of overheated demand for new vessels upon labour relations.

### The Admiralty calls upon Canada

The first two years of the war brought the large-scale mobilization of Canadian industry to fill orders for high-explosive shells and other essential supplies placed by the Imperial Munitions Board, Britain's purchasing agent in Canada, but no similar requests were forthcoming from the Admiralty. It was not for lack of trying. Robert Borden's initial inquiry to the Admiralty regarding cooperation on naval defence in October 1914 was met with advice that Canada's assistance should concentrate on the army.<sup>17</sup> Proposals to build destroyers and submarines to enhance the defence of Halifax were put forward in November by Canadian Vickers Limited of Montreal, only to be told by Winston Churchill, first lord of the Admiralty, that there was no immediate need for such construction in the face of more pressing imperial requirements. Despite Canadian Vickers' assemblage of ten British submarines in 1915 on behalf of the Electric Boat Company of Connecticut to avoid American neutrality laws, the Admiralty refused to build additional submarines in Canada because they would take too long to complete and cost twice as much as vessels constructed in Britain.<sup>18</sup>

Instead of new builds, coastal patrols were begun by Canada's Department of Naval Service but it was impossible to secure a sufficient number of suitable vessels

---

<sup>16</sup> Michael L. Hadley and Roger Sarty, *Tin-Pots and Pirate Ships: Canadian Naval Forces and German Sea Raiders 1880-1918* (Montreal and Kingston, 1991), 187-190, 220-222, 235-236, 278; Brian Tennyson and Roger Sarty, *Guardian of the Gulf: Sydney, Cape Breton and the Atlantic Wars* (Toronto, 2000), 148-165, 176-180; and William Johnston, William G.P. Rawling, Richard H. Gimblett, and John MacFarlane, *The Seabound Coast: The Official History of the Royal Canadian Navy, 1867-1939*, Volume 1 (Toronto, 2010), 395-416.

<sup>17</sup> Library and Archives Canada (hereafter LAC), Sir Robert Borden fonds, MG 26 H, reel C-4318, vol. 76, 39492, G. Perley to R. Borden, 10 October 1914. Although the file "Canadian Coast Patrol 1916-1917" appears to consist of only a single page in LAC's Finding Aid No. 18, Part 1, it is actually a 168-page compendium of correspondence, memoranda, cables, and other documents created between 1914 and 1918 that outline negotiations between the Dominion government and the Admiralty regarding the defence of Canada's Atlantic coast and orders for trawlers and drifters. It is available online at [http://heritage.canadiana.ca/view/oocihm.lac\\_reel\\_c4318/17?r=0&s=4](http://heritage.canadiana.ca/view/oocihm.lac_reel_c4318/17?r=0&s=4), Images 17-184.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, memorandum by G.H. Perley, 2 July 1915.