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**PROFESSIONALISM'S POWER AND THE ROLE OF SERVICE UNITY AND  
POLITICAL COOPERATION IN THE PROFESSIONALIZATION OF NORTH  
AMERICA'S AIR FORCES**

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According to historian Dr Stephen J. Harris (Chief Historian, Directorate of History and Heritage, Canadian Department of National Defence), the genesis of professionalization for a military occurs when the members begin to see themselves as a professional, collective body. Only then are the attributes of professionalism cultivated: expertise (technical competence, leadership, education), corporateness (discipline, promotion on merit, criteria for entrance), responsibility (respect for the chain of command and acceptance of the state's paramount authority).

<sup>1</sup> In his study of the Canadian army's development between 1860 and 1939, Dr Harris reveals that it took the real-life battle experiences of the First World War to resoundingly convince skeptical politicians and citizen-soldier militia-men that a professional and independent regular force was needed to cope with the new phenomenon of total warfare.

Although self-recognition as a corporate body is an imperative step in the professionalization of the military, it is only a first step in giving power to professionalism. No matter how united a service might be in defining and asserting its professional identity, service rivalry and government interference stalls professional development, the ability to exert power, and the possibilities for influencing national policies. In the case of the United States Air Force (USAF), service jealousy precluded the creation of an independent air force before 1947 – in spite of the fact that airmen in the Army, as early as the 1920s, saw themselves as having a separate, distinct identity and role. Opposition to the creation of a third and co-equal service was rooted in concerns over military structure, service pre-eminence, future defence policies, and budget allocations.

For the Royal Canadian Air Force (RCAF), political interference hindered the air force from freely developing its doctrine, tactics, and weapons and from adequately preparing for

future wars. From inception in 1924, it was air force policy to be as compatible as possible with Great Britain's Royal Air Force (RAF) so that the Dominion could easily integrate with the Mother Country's air force if Canada were called to help in a future Empire emergency. Canada's government, and the Department of External Affairs in particular, disliked the RCAF's Imperial ties and hence worked feverishly to minimize the RAF's influence.

Cultivating a sense of collectiveness and articulating a professional identity is only the first step in professionalization of the military. The second – and ever ongoing – step is the creation of unity of opinion amongst the three services and unity of opinion with the civilian government. As demonstrated by the struggles of both the United States and Canada's air forces in the first half of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, service and government interference and antagonism stalls professional development. Gaining the civilian government's support for a military service unified in spirit and goals is what gives professionalism its ultimate power.

Dr SJ Harris on the Professionalization of the Canadian Army:

The Permanent Force of Canada's army emerged at a time when the attitude of Canadians and politicians alike was not conducive to accepting a professional army. Seeing as it was commonly accepted that Canada had few enemies, no one believed there was a need for a regular force. Canadians embraced the myth that the militia (Canada's cherished part-time citizen soldiers) was sufficient to defend the country. The amateur soldiers themselves were reluctant to admit that a Permanent Force might have more knowledge or expertise than themselves. Besides, the Dominion could rely on the British army in time of emergency, if need be. The government resisted the idea of a professional army, for this meant that the seat of power would lose an important institution for patronage. Entrance and promotion based on merit would deprive the government of making prestigious patronage appointments in the militia. Canadians,

militia-men, and politicians all agreed that the Permanent Force's *raison d'être* would be to teach the militia – not to prepare for the next war, not to develop plans and doctrines, and not to cultivate a sense of corporate, professional identity.<sup>2</sup>

Between 1871 and 1898, little progress was made in creating a sense of professionalism. Seeing as soldiers' owed their appointments and promotions to the Minister of Militia and Defence, there was no motivation for bettering oneself professionally. There was also little reason for obeying commanding officers; in the larger scheme of career advancement, these officers' opinions mattered little. The coming to power of Prime Minister Robert Borden in 1898 began a new direction for the Permanent Force. This prime minister was open to the development of a professional army, where merit, ability, and knowledge would be sought after and valued. Unfortunately, the gains toward professionalism that had been made since 1898 were quickly lost when Sam Hughes, a long time militia-man himself, became Minister of Militia and Defence in 1911. Unabashedly partisan, Hughes undermined service discipline, encourage officers to use political influence for promotion, and by-passed district headquarters and staffs.<sup>3</sup>

The battles of the First World War taught some shocking – but sorely needed – lessons about total warfare. Firstly, the experience showed that heavy casualties are inevitable when professional knowledge and expertise are lacking. Secondly, senior officers realized that Canadians had no innate talent for waging war; contrary to the patriotic myth, Canadian soldiers needed professional training and experience in order to survive on the battlefield. The last year of the war brought significant changes to Canada's army and its leadership. Sam Hughes was dismissed in 1917, and George Perley became the Minister of Overseas Forces. Perley recognized immediately that his knowledge of things military was limited; hence, he gave the

army the liberty to fulfill its professional responsibilities, and merit – not patronage – would dictate decisions and promotions. By 1918, politicians truly respected the Permanent Force for its competence and objective, responsible advice. It took the hardships of actually fighting in a real war to teach both soldiers and politicians in Canada that a successful military had to be a professional military.<sup>4</sup>

#### The United States Air Force's Battle for Independence:

The First World War experience of American airmen gave them, too, a sense of identity and the impetus to pursue the creation of a professional body. This early desire to establish a co-equal, independent air service and to pursue the specific mission of strategic bombing ran into opposition from both the Army and the Navy. Brigadier-General William Mitchell led the first campaign for an independent air force. During the First World War, Mitchell had commanded the air units of the United States First Army in France. This experience convinced him that the new technology would radically change the way future wars would be fought. He believed that aircraft were more economical and effective than battleships and that this new tool of war would best be exploited and understood in an independent air force. On 3 February 1920, Mitchell told a House Appropriations Sub-Committee that a strong air force could replace the Navy as the country's first line of defence. The Army did not support the creation of a separate air force; according to the War Department, any air service should remain subordinate to Army ground commanders because supporting ground troops was the air service's main role.<sup>5</sup>

Not surprisingly, the Navy felt threatened by Mitchell's claims that a separate air force could subsume the Navy's role of protecting the shores of the United States. Consequently, Navy leaders suggested the creation of a Bureau of Aeronautics and a Naval Flying Corps within the Navy. A bill establishing both was passed on 12 July 1921. Naval leaders could not dispute

the potential war-fighting capabilities of the airplane; hence, they incorporated this into the Navy rather than letting another (fledgling) service usurp the Navy and its roles. Because neither the Army nor the Navy shared the vision of the airmen desiring an independent air force, the air service remained part of the Army: first as a combatant branch of the Army (under the Reorganization Act of 1920), and then as a corps (under the Air Corps Act of 1926). Neither status satisfied air advocates.<sup>6</sup>

Nonetheless, the aspirations of these air advocates were not dampened by this early defeat. At the Air Service Field Officers School (later renamed the Air Corps Tactical School) in Langley Field, Virginia, instructors cultivated a strategic bombing doctrine based on independent air operations. This doctrine was strongly influenced by early air theorists from around the world – such as Italy’s General Giulio Douhet. Douhet noted that air power had eradicated the distinction between combatants and non-combatants; the airplane made it possible to reach behind enemy lines without actually breaking through the enemy’s ground defences. Command of the air would be achieved by bombing enemy airports, supply bases, and industrial centres. Breaking the will of the enemy to fight would be achieved by demoralizing the citizens with death, destruction, and deprivation; once morale had been crushed through bombing, it was expected that the people would insist that their leaders sue for peace. The textbook issued by the Air Corps Tactical School in 1926, *Employment of Combined Air Force*, reflected Douhet’s theory. According to the text, crushing the enemy’s will to resist was the true objective of war. This would be done through precision attacks on specific targets that were selected deliberately to hinder the enemy’s war effort. By 1930, the school taught its airmen students that precision attacks could be carried out by defensive bomber formations traveling alone without escorts of pursuit fighter aircraft. Although denied a separate air service immediately after the First World

War, air advocates during the 1920s and 1930s were busy discerning how the airplane would best be used in a future war. These deliberations resulted in a strategic bombing doctrine that proved – at least to the airmen – that air power needed to be a separate service; this would allow experts to develop the service’s main mission unhindered by the short-sightedness of those who did not understand air power.<sup>7</sup>

The creation of General Headquarters Air Force (GHQ Air Force) on 1 March 1935 was the Army’s first major step in recognizing the development of air power as something separate from ground forces. With this reorganization, operational control was transferred from Army corps commanders to the Chief of the Air Corps. Although the GHQ Air Force was responsible for combat results and efficiency, another office – the Office of the Chief of the Air Corps - had control of all the Air Corps’ resources: funds, personnel, and equipment procurement. This organization left the air service with authority divided between two bodies. Further autonomy was not granted at this time for numerous reasons. Firstly, many in the War Department were not convinced by air advocates’ claims that strategic bombing could lessen and even replace the carnage on the battlefield. More significantly, though, the War Department General Staff feared that giving the air arm autonomy would mean the Army’s funding would be decreased – not because the money normally allotted to the Air Corps would be removed from the Army budget and given to the air force, but because any additional funding an independent air service needed would probably be secured through cuts to allocations to other Army components. The War Department also claimed that an independent air force would not provide adequate support to ground forces. It was assumed – or at least argued – that the air force would focus on strategic bombing to the detriment of the air arm’s traditional role of ground support.<sup>8</sup>

The Navy’s position on air force independence did not change during the inter-war

period. The Air Corps' views on using bombers for defensive missions and coastal defence brought the Air Corps and the Navy into fierce conflict. The debate was over whether land-based Army air assets would defend the country's coasts from attack, or if the Navy should have land-based air assets to complement and assist the protection being provided by the Navy's ships. If the Army's air assets were granted the responsibility of coastal defence, the two services had to agree upon how far over the ocean the Air Corps would conduct its missions. The dispute over territory was temporarily settled in January 1931 by an informal agreement between General Douglas MacArthur (Army Chief of Staff) and Admiral William Pratt (Chief of Naval Operations). These men decided that naval air's missions would be directly connected with fleet movements while the Air Corps would defend United States coasts and overseas possessions and conduct both reconnaissance and offensive operations in connection with ground forces.<sup>9</sup>

A 1934 Joint Board Statement on "Doctrines for the Employment of the GHQ Air Force" overturned this informal agreement. The Joint Board decided that coastal defence was the purview of the Navy. The Army air arm would only be called upon if the Navy lacked the power to deal with a situation. In 1938, the Air Corps seized an opportunity to demonstrate its capability in providing coastal defence. During joint maneuvers in May 1938, three of the Air Corps' B-17s unexpectedly flew six hundred miles over the Atlantic Ocean and intercepted a New York-bound Italian liner. Air advocates proclaimed that this proved the defensive capabilities and range of land-based bomber aircraft. The Navy, on the other hand, believed that this proved nothing more than that an independent air force would undoubtedly be working toward taking over missions and roles that traditionally belonged to the Navy. The fury of the Navy resulted in Army Chief of Staff promising the Chief of Naval Operations that Air Corps



operational flights would extend no further than one hundred miles from the United States' shore; the War Department then issued this directive verbally.<sup>10</sup>

The Second World War brought significant advances in the Air Corps' pursuit of independence. By 1941, the Army was ready and willing to consider autonomy for its air service. Because of the increasing likelihood that the United States would be drawn into the war, both Army and Air Corp officials agreed that complete separation from the Army at this time would be unprofitable and detrimental to the war effort. The Air Corps did not need the distraction of acrimonious debates with the other services as it was trying to expand. Instead, quasi-autonomy was granted as the Army Air Forces (AAF) were established on 20 June 1941. General Henry Arnold was made Chief of the Army Air Forces which was an autonomous entity within the Army similar to the standing the Marine Corps had in the Navy department. Although air advocates agreed that the debate over complete independence should be postponed until the end of the war, this mind-set did not prevent AAF leaders from pursuing greater autonomy within the Army. At the request of General Arnold, Brigadier-General Carl Spaatz (who would command the Strategic Air Forces in Europe and in the Pacific during the war) prepared a reorganization plan in October 1941 that would make the AAF co-equal with the Army's ground and service forces. Although the War Department rejected this proposal in October 1941, they were of a different frame of mind in November 1941 when General Arnold presented a very similar restructuring. This time, the War Department's War Plans Division approved the plan, and under the Marshall Reorganization of 1942, the AAF was officially recognized as being co-equal with the Army Ground Forces and the Army Service Forces. The AAF's mission was "to procure and maintain equipment peculiar to the Army Air Forces, and to provide Air Force units properly organized, trained, and equipped for combat operations."<sup>11</sup>

The Army's attitude toward an independent air service had changed significantly in the Second World War from the inter-war years, and AAF representation on planning and strategy councils clearly reflected this. The Deputy Chief of Staff for Air sat on the Joint Army-Navy Board. General Arnold served on the Joint Chiefs of Staff and on the Anglo-American Combined Chiefs of Staff. Permitting this kind of representation on such influential bodies demonstrated that the Army had accepted the AAF as equal to the land and sea services. General Marshall (Army Chief of Staff) was visibly keen on granting the AAF as much autonomy as possible. Knowing that separating the AAF from the Army was not possible during the prosecution of war, Marshall deliberately aimed to make Arnold "as nearly as I could Chief of Staff of the Air without any restraint although he was very subordinate." The fact that Marshall and Arnold had been close Army colleagues since 1914 when they served in the Philippines helped cultivate Army support for air autonomy. Nevertheless, Marshall did not allow the AAF more freedom and influence than its status warranted simply because he trusted and respected Arnold's judgements. The Army Chief of Staff was also of the conviction that the General Staff needed to decentralize its operating responsibilities. He desired to have a vertical bureaucratic structure replace the existing horizontal apparatus, and the creation of an air force would further his decentralization plans.<sup>12</sup>

The Army's desire for unity of command also spurred its drive for air force independence as part of creating a single Department of National Defense. Discussions of post-war reorganization were ongoing during the war years. As early as 1943, General Marshall told the Joint Chiefs of Staff that a single Department of National Defense would ensure unity of command, eliminate duplication and overlaps, and result in economy of funds, personnel, and facilities. He saw such an organization being divided into three groups – ground, air, and naval

forces – and the department would be headed by one secretary. General Dwight Eisenhower's war experience made him another Army voice strongly in favour of a single Department of National Defense and a separate air force. As Supreme Commander in Europe, he saw first hand what air forces could accomplish in tactical and strategic roles. This was the very response for which the air force had been hoping. Air power theorists had been extolling the theoretical effectiveness of strategic bombing for years, but the AAF's participation in the war finally gave the air service its chance to prove its effectiveness in reality. Although unescorted precision bombing raids over Germany proved very costly, experience taught the AAF to modify its doctrines; hence, daylight bombing became viable with the help of escort fighters. The devastating power of the atomic weapons used on Hiroshima and Nagasaki resoundingly convinced AAF leaders that strategic bombing would indeed be decisive in future wars. With the support of Army leaders, and with the evidence of the successful use of air power in the time of war, independence advocates were prepared to fight hard for the creation of a separate and co-equal post-war air service.<sup>13</sup>

The Navy, too, was ready to fight just as hard against departmental unification and the creation of an independent air force. The Navy was not interested in a single Department of National Defense because too much power would be given to one secretary and one commander of the armed forces, and this was expected to affect the Navy negatively. In his April 1945 minority report to the findings of the "Joint Chiefs of Staff Special Committee for Reorganization of National Defense", Admiral James Richardson wrote, "Because the interests and activities of the Army and Navy are so divergent, so great in magnitude, and so distinct in mission, I believe that a single departmental system would inevitably hamper the full and free development of each." Naval leaders were not convinced that a single Department of National

Defense would provide better unity of command. They felt that the Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee system could provide this sufficiently in a forum in which all viewpoints would be heard before the compromise decisions were made in the interest of national goals. What the Navy feared more than the loss of freedom to shape the future development of the Navy was the consequences of an independent air force – an integral element of the single department reorganization scheme. Robert Lovett (Assistant Secretary of War for Air) had been vocal that an independent air force would aspire to take control of all land-based aircraft; this was to include the Navy's air assets for long range reconnaissance and for anti-submarine warfare. Richardson wrote in his April 1945 minority report, "I fear that the creation of an air force on a basis coordinate with the Army and Navy would inevitably draw the Naval Aeronautical Organization out of the fabric of the Navy into which it is so intimately woven." Unlike the inter-war period where both the Army and Navy opposed air power independence, in the post-war reorganization negotiations, the Navy was alone as it fought the Army's desire for a single Department of National Defense and the AAF's aspirations for a separate air force.<sup>14</sup>

Although the AAF and Army both agreed on unifying the military departments into one and on the necessity of creating an independent air force, there were disagreements over the future size of a post-war peacetime air force. War Department planners were of the opinion that American citizens would not accept a large standing army once the war was over. Planners also realized that peacetime appropriations would not be sufficient to pay for a large standing military once hostilities had ended. Hence, in anticipation of inevitable budget reductions, Army leaders made post-war planning decisions that reflected the expectation of smaller funding allotments. Universal Military Training (UMT) seemed the most viable solution for Army planners trying to find ways of being most economical. All able-bodied American men between the ages of

seventeen and twenty would receive one year's military training. Then they would serve five years in the Reserves or join the regular forces immediately after the completion of their training. In time of emergency, Congress would have a large body of trained men to call upon so that the military establishment could quickly expand to 4.5 million service personnel. In the meantime, the professional peace establishment would only be as large as necessary to meet peacetime commitments.<sup>15</sup>

The AAF did not reject UMT, but it did oppose having anything less than an air force in being. Contrary to the Army's approach, AAF leaders did not feel that post-war plans should be predicated on the potential post-war budget. Instead, minimum needs for national defence requirements should be articulated and plans should be built around this minimum. Basing future military structures on possible shrinking budget sizes was a sure way of failing to inform the civilian government about the country's defence requirements. The AAF disagreed with another Army approach as well: the professional peace establishment concept. Because of the nature of air warfare, reserves could not be mobilized immediately; they would need additional training beyond the one year provided through UMT. An air force needed to be large enough in peacetime so as to be prepared to take action immediately against enemy air strikes. The professional air force also had to be large enough in peacetime to provide M-Day (Mobilization Day) task forces. Waiting for reserves to acquire the necessary training up-grades meant there would be no adequate air force to repel attacks and support ground forces. The bedrock minimum the AAF argued it needed to accomplish peacetime missions was 70 groups (400,000 men). Having any less would mean that the country would have to turn to the Navy for air defence. According to Brigadier-General Glen Jamison in his minority report as AAF member of the Special War Department Committee on the Permanent Military Establishment (Bessell

Committee, 28 November 1945), “stripping the air force of the units needed for its mission will be an admission that this country must rely for security in the air on the Naval Air Forces, which is a more expensive and less effective way of attacking the problem of air security.” In the end, the 70 group air force in being was accepted and approved.<sup>16</sup>

Both the AAF and the Army were committed to creating a single Department of National Defense and an independent air force. General Arnold feared that the AAF’s gains made during the Second World War would be lost if the War Department was not reorganized before the wartime structure expired six months after the war’s end. To solidify these gains, the AAF favoured a strong unification bill that gave the Secretary of Defense much administrative power. Being the country’s first line of defence and providing atomic deterrence could not be treated lightly. Hence, AAF leaders expected that the Secretary of Defense would support the air force’s strategic mission (bombing) and provide the AAF with the largest portion of the budget in recognition of the mission’s extreme importance.<sup>17</sup> The Army supported unification because this would ensure rapid, effective, and unified command in war. The service did not see the Joint Chiefs of Staff system as being an effective coordinating agency in the post-war era. Eisenhower believed that unified command had to be generated from the top down in Washington. He was also of the opinion that the military services should be mutually dependent on each other (rather than self-sufficient) and that their budget requirements should not be presented separately so as to avoid service competition for funds. As for the AAF, Eisenhower was convinced that the air arm had proved itself during the war; hence, it deserved co-equal status with the other two services. If Congress did not pass legislation making the AAF an independent service, then Eisenhower planned on making the AAF as equal as possible to the Army and Navy “by going ‘just as far as we can within the legal limits placed on us.’”<sup>18</sup>

The Navy, on the other hand, supported neither the drive for unification nor the move toward an independent air force. Naval officers, as well as the civilian Secretary of the Navy, feared unification for many reasons. There was the fear that this reorganization might result in the loss of the Marine Corps to the Army and a loss of the naval air arm to an independent air force. There was also the belief that the Army and the Air Force might work together against the Navy in some disputes. Naval leadership opposed a single Secretary of Defense, for this was seen as giving excessive power to one man – the civilian secretary. It was also argued that those making decisions would likely be people unfamiliar with the Navy's requirements. If unification must take place, then the Navy wanted the Secretary of Defense to be a coordinator rather than a strong administrator. The Navy wanted the preservation of ““sound administrative autonomy and essential service morale.”” The service was unconvinced by the arguments made in favour of unification – the elimination of duplication and the building of unified command. A single Department of National Defense, Naval leaders argued, would actually create triplication because a third service (the air force) would be in existence. According to Admiral Chester Nimitz (Commander in Chief, Pacific Fleet), ““should the Strategic Air Force be set up as a separate entity, with its own administrative and supply systems, the duplication in services and facilities which is frequently advanced as a reason for merging the Army and Navy would become a possibility of triplication.”” The Navy preferred relying on the existing Joint Chiefs of Staff system to provide unified command. Admiral Ernest King (Chief of Naval Operations) believed that putting three services into one department would be extremely detrimental – the inevitable friction would breed alienation and separation, not unification. The creation of a single department meant the loss of naval autonomy, and the creation of an independent air force threatened the loss of land-based aircraft for reconnaissance and anti-submarine warfare

operations – if not the loss of the entire naval air arm. The post-war reorganization proposals were not to the benefit of the United States Navy.<sup>19</sup>

President Harry Truman was in favour of a single Department of National Defense and an independent air force. On 19 December 1945, he articulated his view of a reorganized military establishment to Congress. A Department of National Defense would be headed by a civilian secretary; within this department would be three branches – the land force, the sea force, and the air force. Truman recognized that this new organization ““will require new viewpoints, new doctrine, and new habits of thinking throughout the departmental structure.”” In January 1946, a Senate Military Affairs Committee tasked a sub-committee with drafting unification legislation. Because the Navy feared that unification held the real possibility of losing the naval air arm to the air force and the Marine Corps to the Army, the Navy opposed this legislation. Frustrated with the impasse, Truman decided that the Secretary of War (Robert Patterson) and the Secretary of the Navy (James Forrestal) would work together in drafting a unification legislation to which all services could agree. The President stipulated that within the Department of National Defense, there would indeed be three military departments, and each would have its own civilian secretary. Unifying direction, control, and authority would be provided by a civilian Secretary of Defense. To calm the Navy’s fears, Truman reaffirmed that the Marine Corps would remain within the naval department and that the Navy would still be free to operate air assets necessary for its missions. The draft of the post-war National Security Act was approved by the Joint Chiefs of Staff in December 1946. President Truman forwarded the draft to Congress on 27 February 1947. The President’s approval of unification legislation (National Security Act of 1947 and Executive Order 9877) was given on 26 July 1947. This brought into being the Office of the Secretary of National Defense and the new independent service, the United States Air



Force (USAF).<sup>20</sup>

With this reorganization, all three services made compromises and gained concessions. The Navy failed to stop the creation of a single department and a separate air force; nonetheless, the Secretary of National Defense was not given the strong powers advocated by the AAF and the Army; the Secretary was more a coordinator than an administrator. The Navy lost neither the Marine Corps nor its naval air arm, and this service remained in charge of naval reconnaissance, anti-submarine warfare, and the protection of shipping. The air aspects of these missions would be coordinated with the Air Force; Air Force personnel, equipment, and facilities would be used if this were more economical and effective. Otherwise, the Navy was under no restrictions on the aircraft it operated for its defence roles. The Navy could also have aircraft for naval air transport. The USAF would be responsible for all other military aviation not already assigned to another service. This included joint operations on land, establishing air supremacy, strategic reconnaissance, support of occupation forces, air lift, and air transport. It had taken almost three decades, but 18 September 1947 marked the establishment of the Department of the Air Force and the USAF.<sup>21</sup>

Air advocates saw themselves as a corporate body with a distinct role worthy of validation in independence; nonetheless, service rivalry precluded the creation of a separate air force. Just after the First World War, both the Army and the Navy opposed the creation of a third service. Army leaders' views changed during the Second World War since they saw first hand what air power could actually – not just theoretically – accomplish. Naval leaders still opposed a separate air force, not because they did not believe in the capabilities of air power, but because the Navy itself did not want to lose the air arm it had developed. The Army air arm's self-recognition as a corporate body was clearly only a first step in the long road to

professionalization; proving itself to the other services and gaining their recognition was the laborious and necessary step in becoming an accepted and independent professional service.

#### Inter-War Clashes Between Government and the Royal Canadian Air Force:

The professionalization of Canada's air force did not receive opposition from the older military services; the Royal Canadian Air Force (RCAF) was created in 1924 as a directorate of the Canadian army; once the air force was large enough to justify a separate existence, the government and the army intended to make the RCAF an independent entity co-equal with the navy and the army. (This transpired in 1937). The obstacle the RCAF had to endure and overcome as it grew as a professional body was government interference. The government of Prime Minister WLM King – and the Department of External Affairs in particular – took great exception to the close relationship the RCAF had with the Royal Air Force (RAF) of Great Britain. The Canadian air force's training, organization, and equipment were logically modeled on British methods for two reasons. Seeing as Canada was a Dominion of the United Kingdom, it was natural to look to the Mother Country for tried and true methods. Canadian airmen of the First World War had also served with the RAF (and its predecessor services – the Royal Flying Corps and the Royal Naval Air Service); hence, it was natural for there to be professional ties between RCAF officers and their former service of employment. Furthermore, it was almost inevitable that if Canada fought another world war again, it would do so alongside Great Britain. Hence, interoperability with the RAF was absolutely necessary. Despite these two facts that guided RCAF leaders' inter-war decision making, the government worked extremely hard toward minimizing the RAF's influence on Canada's air force. This was done under the guise of protecting the secrecy of Canadian government policies, resisting Great Britain's request for guaranteed participation in the next European war, and protecting Canadian sovereignty. The

RCAF's professionalization was stalled by the lack of support from, and cooperation of, the civilian government.

Imperial ties of any sort caused great consternation for the leaders of the Department of External Affairs (DEA). Secretary of State for External Affairs WLM King and Under-Secretary of State OD Skelton worked in concert to block Great Britain's militaristic influence and pressure tactics. The minister and his deputy were of like minds when articulating the Canadian government's policy in foreign affairs: resist all peacetime commitments and alliances for fear of eroding Canadian national autonomy, eliminating Parliament's right to decide military participation in time of war, and alienating French-Canadians again with the possibility of conscription. It was this like-mindedness – isolationism, nationalism, anti-imperialism, and a fear of all things military – that brought the forceful external affairs team of King and Skelton together.

King became the new leader of the Liberal Party in 1919. Two years later, he was prime minister and held the responsibility of Secretary of State for External Affairs. Three overarching aims shaped his government's policies: avoid dividing French and English Canadians again as had occurred during the First World War's conscription crisis, expand Canadian autonomy in foreign affairs and independence from Great Britain, and resist being entangled in any international alliance commitments. He was not of the opinion that Canada could mature as a nation and gain its independence and autonomy by remaining part of an imperial forum where the decision and policy making power was centralized with Great Britain.<sup>22</sup> This vision for Canada's future – Canadian control over foreign policy and a loosening of ties with the United Kingdom – was the same vision OD Skelton had, and it was Skelton's articulation of this vision in 1922 that inspired Prime Minister King to secure this man's help in the DEA.

Vincent Massey, a colleague in the DEA, once described Skelton as having "a strong and lasting suspicion of British policy and an unchanging coldness towards Great Britain.... He was anti-British."<sup>23</sup> Ironically, Skelton had come from a strong imperialist background; his family was Conservative, and the principal of his university (Queen's University in Kingston, Ontario) openly preached in favour of an Imperial Federation. While working on an undergraduate debating assignment, he was – much to his chagrin and distaste – given the task of arguing against an Imperial Federation. Not only did he convince his audience and the judges as to the arguments against such a federation, but he also convinced himself, thus forming his views on Canada's place in the Empire for a lifetime.<sup>24</sup> Nevertheless, he still had an interest in Imperial affairs in 1901, for he wrote Britain's India Civil Service entrance exams became the first Canadian accepted into the India Civil Service; unfortunately, he had to withdraw his candidacy when he could not meet the physical requirements for service.<sup>25</sup>

Skelton's early career was taken up with academia. He received his Master of Arts degree in classics and English in 1899 from Queen's University. He earned a PhD in politics and economics from the University of Chicago in 1908. After graduation, he began teaching political and economic science at Queen's, a career that lasted from 1908 until 1925. He served as the university's Dean of Arts from 1919 to 1925.<sup>26</sup> It was during his time teaching at Queen's that Prime Minister King became aware of Skelton's views on imperialism and Canadian foreign policy. King happened to attend the January 1922 Canadian Club luncheon in Ottawa where Skelton was giving the keynote address. Skelton spoke on "Canada and Foreign Policy" and advocated that Canada must gain control over its own foreign affairs. Prime Minister Lloyd George of Great Britain had recently claimed that "the instrument for the foreign policy of the Empire is the British foreign office." Skelton argued that Canada should not let itself lose any of

the autonomy it had gained in recent years. Canadian foreign policy was mainly economic policy, and this clearly could not be separated from domestic policy. The keynote speaker was not advocating isolationism for Canada, but rather caution when entering the international arena: "Let us take our part, but let it be a modest part and at the same time an intelligent part."<sup>27</sup>

Prime Minister King called the talk "an excellent address," and he told Skelton that there might very well be a position for him in the DEA someday. In his diary, King wrote, "Skelton's address would make an excellent foundation for Canadian policy on External Affairs, and Skelton himself would make an excellent man for the department .... He certainly has the knowledge and the right point of view."<sup>28</sup> Thus began the working relationship between King and Skelton which lasted close to twenty years. As the two men worked to ensure Canadian autonomy in foreign policy and external affairs, Skelton had unrivalled access to the prime minister, became a strong influence on domestic policy and political matters, and was even called the *de facto* Deputy Prime Minister.<sup>29</sup>

Skelton was not immediately offered a job with the DEA, but he was asked by the prime minister to attend the 1923 Imperial Conference as King's adviser. In 1924, Skelton was hired as a consultant on foreign affairs, and in the same year, he attended the League of Nations' meetings in Geneva.<sup>30</sup> King noted Skelton's departure for Geneva on 27 August 1924 in his diary with great sadness, for he had grown extremely attached to, and reliant on, Skelton, even in these early days of their teamwork: "Skelton leaves today for Geneva – a loss to me to have him go just when retained but [that is quite] advisable. He has been no end of help, and his coming into the department has eased my mind and burden beyond words. If I had had him from the start, it would have meant everything."<sup>31</sup> OD Skelton became the Under-Secretary of State for External Affairs – King's deputy minister – in 1925.

Prime Minister King began expressing a separate and autonomous Canadian foreign policy very shortly after being elected as prime minister in 1921. King refused to provide any assistance in 1922 for Great Britain and its confrontation with Turkey.<sup>32</sup> When signing the Halibut Treaty with the United States in 1923, King insisted that Canada would sign alone – without the signature of the British ambassador. The prime minister wanted Canada to have the right to negotiate and sign international treaties by itself.<sup>33</sup> In the early years of the inter-war period, King used the Imperial Conferences to articulate Canada's isolationist policies. Accompanied by his advisor Skelton in 1923, the Canadian prime minister informed his audience "that minor imperial crises had ceased to be the *causus belli* for any government of which he happened to be the head."<sup>34</sup> While preparing for this conference, King had not been impressed with Great Britain's centralizing tendencies. In his diary, he wrote,

It is quite clear [the] whole purpose of the Conference is a centralizing imperial policy, first [about] foreign policy to be made in London and next for central control of Navy and distribution of costs of upkeep among outlying dominions. I was quite incensed when I read Skelton's memo on naval policy to see [that the] Admiralty proposed to issue a plan to the several dominions. An outrageous interference with the autonomy and self-government of the dominions.<sup>35</sup>

For the 1926 Imperial Conference, Skelton wrote a departmental position paper that focused on the link between foreign policy and national interests. Skelton asserted that Canada's primary foreign affairs concerns would probably arise out of relations with the United States. Questions about boundary lakes and rivers, development of Niagara and St Lawrence power, and St Lawrence River navigation were the issues of concern to Canada, not squabbles Great Britain might have with its European neighbours. The DEA position for the 1926 Imperial Conference was that Empire members should not be expected to participate in foreign affairs that did not affect their national interests.<sup>36</sup> Prime Minister King and External Affairs officials, at the 1926 conference, contributed heavily to the production of a statement that defined dominions as "autonomous Communities within the British Empire, equal in status, ... united by a common

allegiance to the Crown." The DEA was making grounds in redefining the British Commonwealth as an association of equal and independent nations.<sup>37</sup>

The Canadian government continued to distance itself from Empire and European affairs throughout the 1930s, despite the obvious threats to international peace by German, Italian, and Japanese aggression. In 1935, the DEA acknowledged that Canada was less concerned with the rise of Hitler and Nazism than Great Britain was: "distance and the second-hand character of the danger combine with our own besetting economic problems to give the problem a smaller arc on our horizon."<sup>38</sup> The newly elected Liberal government of 1935 not only had to discern how to take care of an entire nation enduring the scourge of economic depression, but the King government also had to deal with Italy's 1935 invasion of Ethiopia and the League of Nation's debate over economic sanctions and oil embargoes. Under-Secretary of State Skelton could see that strong ties to Great Britain would force Canada to go to war again, and he feared that internal divisions in Canada between French and English Canadians might lead to civil war. Consequently, he advised King to avoid international commitments.<sup>39</sup> Skelton did not think that Canada should be advising the League of Nations to impose oil sanctions on Italy's Mussolini: "he repeatedly stressed that as a small power, [Canada's] proposals in foreign policy should be intelligent but modest, in accordance with [Canada's] resources. He feared responsibility without control."<sup>40</sup> King followed his adviser's words and reprimanded Canada's acting delegate to the League of Nations – Walter Riddell – for exceeding his authority and advocating that oil sanctions should be imposed on Italy. King's government did not support this proposed policy and distanced itself immediately.<sup>41</sup>

Skelton was growing disillusioned with the League of Nations seeing as it exerted little power and influence over ambitious powers. By 1936, King viewed the League as having only a

conciliation and mediation role.<sup>42</sup> Hence, there was little support in Canada's government and the DEA for a League of Nations war. When considering whether or not Canada would go to battle if Great Britain became entangled in such a war, the DEA acknowledged, in 1936, that “opposition to war, any war, is growing in Canada .... Canadian sentiment is definitely becoming more Canadian, less and less imperialist. After taking part in two wars ... because Great Britain was at war, the reluctance to sacrifice Canada for any outside interest whatever is growing.”<sup>43</sup> A DEA policy document of February 1937 clearly asserted that “Canada does not go for military alliances. Such a policy is not feasible or necessary in her circumstances. She tries to pursue external policies that will minimize the cost of her defence problem.” The writer also argued that Canada was not prepared to “dictate how Europeans should live and divide their continent [, for Canada is not] ... prepared to invade their shores if they should decline [Canada’s] advice.”<sup>44</sup> Another 1937 DEA document acknowledged that Canada was not strong enough to be able to prevent future wars; nonetheless, Great Britain and the United States could conceivably reproduce the balance of power that prevented war between 1815 and 1914. The role of the Dominions should be to bring about this Anglo-American cooperation.<sup>45</sup>

As heightening tensions in Europe signaled the increased likelihood of another war, the Canadian government’s isolationism led to overt refusals to help the Mother Country prepare for the looming conflict. When the Chiefs of Staff Sub-Committee of the Imperial Defence Committee (in Great Britain) proposed in March 1937 that Canada should establish munitions manufacturing facilities, Skelton denounced the scheme and its consequences. Such factories in peacetime would undoubtedly be expected to expand production in time of war – hence commitment to war would be automatic. Canadian autonomy would be threatened; Canada’s defence policy of only being responsible for local defence measures only would be contravened;



and the authority of the military would be enhanced: “participation by agreement with [the] UK government in such a programme in peace time commits us to participate in war because of claims of honour, creation of vested interests in such trade, and developing staff conversations.”<sup>46</sup>

By March 1939, it was clear to most of the world that war was only months away. In one breath, King was preparing the House of Commons to go to war, promising that conscription would not be re-instated so that a united nation would be at Great Britain's side.<sup>47</sup> In the next breath, King disparaged the idea that Canada should be expected to go to war every twenty years for "a continent that cannot run itself."<sup>48</sup> On 25 August 1939, only one week before Great Britain was again at war, Skelton wrote of his objections with Britain's erroneous and incompetent policy concerning Poland. The Under-Secretary of State for External Affairs could not agree with Great Britain's policy of unilaterally guaranteeing the existence of Eastern European countries, for the promises were clearly empty gestures to desperate people willing to accept illusions. From across the Atlantic Ocean, Skelton could see that

not only is there no likelihood of peace being preserved by the Polish guarantee; there is no likelihood of Polish independence being preserved if war comes. How can Britain and France protect Poland? They cannot send her military aid across Germany or through the neutral states; they can give little effective naval help in the Baltic; some air squadrons might be sent, but their aid could not be decisive.

In Skelton's assessment, this policy had not deterred Hitler – as it was meant to do – but rather it had strengthened him. Not only was Skelton sceptical of the logic behind Great Britain's foreign policy, but he was also quite dismayed over the prospect of Canada's future being determined by this loathsome policy without Canada's consultation: "My objection is to our fate being determined without any participation or agreement on the part of the government of Canada in the commitments made, being determined by policies and decisions of other governments without even the polite formality of consultation." Despite two decades of Canadian officials

asserting the principle of autonomy and the independent status of all Dominions, the Mother Country had either not been listening, was merely paying lip service to those expressions, or simply did not understand what autonomy meant. Skelton fumed that, concerning war in Poland, "the British government with bland arrogance has assumed that whatever its policy..., we could be counted on to trot behind, blindly and dumbly, into chaos.... Does the record of London policy give grounds for the policy of 'trust mother'?"<sup>49</sup>

The RCAF's ties with Great Britain and the King government's pursuit of autonomy did not really clash until the late 1930s, when the possibility of war in Europe again became more and more likely. Up until then, the air force went about its daily duties (training a small cadre for a professional force, flying civil government air operations for numerous government departments). Cuts to military appropriations were the government's most frequent demand during the early inter-war period. Because the services were not proposing any elaborate, imperialistic, or expansionist plans, the DEA had no reason to interfere with the Department of National Defence (DND); interactions between the two departments were for routine matters. It was in early 1937 that the RCAF's cultivation of imperial ties was challenged by a government determined to keep Great Britain and its militaristic influences at a safe distance. The Canadian Chief of the General Staff (CGS) had been exchanging liaison letters with the RAF's Chief of the Air Staff since 1934. (The tradition of Canadian and British services corresponding on a regular basis dated back to 1909). These letters shared information on equipment procurement, scientific research, organization, and defence policy in an informal and collegial manner – one service chief to another. Suddenly in April 1937, Major-General EC Ashton (the Canadian CGS) informed the RAF that “with a view of preventing any conflict of my personal opinion with government policy, it has now been decided by the government that, in future, my liaison letters

to you shall be forwarded through our Department of External Affairs.”<sup>50</sup>

Concern over the existence of exchanges of information and intelligence between the Canadian services and the Mother Country had been brought to the government's attention – with a stinging condemnation in 1934 – year previous. The Canadian Institute of International Affairs complained that “the Department of National Defence ... is the only Canadian government department which has the right to communicate direct with its opposite number in London, without having to use the channel of the Department of External Affairs. While direct communication on routine matters might be desirable, all communications involving defence policy should pass through the hands of the Department of External Affairs.” This change in procedure would prevent the DND from concealing intelligence from its civilian masters.<sup>51</sup> Despite the suggestion by the Institute, no changes were implemented, and the Canadian services continued to exchange letters freely and directly with their British counterparts in London – that is until 1937.

The Chiefs of Staff Sub-Committee of the Imperial Defence Committee sent two policy papers to the Dominions in preparation for the 1937 Imperial Conference; it was these two papers that sparked the crisis for the Canadian government. The policy papers contained the Imperial Power's recommendations for the Dominions' foreign policy stances. The papers not only suggested how the Dominions could (and should) best cooperate with the Mother Country in preparing for war, but the British military officials also talked about the Canadian government's setting-up of an imperial supply organization and the government's intention to expand it.<sup>52</sup>

Under-Secretary of State Skelton was incensed at the fact that military planners – and imperial military planners at that – dared suggest policy pursuits for civil governments. Skelton

asked, "Is it for the military staff to expound policies? .... Is it not for the civil arm of government to lay down the scheme of policy and liabilities, and then for the military to submit military plans accordingly?"<sup>53</sup> Prime Minister King was not so much taken up with the apparent reversal of roles in the civil-military relationship as he was taken aback by the British military planners' references to Canadian government policies on establishing and expounding a supply organization for the event of war. The prime minister was not even aware of any communications with the United Kingdom that could justify these papers' statements. To King's knowledge, his government had not considered – let alone approved – the creation of a supply network which would liaise with the United Kingdom's organization.<sup>54</sup>

Actually, British military planners were not making up a fictitious Canadian consent to establishing a supply organization for war. It turned out that Canada's Minister for National Defence – Ian Mackenzie – simply had not bothered to mention to the prime minister that Canada's Chief of the General Staff (CGS) had consulted with the minister and received his authorization to pursue the British proposal. Focusing attention away from this omission on his part, Mackenzie suggested that perhaps the exchange of liaison letters should not longer be permitted since the British documents "almost refer to questions of government policy in Canada."<sup>55</sup>

King, consequently, instructed the Minister of National Defence to review all liaison letters exchanged since 1929. In doing so, Mackenzie found numerous aspects of these letters disturbing. There was a persistent assumption that it was desirable for Canada's military and air force to be "modeled as closely as possible on those of Great Britain." General AGL McNaughton, the former CGS, also entered dangerous waters by making "continual reference to the sending of an expeditionary force." Mackenzie did have to admit, though, that any

discussion of the possibility of Great Britain and Canada cooperating militarily in the time of war had always been qualified with the phrase "assuming this to be the policy of his majesty's government in Canada." The minister also acknowledged the benefits accrued for Canada's armed forces from the exchanges on technological and scientific data about weapons and equipment. Although his report "conceded that much valuable information is exchanged, and this is of great benefit to us in Canada," he was unsettled that "the discussion of possible policies in such liaison letters may be fraught with great danger especially when they are not within the council of the government." Instead of recommending their discontinuance, though, he wanted the letters forwarded through the DEA for review, vetting, and transmission to the British authorities.<sup>56</sup> The recommendation was adopted by Cabinet, thus affecting all liaison letters of all the military services.<sup>57</sup>

British officials did not want their "demi-official exchange of military information and ideas between branches of the same staff" turned into official communiqués that had to pass through official channels. Britain's CGS wanted to continue addressing his correspondence to his Canadian counterparts, just as he would be doing for the other dominions; nonetheless, he did not object to his letters being shown to the DEA. Canada's CGS Major-General EC Ashton found this arrangement to be entirely satisfactory, but members of King's government felt otherwise. There would be no compromise: "the procedure previously endorsed by the Canadian government would be the one in future adhered to." Liaison letters took on official status, and they had to be transmitted through and reviewed by the DEA.<sup>58</sup>

As late as October 1937, British officials were still trying to understand the change they hoped they could still overturn. One official protested to Britain's Dominions Office that the Chief of the Air Staff had been sending personal letters to his dominion counterparts for years, in

which he discussed such confidential details as organization, personnel selection, scientific research, and technical developments. It was not understood why suddenly, after the Imperial Conference of 1937, Canada's CGS wanted the letters exchanged through the Dominions Office and the DEA: "it seems ... rather a pity that they should now be formalized into official communications passing through a number of government departments, and I wondered if you knew of any reasons why the Canadians were making this request."<sup>59</sup>

The Dominions Office responded that the Canadian government decided on this change in policy before the Imperial Conference; hence, it was not a reaction to something that had occurred at the conference (as was originally suspected). The changes were made to resolve the constitutional difficulties of the former system: "we gathered that it was bound up with the idea that direct staff discussions might in some way be regarded an obstacle to the freedom of action which is always claimed for the Canadian Parliament in arriving at a decision as to whether they are to participate in any war in which other parts of the Empire may be involved." As to the likelihood that this change in procedure would be – or could be – reversed, the Dominions Office advised "it is very unlikely that the Canadian government will change their attitude in this matter.... The result might be some even more restrictive decision than the present one."<sup>60</sup> By early November 1937, Britain's Air Ministry acquiesced "that we must fall in with the procedure for which the Canadian government has asked."<sup>61</sup>

Although it is clear that the Canadian government of the 1930s wanted to curtail Great Britain from dictating Canada's defence policies, and although the King government wanted to assert Canada's independence and autonomy, the fear of imperialism was probably not the only – nor the main – motivating factor for subordinating the DND to the DEA. Contributing this action to the civilian government wanting to assert its rightful authority over the military establishment

may even be understating the intentions of the government. In light of the fact that the military made some perceptive assessments of Canadian public opinion, and in light of the fact that the military did not try to over-extend itself by rushing into Imperial commitments in the 1930s, it appears as though the government unfairly dismissed the military's viewpoint and advisory capability.

In a liaison letter of December 1932, the Canadian CGS acknowledged that minor conflicts involving Great Britain probably did not need Dominion assistance; nonetheless, he recognized that public opinion might demand a show of Empire solidarity by sending a force.<sup>62</sup> The Canadian CGS, in a liaison letter of October 1933, described Canadian's apathetic attitude in times of peace: "a knowledge of Canada's attitude in the past is essential to an appreciation of her probable action in the future." This attitude was normally replaced by Imperial sentiment in times of emergency.<sup>63</sup> By January 1937, the CGS was warning the Minister of National Defence about the deteriorating international situation. Canada needed to be able to protect itself against air attacks, and the country needed to be able to defend its neutrality if war broke out between the United States and the Far East.<sup>64</sup> In April 1937, the Senior Air Officer called for the manufacture of aircraft equipment in Canada: "not a single item of air force equipment required for defence purposes is manufactured in Canada from materials available in the country at the present time." In the event of war, such supplies would be available from neither Great Britain (as that country would be rearming itself) nor from the United States because of its neutrality laws.<sup>65</sup>

The advice and proposed policies of Canada's military were sound: military officials were calling for the protection of neutrality, and they were encouraging the nation to be self-sufficient in manufacturing. These suggestions were consistent with Canadian nationalism and

asserting Canadian sovereignty. Nonetheless, the allegedly nationalist government was unwilling to embrace these ideas. Canada's military leaders had correctly gauged Canadian public opinion and were willing to accept the fact that Canadians' Imperialist sentiment would remain latent until a war actually erupted. Nevertheless, government officials, who also underlined the isolationist tendencies of Canada's citizens, did not see military leaders as men of like minds. The military was not challenging the government's policies; the military was often of the same opinion. Nonetheless, the government showed no respect for the military's advisory capacity.

As late as 1938, the government was dismissing the military's calls for homeland defence preparations because the threats presented were too vague and hypothetical. On 7 January, Chief of the General Staff Major-General EC Ashton forwarded the Minister of National Defence a survey of the military's requirements. In this memo, the General Ashton reflected that "the international situation [has] deteriorated in an alarming degree. The possibility of a major world war from which it was at least doubtful Canada could reasonably hope to remain aloof [is] daily becoming more apparent. It [is] imperative that we should take stock of our military position without delay."<sup>66</sup> Loring Christie of the DEA severely criticized the paper in which the General Staff called for the immediate mobilization of "the fortress garrisons and two divisions to guard against sea and air borne attack and unforeseen contingencies." Christie took issue with the paper's presentation of Canada's defence position as "grave", "dangerous", and "alarming" in the face of the "the menace of enemy air action." These warnings and threats were too vague; hence, according to the DEA, this warranted the dismissal of the paper's recommendations:

That the world is disturbed and that Canada may be affected in some sense cannot be disputed; but it would be easier to think about and deal effectively with ... the external factor ... [if it] could be more narrowly stated in the form of an hypothesis, or alternative hypothesis, as to the specific source and extent of the attack on Canada against which we are to plan and remedy our defencelessness.



(Compare the United Kingdom's Chiefs of Staff paper submitted to the Imperial Conference setting forth various specific hypotheses respecting attacks by Germany, Italy, and Japan against which they are planning)... This lack of a more specific hypothesis (or alternative) complicates any firm dealing with the paper's main practical conclusions.

Mr Christie himself acknowledged that the government was fully aware of the international threats by Germany, Italy, and Japan, for these had been clearly articulated at the 1937 Imperial Conference. Hence, the Canadian General Staff's failure to reiterate these threats in the Canadian context did not preclude the government from understanding "the paper's main practical conclusions."<sup>67</sup> The DEA was merely dismissing – yet again and for no sound reason – the military's advisory capacity. The challenge is discerning the true reasons for the military being so unfairly dismissed.

Political historians usually praise the governance of Prime Minister King as he guided a nation through the dark years of depression and even darker years of world war. The country he was representing had been appalled by the First World War, thus fuelling an isolationist sentiment during the inter-war period, in vain hopes that avoiding too much contact with European affairs would enable Canadians to escape being drawn helplessly into future conflicts. The First World War's conscription crisis also left deep cultural divisions between English and French Canadians. King is lauded by historians for his astuteness in leading a divided and weary nation; he knew not to pursue radical policies that would alarm the nation's constituents. Voters were not demanding much in the way of policies, so King did not lead them into more than they asked for.

King was able to turn the resistance to international commitments into a foreign policy that contributed to Canada's maturation from colony to nation. Not becoming entangled in Great Britain's affairs in Europe was Canada's way of showing independence of thought; foreign policy made in Canada was an expression of national sovereignty. Resisting close affiliation with

imperial bodies and foreign policies created in London was a means of ensuring that Canada was not reduced to colonial status again. The policy of not making international commitments meant that Canada did not have to plan or fund military commitments, that Canadians were not worrying about the consequences of going to war again, and that the government was enabling the country to gain and assert its independence as a self-governing nation. This resulted in King's political success – four terms as prime minister, three of these terms being consecutive. Historians praise King for knowing how to play the political game and for contributing to the longevity of the Liberal Party's staying in power.

With this analysis in mind, it is comprehensible as to why the government did not warm to the RCAF's imperial connections and interest in being capable of providing international contributions. Imperial ties and international commitments went against the electorate's will; it threatened national unity; it muted national sovereignty; and it contradicted the Liberal Party's game plan for re-election. Nevertheless, the historical record does not show that King's policy deserves nothing but praise. In fact, a reconsideration of the record shows that King's myopic determination is worthy of condemnation. The Canadian government was illogically anti-military, to the point where sound suggestions by military officials were dismissed simply because they came from the mouths of those dressed in uniforms. The civilian government had an agenda – to keep Canada away from military alliances and future war commitments; the attitude of the government was that only civilians could bring this aspiration to fruition. Those in uniform were immediately suspected of conspiring to entangle Canada in the imperial web and inevitably bring the country into war. Hence, military officials were simply shunted aside.

Not seeing military leaders as men of like minds and potential partners in building a dynamic nation can also be contributed to the small visions that the civilian leaders had for

Canada. King, his Cabinet, the Liberal Party, OD Skelton, and the DEA did not aspire to make Canada a great power; they did not envision the nation playing a prominent role in working towards – and maintaining – peace in a world where new technological developments were bringing increased globalization and great military threats.

In fact, avoiding such a contribution was the government's explicit policy. OD Skelton saw Canada as a small power, and he consciously devised foreign policies that fit Canada's size; growth and expansion of power were not his goals. WLM King's reaction to the new direction into which post-Second World War DEA officials were taking Canada showed how small King's vision had been. The younger blood of the department had more dynamic ideas and were taking Canada out onto the international scene. In 1947, Canadians were serving on a United Nations commission supervising Korean elections. In 1949, Canada joined NATO – the culmination of Escott Reid's work in the DEA on the idea of a collective security alliance. Lester Pearson, as Minister of External Affairs, had Canada contribute forces to the UN's army in Korea.<sup>68</sup> King watched with trepidation as the DEA had Canada deliberately step out onto the world stage; "to King, this was meddling in affairs that Canada knew nothing about, that were the preserve of the Great Powers."<sup>69</sup>

As seen in the early years of both air forces in North America, professionalism is a very political process. Professionalization does not end with a military service recognizing itself as a professional body and corporate entity: it only begins there. A military service cannot make any policy-level decisions about the direction of its future without government approval, and this approval often hinges on the acquiescence of the other military services. Although the airmen in the United States army had a vision immediately after the First World War of an independent air force carrying out strategic bombing missions, they had to convince first the army, and then the

Navy, that creation of a separate air force was in the nation's best interest. Only once service rivalry was overcome did the government grant the air force independence and control over its own destiny. In the case of the RCAF, service jealousy was not an issue; rather, the government's determination to pursue an isolationist policy resulted in the government working to hinder the air force (and the entire military) from making substantial war contingency plans and from cultivating ties with the Imperial military services. This impediment of government interference was not removed until the imperative of war demanded that mobilization take place as quickly and as efficiently as possible. Only then did the government accept the military's advice as expert. Today's military services can benefit from the hard lessons that the previous services had to learn. Professionalization cannot go forward without service support or government cooperation. The army, navy, and air force in both Canada and the United States would do well to remember that professionalization is a political process in which allies are needed in the public, the other services, and the government. Without unified spirit and goals, without the ability to inform a nation's defence and foreign policy by experts in the field, military professionalism truly falls short of its potential power.

## Endnotes

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A previous version of this paper was presented by Rachel Lea Heide BA (Hons), MA at the Conference of US Army Historians, Crystal City, Virginia 14 July 2004

<sup>1</sup> Stephen J. Harris, *Canadian Brass: The Making of a Professional Army, 1860 - 1939* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1988), pp. 3-5.

<sup>2</sup> Harris, *Canadian Brass*, p. 6.

<sup>3</sup> Harris, *Canadian Brass*, pp. 24, 80, 87, 89, 94.

<sup>4</sup> Harris, *Canadian Brass*, pp. 7, 103, 120, 125, 137.

<sup>5</sup> Herman S. Wolk, *Toward Independence: The Emergency of the US Air Force 1945 - 1947* (Washington: Air Force History and Museums Program, 1996), pp. 1-2; Jeffrey G. Barlow, *Revolt of the Admirals: The Fight for Naval Aviation 1945 - 1950* (Washington: Naval Historical Center, 1994), p. 4.

<sup>6</sup> Wolk, *Toward Independence*, p. 2; Barlow, *Revolt of the Admirals*, pp. 4-5.

<sup>7</sup> Wolk, *Toward Independence*, p. 2; Barlow, *Revolt of the Admirals*, pp. 11-12.

<sup>8</sup> Herman S. Wolk, *Planning and Organizing the Postwar Air Force 1943 - 1947* (Washington: USAF Office of Air Force History, 1984), pp. 13-14; Herman S. Wolk, *The Struggle for Air Force Independence 1943 - 1947* (Washington: Air Force History and Museums Program, 1997), p. 22; Wolk, *Toward Independence*, p. 3.

<sup>9</sup> Wolk, *The Struggle for Air Force Independence*, p. 19.

<sup>10</sup> Wolk, *The Struggle for Air Force Independence*, pp. 19-20.

<sup>11</sup> Wolk, *The Struggle for Air Force Independence*, p. 23; Wolk, *Toward Independence*, pp. 4-6; quotation from p. 6.

<sup>12</sup> Wolk, *Toward Independence*, p. 7; Wolk, *The Struggle for Air Force Independence*, pp. 25-26; quotation from p. 26

<sup>13</sup> Wolk, *The Struggle for Air Force Independence*, pp. 37, 46; Barlow, *Revolt of the Admirals*, pp. 15, 21, 23-24.

<sup>14</sup> Barlow, *Revolt of the Admirals*, pp. 25, 30; Wolk, *Toward Independence*, pp. 10-11; Wolk, *The Struggle for Air Force Independence*, pp. 39-40; quotations from Appendix 3, p. 272.

<sup>15</sup> Wolk, *The Struggle for Air Force Independence*, pp. 57, 58, 63.

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<sup>16</sup> Wolk *The Struggle for Air Force Independence*, pp. 59, 60, 62, 63, 68, 74, 76, 81, 82; quotation from Appendix 4, p. 280.

<sup>17</sup> Wolk, *The Struggle for Air Force Independence*, pp. 87, 113, 118, 178; Wolk, *Planning and Organizing*, p. 211.

<sup>18</sup> Wolk, *The Struggle for Air Force Independence*, pp. 88, 98, 103, 104, 106; quotation from p. 160.

<sup>19</sup> Wolk, *The Struggle for Air Force Independence*, pp. 102, 163, 183; quotation from p. 165.

<sup>20</sup> Wolk, *The Struggle for Air Force Independence*, pp. 184, 196, 197; Wolk, *Toward Independence*, p. 26; quotation from p. 17

<sup>21</sup> Wolk, *The Struggle for Air Force Independence*, pp. 85, 107, 167, 170, 172, 178, 184; Wolk, *Toward Independence*, p. 18, 19; quotation from p. 17.

<sup>22</sup> “Our Past: The History of the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade” on *Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade* website: <http://www.dfait-maeci.gc.ca/department/history/King-en.asp> [accessed on 25 March 2004].

<sup>23</sup> James Eayrs, *In Defence of Canada*. Volume II: *Appeasement and Rearmament* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1965), p. 8.

<sup>24</sup>24. “W.A. Mackintosh on O.D. Skelton” on *Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade* website: [http://defait-maeci.gc.ca/department/skelton/mackintosh\\_about-en.asp](http://defait-maeci.gc.ca/department/skelton/mackintosh_about-en.asp) [accessed on 25 March 2004]; “O.D. Skelton, 1878-1941” on *Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade* website: [http://www.defait-maeci.gc.ca/department/skelton/mackintosh\\_obit-en/asp](http://www.defait-maeci.gc.ca/department/skelton/mackintosh_obit-en/asp) [accessed 25 March 2004].

<sup>25</sup> Norman Hillmer, “O.D. Skelton: Ambition Under Control” on *Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade* website: <http://defait-maeci.gc.ca/department/skelton/hillmer-en.asp> [accessed on 25 March 2004].

<sup>26</sup> “Skelton, Oscar Douglas” on *Queen’s University* website: [http://qnc.queensu.ca/Encyclopedia/Queen\\_s\\_Encyclopedia\\_S/queen\\_s\\_encycolpedia\\_s.html#Skelton](http://qnc.queensu.ca/Encyclopedia/Queen_s_Encyclopedia_S/queen_s_encycolpedia_s.html#Skelton) [accessed 25 March 2004].

<sup>27</sup> “W.A. Mackintosh on O.D. Skelton” on *Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade* website: [http://defait-maeci.gc.ca/department/skelton/mackintosh\\_about-en.asp](http://defait-maeci.gc.ca/department/skelton/mackintosh_about-en.asp) [accessed on 25 March 2004]; Norman Hillmer, “O.D. Skelton: Ambition Under Control” on *Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade* website: <http://defait-maeci.gc.ca/department/skelton/hillmer-en.asp> [accessed on 25 March 2004]; “Oscar Douglas Skelton” on *National Archives of Canada* website:

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[http://www.collectionscanada.ca/05/0532/05320113/053201130440\\_e.html](http://www.collectionscanada.ca/05/0532/05320113/053201130440_e.html) [accessed 25 March 2004]; Hector Mackenzie, "Skelton's Boys: Recruitment for the Foreign Service of Canada, 1925-1941" on *Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade* website: <http://www.dfait-maeci.gc.ca/department/skelton/mackenzie-en.asp> [accessed 25 March 2004].

<sup>28</sup> 21 January 1922, W.L.M. King Diary Entry on *National Archives of Canada* website: [http://www.collectionscanada.ca/05/0532/053201\\_e.html](http://www.collectionscanada.ca/05/0532/053201_e.html) [accessed 27 March 2004].

<sup>29</sup> Norman Hillmer, "O.D. Skelton: Ambition Under Control" on *Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade* website: <http://dfait-maeci.gc.ca/department/skelton/hillmer-en.asp> [accessed on 25 March 2004].

<sup>30</sup> "W.A. Mackintosh on O.D. Skelton" on *Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade* website: [http://dfait-maeci.gc.ca/department/skelton/mackintosh\\_about-en.asp](http://dfait-maeci.gc.ca/department/skelton/mackintosh_about-en.asp) [accessed on 25 March 2004]; "Oscar Douglas Skelton" on *National Archives of Canada* website: [http://www.collectionscanada.ca/05/0532/05320113/053201130440\\_e.html](http://www.collectionscanada.ca/05/0532/05320113/053201130440_e.html) [accessed 25 March 2004].

<sup>31</sup> 27 August 1924, W.L.M. King Diary Entry on *National Archives of Canada* website: [http://www.collectionscanada.ca/05/0532/053201\\_e.html](http://www.collectionscanada.ca/05/0532/053201_e.html) [accessed 27 March 2004].

<sup>32</sup> "Our Past: The History of the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade" on *Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade* website: <http://www.dfait-maeci.gc.ca/department/history/King-en.asp> [accessed on 25 March 2004].

<sup>33</sup> "Our Past: The History of the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade" on *Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade* website: <http://www.dfait-maeci.gc.ca/department/history/King-en.asp> [accessed on 25 March 2004].

<sup>34</sup> James Eayrs, *In Defence of Canada. Volume I: From the Great War to the Great Depression* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1964), p. 80.

<sup>35</sup> 11 September 1923, W.L.M. King Diary Entry on *National Archives of Canada* website: [http://www.collectionscanada.ca/05/0532/053201\\_e.html](http://www.collectionscanada.ca/05/0532/053201_e.html) [accessed 27 March 2004].

<sup>36</sup> "Notes on Imperial Relations in 1926" by OD Skelton (Under-Secretary of State for External Affairs), OD Skelton Papers, National Archives of Canada MG 30 D33 Volume 3 File 3-14 External Affairs Correspondence, Memos, Notes 1926.

<sup>37</sup> "Our Past: The History of the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade" on *Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade* website: <http://www.dfait-maeci.gc.ca/department/history/King-en.asp> [accessed on 25 March 2004].

<sup>38</sup> "Foreign Policy Discussion in London 1935" by OD Skelton (Under-Secretary of State for External Affairs), OD Skelton Papers, National Archives of Canada MG 30 D33 Volume 4 File

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4-20 External Affairs, Correspondence, and Position Papers 1935.

<sup>39</sup> Norman Hillmer, "O.D. Skelton: Ambition Under Control" on *Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade* website: <http://defait-maeci.gc.ca/department/skelton/hillmer-en.asp> [accessed on 25 March 2004].

<sup>40</sup> "W.A. Mackintosh on O.D. Skelton" on *Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade* website: [http://defait-maeci.gc.ca/department/skelton/mackintosh\\_about-en.asp](http://defait-maeci.gc.ca/department/skelton/mackintosh_about-en.asp) [accessed on 25 March 2004]

<sup>41</sup> "Our Past: The History of the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade" on *Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade* website: <http://www.dfait-maeci.gc.ca/department/history/King-en.asp> [accessed on 25 March 2004].

<sup>42</sup> "Our Past: The History of the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade" on *Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade* website: <http://www.dfait-maeci.gc.ca/department/history/King-en.asp> [accessed on 25 March 2004]; "W.A. Mackintosh on O.D. Skelton" on *Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade* website: [http://defait-maeci.gc.ca/department/skelton/mackintosh\\_about-en.asp](http://defait-maeci.gc.ca/department/skelton/mackintosh_about-en.asp) [accessed on 25 March 2004].

<sup>43</sup> September 1936 "Canada and British War: Extract from Notes Prepared for League Assembly", National Archives of Canada RG 25 Volume 818 File 664 Reel 2203 Office of the Under-Secretary of State for External Affairs 1934-1939, pp. 16-19.

<sup>44</sup> 16 February 1937 "Re Monroe Doctrine", National Archives of Canada RG 25 Volume 721 File 47 Reel T1747 Office of the Under-Secretary of State for External Affairs 1936-1948, pp. 61-63.

<sup>45</sup> 17 March 1937 Letter to LC Christie (Department of External Affairs), National Archives of Canada RG 25 Volume 1879 File 318-L-36 Imperial Conference 1937 – Documents on Foreign Policy.

<sup>46</sup> Eayrs, *Appeasement and Rearmament*, pp. 116-8.

<sup>47</sup> 30 March 1939, *Dominion of Canada Official Report of Debates of House of Commons* (Ottawa: J.O. Patenaude, Printer to the King's Most Excellent Majesty, 1940), p. 2126.

<sup>48</sup> Eayrs, *Appeasement and Rearmament*, p. 75.

<sup>49</sup> 25 August 1939 "Canada and the Polish War: A Personal Note" by OD Skelton (Under-Secretary of State for External Affairs), OD Skelton Papers, National Archives of Canada MG30 D33 Volume 5 File 5-12 External Affairs Correspondence, Foreign Policy Statements 1939.

<sup>50</sup> 20 April 1937 Letter from Major-General E.C. Ashton (Canadian Liaison RCAF) to Air Chief



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Marshal Edward Ellington (Chief of the Air Staff RAF), Directorate of History and Heritage Air 2/1585 Liaison Correspondence.

<sup>51</sup> Eayrs, *From the Great War*, p. 92.

<sup>52</sup> Eayrs, *Appeasement and Rearmament*, p. 82; C.P. Stacey, *Arms, Men, and Governments: The War Policies of Canada 1939-1945* (Ottawa: Queen's Printer, 1970), p. 73.

<sup>53</sup> Stacey, *Arms, Men, and Governments*, p. 74.

<sup>54</sup> Stacey, *Arms, Men, and Governments*, p. 75.

<sup>55</sup> Stacey, *Arms, Men, and Governments*, p. 75.

<sup>56</sup> 10 April 1937 Letter from Ian Mackenzie (Minister of National Defence) to W.L.M. King (Prime Minister and Secretary of State for External Affairs), National Archives of Canada RF 25 Volume 1817 File 63; Stacey, *Arms, Men, and Governments*, p.74; Eayrs, *Appeasement and Rearmament*, p. 83.

<sup>57</sup> Stacey, *Arms, Men, and Governments*, pp.73-5; Eayrs, *Appeasement and Rearmament*, pp. 82-4.

<sup>58</sup> Eayrs, *Appeasement and Rearmament*, p. 84.

<sup>59</sup> 9 October 1937 Letter from F.H. Sandford to W.C. Hankinson (Dominions Office, Downing Street), Directorate of History and Heritage Air 2/1585 Liaison Correspondence.

<sup>60</sup> 21 October 1937 Letter from F.H. Sandford to W.C. Hankinson (Dominions Office, Downing Street), Directorate of History and Heritage Air 2/1585 Liaison Correspondence.

<sup>61</sup> 8 November 1937 Letter from F.H. Sandford to W.C. Hankinson (Dominions Office, Downing Street), Directorate of History and Heritage Air 2/1585 Liaison Correspondence.

<sup>62</sup> 31 December 1932 Canadian Liaison Letter No. 4 from Major-General A.G.L. McNaughton (Canadian Chief of the General Staff) to Field Marshall Sir George F. Milne, National Archives of Canada RG 25 Volume 818 Reel T2202 File 663 Office of the Under-Secretary of State for External Affairs 1929-1939, pp. 25-29.

<sup>63</sup> 15 October 1933 Canadian Liaison Letter No. 3 from General A.G.L. McNaughton (Canadian Chief of the General Staff) to General Sir Archibald A. Montgomery-Massingberd (British Chief of the General Staff), National Archives of Canada RG 25 Volume 818 Reel T2203 File 663 Office of the Under-Secretary of State for External Affairs 1929-1939.

<sup>64</sup> 1 January 1937 "The Requirements of Canadian Defence" Memorandum from Major-General E.C. Ashton (Chief of the General Staff) to Minister of National Defence, Directorate of History

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and Heritage 74/256 Imperial Conference – Data of Senior Air Officer.

<sup>65</sup> 22 April 1937 “The Direct Defence of Canada Considered from an Air Force Aspect” Memorandum by Air Commodore G.M. Croil (Senior Air Officer RCAF), Directorate of History and Heritage 74/256 Imperial Conference – Data of Senior Air Officer.

<sup>66</sup> 7 January 1938 “The Defence of Canada – A Survey of Militia Requirements” Memorandum by Major-General E.C. Ashton (Chief of the General Staff) to Minister of National Defence, National Archives of Canada RG 25 Volume 721 File 47 Reel T1747 Office of the Under-Secretary of State for External Affairs 1936-1938.

<sup>67</sup> 19 January 1938 “Notes on General Staff Paper of 7 January 1938 on ‘The Defence of Canada - A Survey of Militia Requirements’” by L.C. Christie (Department of External Affairs), National Archives of Canada RG 25 Volume 721 File 47 Reel T1747 Office of the Under-Secretary of State for External Affairs 1936-1938.

<sup>68</sup> “Our Past: The History of the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade” on *Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade* website: <http://www.dfait-maeci.gc.ca/departement/history/King-en.asp> [accessed on 25 March 2004]; “Reid, Scott Meredith” on *The Canadian Encyclopedia* website: <http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.com> [accessed 25 March 2004]; “Robertson, Norman Alexander” on *The Canadian Encyclopedia* website: <http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.com> [accessed 25 March 2004].

<sup>69</sup> “Our Past: The History of the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade” on *Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade* website: <http://www.dfait-maeci.gc.ca/departement/history/King-en.asp> [accessed on 25 March 2004].