

Collingwood's general manager, remarked to one of his directors that, "This would be lovely business as there is not much to the little hulls ... I am afraid, however, that nothing much will come out of it."²⁴ Regardless of Leitch's doubts, prospects of such work continued to percolate, fuelled by inquiries such as the notice published by the Submarine Boat Corporation of New York in December 1916, looking for a Canadian agent to build 200 trawlers worth \$30,000,000.²⁵

The Admiralty's change of mind to build in Canada was likely influenced by Joseph Flavelle, a wealthy Toronto businessman who chaired the Imperial Munitions Board. Working through the Ministry of Munitions, the board's parent organization, the Admiralty asked Flavelle on 21 December 1916 to obtain quotations for building self-trimming colliers, as well as prices for general cargo ships that could alleviate the deficit of merchant tonnage. Flavelle engaged the services of Joseph W. Norcross, whose report on 28 December outlined the capacity of steel shipyards across Canada, and recommended that Britain embark on a program of new construction on the basis of cost plus overhead, with a percentage for profit. The report languished in London, and Flavelle turned to Robert Brand, an English financier representing the board in London, to lobby imperial officials for a decision regarding merchant shipbuilding. The urgent need for patrol vessels and the great difficulty in getting answers to Canadian inquiries were brought to Brand's attention, and he met with imperial officials on 25 January 1917. The Admiralty was open to constructing trawlers and drifters in Canada, but it was uncertain who would administer this program. A clear statement was required from the Admiralty. Brand's first draft of this communication on 27 January gave all responsibility for construction to the Imperial Munitions Board, and he hammered out the details in subsequent meetings with Sir Edward Carson, first lord of the Admiralty. In the meantime, Flavelle pressed ahead with the program as Norcross drafted plans for drifters with the assistance of Philip Miller, general manager of Canadian Vickers. Miller was familiar with the dimensions and shear of drifters through his professional experience in Scotland.

J.W. Norcross and the alignment of procurement and corporate ownership

Arrangements were well in hand by the time the Admiralty sent its cable of 5 February 1917. It is not clear why management of construction was taken away from the Imperial Munitions Board (perhaps the Admiralty preferred that naval shipbuilding be supervised by naval officials), but Flavelle and Brand were successful in putting the trawler and drifter program on the same financial footing as Canadian-built merchant ships for Britain's Shipping Controller: payment was an imperial responsibility. Regardless of this change, Norcross would manage the

²⁴ Collingwood Museum (hereafter CM), John Leitch letter books, Acc. No. X974.995.1, Leitch to A. McDougall, 21 August 1916.

²⁵ *The Financial Post of Canada*, 30 December 1916, 15.