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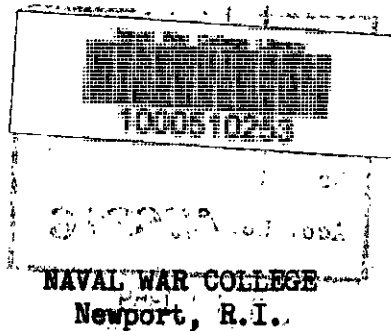
THE INFLUENCES AFFECTING NAVAL
SHIPBUILDING LEGISLATION, 1910 - 1916 (U)

LCDR J. ^W W. ADAMS, USN

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THESIS

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by

John W. Adams

Lieutenant Commander, U.S. Navy

The contents of this paper reflect my own personal views and are not necessarily endorsed by the Naval War College or the Department of the Navy.

John W. Adams

4 March 1969

31 March 1969

ABSTRACT OF THE INFLUENCES AFFECTING NAVAL SHIPBUILDING
LEGISLATION, 1910-1916

The status of the United States Navy was a prime factor which determined the amount of power backing the diplomatic efforts of Presidents William H. Taft and Woodrow Wilson.

The United States Navy in 1909 was the second ranking force among world naval powers. It subsequently dropped to third place during the Taft administration. Until well after the Naval Appropriation Act of 1916 the Navy remained in third position, and was not capable of adding a large measure of force to some of the administrations' policies during the era 1910 to 1916.

The causes which necessitate the maintenance of a fleet are viewed from the positions of the General Board of the Navy, the Secretary of the Navy and his President, and the Congress of the United States. Each group's view with regard to fleet size, ratio of classes of ships within the fleet, and the need for a fleet because of a foreign threat is noted.

The determination of the technical aspects of fleet creation is something done largely by the Navy. But, the determination of national policy creates or eliminates the need for a Navy. This latter determination must be made by the people through the Congress. This paper explores the influences affecting the determination of our country's naval shipbuilding needs, for the period 1910 to 1916.

We find that the General Board of the Navy made a strong effort to obtain not only a growing fleet, but also one which had proper balance with regard to the classes of vessels present. The Board also properly

appreciated the threats as they existed; however, it disregarded the responsibility to properly plan for campaigns against potential foes.

The Taft administration tried to economize by cutting expenses in the Navy, and at the same time followed a policy which it really did not have the power to enforce. While this procedure is a dangerous one it was probably the best course of action for the times.

The Wilson administration neglected some of the most important aspects of naval maintenance during the early years in office. Not until 1915 was serious consideration given to creating a naval force consistent with the threats in being and the national policies being pursued.

The Congress mirrored the economic plight of the country, the spirit of isolationism, and the shift to a desire for preparedness in the Naval Appropriation Acts of this era. The legislators did not appraise the threats as accurately as the General Board, but they did reflect the desires of the country.

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INTRODUCTION

THE PROBLEM

The General Board is influenced by its professional views, while an administration takes into consideration the whole national policy and does not overlook the question of national revenues -Josephus Daniels .

Obviously not all segments of the country view naval needs alike. The degree of agreement between planners, those who authorize, and those who execute is of the greatest importance. If the needs for a Navy are not seen similarly, cross purpose objectives can be pursued with disastrous effects.

How did the General Board of the Navy, the administration, and Congress perceive the naval needs of the country prior to World War I? Why did they choose to create a navy heavy in capital ships¹, but with so many other deficiencies as a fighting organization that conflict with a well balanced hostile fleet might easily have proven fatal? Was the threat viewed similarly by those concerned with building and by those concerned with maintaining the Navy?

In order to answer the questions posed, this paper will explore the period 1910 to 1916, to determine the reasons annual naval shipbuilding legislation was enacted. In this quest, we will attempt the analysis of Naval Appropriation Acts as they originated with the General Board of the

¹Capital ships for this era are defined as dreadnought, battleships, and battle cruisers.

Navy, were presented by the Secretary of the Navy for the administration, and finally were enacted in the Congress. Careful attention will be paid to the bills, not only as a monetary authorization, but as a requirement to build specific ship types. The size and composition of the fleet was a direct reflection of the outlooks of the above mentioned three bodies, and will show the spirit of the country in the years immediately preceding World War I.

THE INFLUENCES AFFECTING NAVAL SHIPBUILDING LEGISLATION, 1910 - 1916

CHAPTER I

THE LEGACY OF ROOSEVELT

Dear Will:

One closing legacy. Under no circumstances divide the battleship fleet between the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans prior to the finishing of the Panama Canal.

. . . Keep the battle fleet either in one ocean or the other and have the armed cruisers always in trim, as they are now, so that they can be sent to join the battle fleet if the need should arise.

Faithfully yours,
/S/ Theodore Roosevelt

In order to better understand what naval legacy Presidents William Howard Taft and, to a lesser degree, Woodrow Wilson had received, it is necessary to briefly review the accomplishments of Theodore Roosevelt and state the status of the United States Navy in 1909.

Taft received a legacy of men and material in the form of a Navy second only to Great Britain in order of strength.¹ He received a revitalized Navy, fresh from the triumphant voyage of the Great White Fleet, a voyage which represented the first exhibit of massed American ships of the line on so extensive a trip. The personnel were well trained and confident in their abilities to perform. Through a steady building program, Congress had reacted to the ebullient Roosevelt in at least building major ships at a fairly satisfactory rate. The Navy,

¹Fred T. Jane, ed., Jane's Fighting Ships, (London: Sampson, Low, Marston, 1909), p. 9. (Hereafter cited as Jane's, year)

measured in capital ships, was five times as large in 1909 as it had been in 1890, and the 1909 composition is shown below.

TABLE I²
1909 U. S. NAVY COMPOSITION

| Unit Type | No. Built | No. Under Construction ^a |
|----------------------------------|-----------|-------------------------------------|
| Dreadnought ^b | 2 | 6 |
| Battleship ^c | 25 | 0 |
| Armored Cruiser, Invincible Type | 0 | 0 |
| Armored Cruiser ^d | 12 | 0 |
| Cruiser ^e | 35 | 0 |
| Destroyer | 17 | 19 |
| Torpedo Boat | 30 | 0 |
| Submarines | 12 | 20 |
| Coast Defense Vessels | 6 | 0 |

^aIncludes those building and authorized

^bBattleships having a main battery of all big guns (11 inches or more in caliber).

^cBattleships having a displacement of about 10,000 tons or more.

^dArmored cruisers having guns of the largest caliber in the main battery and capable of taking their place in the line of battle with the battleships.

^eIncludes all unarmored cruising vessels above 1,000 tons displacement.

Taft had been Roosevelt's Secretary of War from 1 February 1904 to 30 June 1908, and certainly had a speaking acquaintance with the Navy he inherited. He had not been in office when the General Board of the Navy was formed, but had watched the Board's position become clearer under Roosevelt's administration until it performed coordination, planning, and advisory functions. Additionally, Taft had observed Roosevelt's

²U.S. Navy Department, Annual Reports of the Secretary of the Navy, 1909, (Washington: U.S. Govt. Print. Off., 1910), p. 21-22. (Hereafter cited as, Annual Reports, year)

attempts to create a General Staff with some measure of authority. In his Annual Message to Congress in 1903, Roosevelt appealed for a naval General Staff similar to the Army's to replace the General Board and bureaus, as Roosevelt felt, "Though under excellent officers at their head, these boards and bureaus do good work, they have not the authority of a general staff, and have not sufficient scope to insure a proper readiness for emergencies."³

Taft also obtained a new Secretary of the Navy, George von L. Meyer, who would remain in office during the entire administration of the new president. Meyer had held enough governmental positions to be cognizant of the practices and practicalities in and around Washington. Additionally, the consistency in the Navy Department with one man remaining at its head would prove a welcome relief, as Roosevelt had six Secretaries of the Navy during his tenure, none of whom had served much longer than two years.⁴ Meyer's predecessor, Truman H. Newberry, had spotlighted this fault aptly when in 1908 he said, "I do not believe that anyone can understand the Navy Department with less than two years continuous application."⁵

³Theodore Roosevelt, "Annual Message to Congress", U. S. Cong. Record, 58 Congress, 2nd Sess., 7 December 1903, p. 8.

⁴Roosevelt's Secretaries of the Navy included: J. D. Long until 30 April 1902, W. H. Moody from 1 May 1902 to 30 June 1904, Paul Morton from 1 July 1904 to 30 June 1905, C. J. Bonaparte from 1 July 1905 to 16 December 1906, V. H. Metcalf from 17 December 1906 to 30 November 1908, and T. H. Newberry from 1 December 1908 to 5 March 1909.

⁵Truman H. Newberry, quoted in Gordon C. O'Gara, Theodore Roosevelt and the Rise of the Modern Navy, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1943), p. 15; and in Brayton Harris, The Age of the Battleship, 1890 - 1922, (New York: Franklin Watts, 1965), p. 119.

Theodore Roosevelt left one final naval legacy, namely a double strategy in his dealings with Congress. Unfortunately, the first half of this strategy, the policy of asking for four battleships in order to obtain the two desired, would meet increasing resistance. The other half, sacrificing the fleet's smaller units and auxiliaries⁶, was to be continued with increasing imbalance the result. While this entire policy was probably the best practical compromise under existing circumstances, the fleet which resulted was very deficient in these smaller classes. Capital ships were frequently used to perform tasks normally assigned the smaller units and auxiliaries. Thus the practice of sacrificing the smaller units gained less in over-all naval posture than it would seem from outward appearances.

⁶Smaller units and auxiliaries included: cruisers, scout cruisers, destroyers, submarines, repair ships, transports, tenders, etc.

CHAPTER II

THE BOARD STRUGGLES

A navy in firm control of the seas from the outbreak of war is the prime essential to the defense of a country situated as is the United States bordering upon two great Oceans. A navy strong enough only to defend our coast from invasion is not the only function of the Navy. It must protect our sea-borne commerce and drive that of the enemy from the sea.

-General Board, 1915

The General Board of the Navy was formed by executive order number 544 of 13 March 1900, signed by Secretary of the Navy, John Davis Long. The stated purpose of the Board was to "ensure the efficient preparation of the fleet in case of war and for the naval defense of the coast."¹ It was headed by the Admiral of the Fleet, George Dewey, and contained nine members. The membership was divided into two categories: ex-officio and individual. The ex-officio members included: the Admiral of the Navy, the Chief of the Bureau of Navigation, the Chief Intelligence Officer and his principal assistant, and the President of the Naval War College and his principal assistant. There were three individual memberships all of or above the rank of Lieutenant Commander. Meetings were to be held at least once each month, but two such monthly meetings were to include daily meetings of at least a week's duration. A quorum existed when five

¹Executive Order No. 544 reprinted in H. S. Knapp, "The General Board", The Navy Department, (Annapolis: Postgraduate Department, U. S. Naval Academy, 1913), p. 160.

members were present.²

Although Board membership was to be limited to nine members, Secretary Long initially appointed eleven members, including Captains Henry C. Taylor, R. D. Evans, C. E. Clark, F. E. Chadwick, and Marine Colonel G. C. Reid, by name. Soon membership provisions were changed to permit the Secretary the flexibility to appoint any number of members.³ Assignments to the Board of staff assistants, who were nonvoting members, did not commence until 1902 after Secretary Long's departure from office.

Although assignment to the Board was regarded as highly desirable, particularly in the early years and for aspiring officers, many senior Rear Admirals were assigned to the Board in the few months preceding their retirement. Thus the Board contained talented junior officers, fresh from sea duty and eager to perform, as well as senior officers in the twilight of their careers with no real further ambition.

The Board had many and varied advisory, planning, and coordination roles, but the most significant role to be considered here was stated as follows:

It shall consider the number and type of ships proper to constitute the Fleet, the number and ranks of officers, and the number and ratings of enlisted men required to man them; and shall advise the Secretary of the Navy respecting the estimates therefore (including such increase

²Daniel J. Costello, "Planning for War: A History of the General Board of the Navy, 1900-1914", Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Fletcher School, Tufts University, Medford, Mass.: 1968, p. 24-25.

³Ibid., p. 29-30.

as may be requisite) to be submitted annually to Congress.⁴

Table V, Appendix I, on page 66 depicts the requirements of the Navy as seen by the General Board, by the administration, and as approved by the Congress. Inasmuch as the Board eventually became responsible for making these first recommendations for new ship construction, what kind of program did it develop? The only long range program of ship construction was developed by the Board and submitted to Secretary of the Navy William H. Moody in February of 1903. It called for a force of forty-eight battleships with a proportionate number of supporting vessels to be constructed by 1920.⁵ The Board's program was not made public until 1914, but enough of the general content was known to be able to realize that some systematic plan was in effect. In October 1903 the planned completion date was changed to 1919⁶ and, thus armed, the Board was left to obtain the necessary construction by means of a schedule which would meet with approval at higher levels and satisfy the basic requirements set forth.

This 1903 building program failed to account for the problem of ship replacement due to age or technological obsolescence. Not until 1910 did the Board develop a practice similar to that of Germany which required scrapping battleships after twenty years of commissioned service.⁷

⁴U.S. Navy Department, Regulations for the Government of the Navy of the United States, 1913, (Washington: U.S. Govt. Print. Off., 1913), Section 7, Article 167, Paragraph 3, p. 24R. (Hereafter cited as Navy Regs)

⁵Costello, p. 237.

⁶Ibid., p. 238.

⁷Ibid., p. 239.

There is little evidence that anyone except Theodore Roosevelt, and possibly George Meyer, approved of the General Board's long range program. What then, beyond obtaining forty-eight battleships, was the intent of the General Board's building recommendations?

Obviously, the Board was at least attempting to maintain a semblance of balance within the fleet. The Board's policy of four destroyers per battleship, one repair ship per squadron of eight battleships, one tender per sixteen destroyers, etc. was restated regularly in its reports to the Secretary of the Navy which were appended to the Secretary's annual report, or included in the body of these reports, for the years 1911 - 1916.⁸ Not content merely to allow the figures and prescribed ratios to speak Admiral George Dewey, prior to affixing his signature, made specific reference to the lack of scouts and destroyers by pointing out:

That the basis of the material side of the fleet is the battleship of the first line, and that this basis for life and action requires to be supplemented by its military assistants - destroyers, scouts, submarines, . . . - in proper proportionate numbers.⁹

Admiral Dewey realized the limitations of the Board's advisory position, knew the administration's position, and at least had a feeling for sentiment within Congress. But in continuing to champion all classes of vessels the Admiral of the Navy would do the fleet no ill, and professionally could afford any rebuffs thrown his way. The reports showing

⁸Annual Reports, 1911, p. 39; 1912, p. 27; 1913, p. 33; 1914, p. 63; 1915, p. 91; 1916, p. 73.

⁹Ibid., 1913, p. 31.

the increasing requirements for "supplementary assistants" in the fleet were a legal protest against the continued imbalance carried on by the actions of a Congress which apparently wanted to maintain a fleet with "status", not balance.

The dissenter will be quick to point out that from 1907 until 1914, the General Board was yearly uniform in recommending the construction of four battleships. This seeming paradox—i.e., the apparent inconsistency of asking for a balanced fleet and four battleships annually—was adequately answered in 1914 when the Board attempted to clear any misinterpretation of its position on battleship construction by stating:

[The General Board] . . . believes that these recommendations made from year to year have been both misunderstood and misconstrued in some quarters. The impression prevails that the General Board has always recommended an annual continuing program of four (4) battleships, with accompanying lesser units and auxiliaries. A brief analysis of the recommendations . . . will show the recommendations made were consistent and contemplated the creation of a battleship fleet of 48 vessels by 1919 but did not involve a constant and fixed program of building four battleships a year.¹⁰

This statement was reiterated a year later in exactly the same form.¹¹

The Board was not inconsistent in policy, only flexible enough to attempt to gain the objective it proclaimed in 1903 of forty-eight battleships and a properly proportioned fleet of auxiliaries in being by 1919.¹² Despite continuing changes in the building programs by Congress, the Board

¹⁰Ibid., 1914, p. 59-60.

¹¹Ibid., 1915, p. 87.

¹²Ibid., 1913, p. 31.

was seriously attempting to pursue the correct steps to obtain a stated naval goal. Although the program of development as produced by the General Board in 1903 was never adopted outside the Navy, it was the only avowed naval building policy then in existence, the only block on which to build.

When directed by the Secretary of the Navy in October 1915 to prepare a five year Navy building program which would "make it as powerful and well balanced as possible at the end of this period",¹³ the Board responded with an ambitious program which would have required the expenditure of nearly a half billion dollars on new ship construction.¹⁴ This program as shown in Table II, realistically requested a total of only ten battleships, but did attempt to reduce the acute lack of cruisers, scouts, and escorts. Possibly because of the war in progress the Navy appears to have been unable to overcome the temptation of asking for most of the program at the beginning, but close inspection will show that the money was to be spent at a relatively even pace.

¹³Josephus Daniels to the General Board, "Building Program for the Navy", Washington, 7 October 1915, No. Op-9.

¹⁴General Board to the Secretary of the Navy, "Building Program to be Authorized Within a Period of Five Years", Washington, 12 October 1915, General Board No. 420-2, Ser: 415.

TABLE II¹⁵
FIVE YEAR BUILDING PROGRAM PROPOSED BY THE GENERAL BOARD

| Ship Type | 1917 | 1918 | 1919 | 1920 | 1921 | Total Cost (Million) |
|-------------------------|--------|--------|---------|---------|--------|----------------------|
| Dreadnought | 4 | 2 | 2 | 2 | | \$188.0 |
| Battle Cruiser | 3 | | 1 | 2 | | 105.0 |
| Scouts | 4 | 2 | 1 | 3 | | 50.0 |
| Destroyers | 10 | 10 | 10 | 14 | 6 | 68.0 |
| Fleet Submarines | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 1 | 13.5 |
| Coast Submarines | 20 | 10 | 10 | 10 | 8 | 37.7 |
| Fuel Ship, Oil | 1 | | | 2 | | 4.1 |
| Repair Ship | | | | 1 | | 2.1 |
| Transport | | | | 1 | | 2.0 |
| Hospital Ship | 1 | | | | | 2.5 |
| Destroyer Tender | 1 | | | 1 | | 4.0 |
| Fleet Submarine Tender | | | | 1 | | 1.5 |
| Ammunition Ship | 1 | | | 1 | | 3.0 |
| River Gunboat | 2 | | | | | .6 |
| Cost Per Year (Million) | \$96.8 | \$98.7 | \$103.2 | \$100.1 | \$73.2 | |

It will be shown later that the similar legislation passed by Congress known as the Naval Appropriations Act of 1916, was modeled after the Board's recommendation. Nothing the Board did resulted in this abrupt change; rather a combination of factors, including the increasing voice of preparedness groups springing up throughout the country, the very real threat of war, and a change of heart within the administration were the major factors. Yet, a measure of the success and correctness of direction the success took stemmed from a group who continued to point the proper direction for the Navy to move.

What real requirement did the Board see for this collection of ships they continued to ask for? Aside from the obvious fact that a

¹⁵Figures for Table II extracted from Annual Reports, 1915, p. 80, 83, 84.

professional likes to have the best tools of his trade, some enemy must appear to be a threat to defend against. What threat did the Board see, and how did it plan to use the fleet against this threat?

By 1909, the Board had its position defined well enough through executive orders to have the advisory responsibility to, ". . . prepare and submit to the Secretary of the Navy plans of campaign, including cooperation with the Army . . . and shall constantly revise these plans in accordance with the latest information received."¹⁶ Ultimately, the manner in which this responsibility was discharged is exemplified by the fact that when Congress declared war on 6 April 1917, the only official plan for war with Germany dealt with a campaign against a battle fleet in the western Atlantic, probably in the Caribbean, and no provisions were made for either a campaign against submarines, or a major fleet action in conjunction with Great Britain in European waters.¹⁷

In executing the responsibility to "prepare plans of campaign", should the Board have prepared definite contingency options as we know them today? What kept the Board from prescribing the actual course of action to be followed in the event of war? A quick glance into some of the inherent problems may help clear the muddy waters.

To begin with, the Board was empowered with advisory authority only.

¹⁶Navy Regs, Section 7, Article 167, Paragraph 2, p. 24R.

¹⁷U.S. Congress, Senate, Report on the Naval Investigation by the Subcommittee of the Committee on Naval Affairs, U. S. Senate, (Washington: U.S. Govt. Print. Off., 1921), p. 25. (Hereafter cited as Naval Investigation)

Therefore, any orders would have to be routed through the Secretary's office, and issued by him. No "by direction" powers existed, nor did any of the specific authorities of a General Staff, such as those of the staffs of Great Britain or Germany, exist within the august body.

When asked by the Secretary of the Navy in 1910 as to the proper place for fleet concentration, Admiral Dewey replied:

. . . regarding the best location for the concentration of the battlefleet; the General Board is of the opinion that the fleet should be based in the Atlantic for the following reasons . . . At present we know of no nation with whom war is probable. The two nations which approximate this state most closely are Germany and Japan. As between the two, it is impossible to say that either is the more probable antagonist, but it is sure that Germany would be the more formidable.¹⁸

The letter further contained valid reasons for retaining the battle fleet in the Atlantic, including the higher probability of fleet action in the case of a conflict with Germany. Probably this exercise was without intention inasmuch as little real support could be found to build up West Coast logistics. Consequently, the fleet had no choice but to remain close to the East Coast yard and base complex. The exercise did show capabilities and therefore was not totally worthless.

In 1912 the Board again concluded that the battlefleet should be retained in the Atlantic, as "The Fleet should be concentrated in that ocean where there is the greatest likelihood of its being obliged to meet an enemy in war."¹⁹ These early indicators show that thought was

¹⁸General Board to the Secretary of the Navy, "Location of the Battlefleet", Washington, 16 November 1910, General Board No. 420-1.

¹⁹Dewey to the Record, "Notes on Distribution of the Fleet", Washington, 7 May 1912, General Board No. 420-1.

being given to "the threat", but it will be seen that little action was actually taken.

Within the confines of the General Board war plans, such as they were, existed in three geographically segregated portfolios. Portfolio one contemplated an Atlantic war, portfolios two and three dealt with conflict in the Pacific, Western and Eastern respectively. Each portfolio contained documents pertinent to the political, strategic, and tactical situations.²⁰ Some were fairly detailed, most contained only scant intelligence information, and none possessed an "action" annex.

It must be emphasized that these plans were studies only, not a directive to a fleet commander. The plans did not include, indeed could not hold the promise of, provisions for adequate forces to ensure compliance. Further, the plans were sent to the fleet commander for his review and criticism. Every such plan forwarded to a fleet commander emphasized that no intention to encroach upon command prerogative or to limit him (the fleet commander) in any way was intended.²¹ Therefore, the plan embodied only an idea which could not be interpreted as a binding directive.

The basic reason that war plans were of minimal value was due to the Board's inability to implement them. The Board held no positive control over the bureaus; the bureaus controlled all the war materials, men, and other assets. Without the ability to produce the material called for in

²⁰Costello, p. 109-110.

²¹Ibid., p. 114.

the war plans, implementation was a lost cause unless coordinated and ordered by the Secretary of the Navy.

Although Secretary Meyer approved a system which attempted to coordinate and maintain liason between the bureaus and the General Board, with regard to war plan requirements in 1911, it turned out to be a paper work exercise only. Meyer's directives required no production of the actual hardware required, merely a statement of the action which would, presumably, be taken should the need arise.

Captain Bradley A. Fiske, when taking charge of the war plans section of the General Board in 1910, realized that the plans were, ". . . so general in character as hardly to be war plans at all, and to consist mainly of information of all kinds concerning various countries, accompanied with suggestions for the commander-in-chief of the fleet."²² Fiske could find no real plans or even the project for formulating any, and realized that the task had fallen upon his shoulders, even though he was wholly unprepared for it.²³ He subsequently talked a little to the "experts" he could find, speculated a little more, but made no real progress toward definitive plans or even a program to obtain them before he was promoted to Rear Admiral and detached from the General Board for command at sea.

Fiske returned to Washington as Aid for Inspections in January of 1913, but was soon shifted to the post of Aid for Operations, the senior

²²Bradley A. Fiske, From Midshipman to Rear Admiral, (New York: Century, 1919), p. 477.

²³Ibid., p. 479.

post connected with war plans. The only improvement in the general area of planning that had occurred during his absence was a firm realization among senior naval professionals that the German Navy was the object upon which to focus. The most impressive facet of the German naval military machine was an exemplary administrative organization; conversely, the United States Navy was still struggling with much the same setup that had been present during the Civil War. Therefore, in April 1913, the General Board submitted a recommendation in the form of an "Administrative Plan" to the Secretary of the Navy. This was to be the initial action in coordinating the bureaus' efforts to prepare for war.²⁴

Although the Secretary of the Navy, Josephus Daniels, procrastinated over the "Administrative Plan", work continued with the emphasis on plans for war with "Black" (Germany). On 13 March 1915, Secretary Daniels was presented with a complete "Black" war plan which incorporated a new administrative section. Until Daniels approved the administrative section the plan was almost worthless, could not even be disseminated, let alone be put into force. Again, as before, Daniels procrastinated.²⁵ Near the time of selection of the first Chief of Naval Operations, Fiske resigned as Aid for Operations and shortly after his relief on 11 May 1915, the administrative section of the war plan was approved and signed. Thus, in

²⁴Ibid., p. 540.

²⁵General Board to the Secretary of the Navy, "Preparations Necessary to be made by the Bureaus and Officers of the Navy Department to Insure a State of Preparedness for War", Washington, 13 March 1915, General Board No. 425; also printed in Naval Investigation, p. 1009.

mid-1915, the Navy possessed the embryo of a general staff in the form of a CNO and his staff of fifteen officers. It also possessed a start on the only firm war plan against Germany the Navy would have prior to entering the war.

Despite the lack of evidence showing good leadership at the secretarial level, indeed it will later be shown that some poor secretarial judgement abounded during the Daniels prewar tenure, all the blame cannot rest on the Secretaries. The General Board, the bureaus, and possibly the senior commanders themselves were all guilty of extreme complacency. They failed to absorb Mahan's concepts on preparedness, for peacetime planning was stated as one of the most important facets of naval strategy.²⁶

²⁶Alfred T. Mahan, "Preparedness for Naval War", Interests of America in Sea Power, Present and Future, (Boston: Little, Brown, 1897), p. 175-214.

CHAPTER III

TAFT AND HIS SECRETARY

For the purpose of defending our country against attacks from any nation on earth we confidently believe that our Navy is amply sufficient and fully adequate, and for any other purpose we need no Navy at all.

House Naval Committee Minority Report, 1913

President Taft and Secretary Meyer were probably closer personally, than the normal relationship which exists traditionally between the President and a member of his cabinet. Meyer frequently played golf, rode horseback, and socialized with Taft. The two men shared an affinity for life together and seemed to be in accord on most views politically.

Meyer represented the President in presenting administration naval views to Congress; however, he presented views not always consistent with those of his advisors within the Navy department. Being a realist of long government service, it is possible that Meyer simply bowed to the wind in ease, rather than stand righteously before the gale forces and break.

The theory with which Taft and Meyer worked precluded war involving the United States. This theory did not eliminate public pronouncements by the administration on rising threats of war, but privately Taft appeared to discount actual United States involvement in armed conflict. The hopes in which the administration engaged included a lessening of the depression it inherited, a slowdown in the Anglo-German naval race, and an improved situation with an insurgent Congress. All these factors combined to play a part in the administration's naval programs.

Taft's policies eschewed active involvement in the international arena of power diplomacy. However, he wasn't blind to the realities of life and hedged his bets somewhat by continuing the naval programs of Roosevelt. The growing Anglo-German race for naval supremacy gave him a convenient justification for the attempt to retain second place among naval powers.¹ He and Meyer alluded to a belief that failure to maintain a sufficient naval building program would expose the United States or its Caribbean interests to attack from overseas.²

Although this idea had little basis in fact, it was a popular reason used to marshal votes for shipbuilding programs. The administration wasn't above citing recent troubles with Japan to push legislation for the same ships, and here the case may have been more real.

Although Taft could not make a great crusade for matching German naval increases, it is not automatically true that valid reasons did not exist. From the time of the Spanish-American War and throughout most of Roosevelt's tenure Germany was the naval power which was viewed as the "probable enemy".³ German attempted encroachment into the Caribbean and German migration into South America (particularly Brazil) were

¹Harris, Age of the Battleships, p. 147-148; and Harold and Margaret Sprout, The Rise of American Naval Power, 2d. ed., (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1946), p. 288.

²Bureau of National Literature, Inc., A Compilation of the Messages and Papers of the Presidents, (New York: Bureau of National Literature, 1922), v. XV, p. 7371, 7372; v. XVI, p. 7808; and Annual Reports, 1909, p. 23; 1910, p. 41-42; 1911, p. 38; 1912, p. 24-25.

³O. J. Clinard, Japan's Influence on American Naval Power, 1897-1917, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1947), p. 36.

reasons cited for the Kaiser's increasing fleet. These factors combined with the impression made public by the German Fleet Law of 1900 gave American naval advocates ample opportunity to urge expansion. However, Taft privately seemed to be of a different mind, and as early as 1909 he apparently dismissed the thought of attack by Germany. In a cabinet meeting Meyer recorded in his diary:

Knox read a letter from an American friend living in England which describes the English hysteria over Germany at the present time . . . he went on to say that we have only Germany to fear, and must keep up our Navy, as she was liable to come out sometime and possibly attack us . . . All of which is absurd, and Taft felt the same way about it.⁴

The problem of possible conflict with Japan was slightly thornier, for the naval realities of life showed that no successful action could be fought in the Western Pacific.⁵ The most fully developed war plan for conflict with the Japanese, the "Orange Plan", showed Hawaii was as far west as the armed forces could hope to hold initially. All proposals to station a sizable naval force in the Pacific were rejected. The reasons for this rejection were publically justified because of the expense involved and the inadequacy of shore facilities in the Pacific.⁶ The real reason for this rejection may well have existed within Congress, as Secretary Meyer observed, by stationing the battleship fleet in the

⁴Meyer diary, 1 June 1909, Mark A. D. Howe, George von Lengerke Meyer, His Life and Public Service, (New York: Dodd, Meade, 1920), p. 433-434.

⁵Costello, p. 168-172.

⁶Annual Reports, 1910, p. 24.

Pacific "most of the navy yards on the eastern coast will automatically close themselves".⁷ Without decimation of the Atlantic defenses, plus a buildup in Pacific support facilities, the United States could not hope to be even moderately successful in any engagement with Japan. Yet, Taft and his Secretary of State, Philander C. Knox, continued an Asiatic policy full of conflict possibilities without the true power to back up this policy. Taft even proclaimed the intention of maintaining United States interests intact in the Orient. He further stated that America could not do so "if it is understood that she never intends to back up her assertation of right and her defense of her interest by anything but mere verbal protest and diplomatic note."⁸ In all the failure to make adequate Pacific fleet preparations, because of the exigencies in domestic politics and varying diplomatic considerations, made Asiatic naval policy one of inconsistent frustration for the Navy's leadership.

Taft had, in reality, two reasons he wanted to maintain the naval pace and neither was politically expedient. First, by maintaining a sufficient naval power relative to European navies, the United States would be a force to be reckoned with as a neutral or in influencing a future Anglo-German struggle. Second, any future determination to enter more fully into the political and commercial activities of the Orient would require tangible military force, i.e., a more powerful navy.

⁷Ibid., 1911, p. 28; and 1912, p. 43.

⁸William H. Taft, "Inaugural Address", 4 March 1909, Inaugural Addresses of the Presidents of the United States, (Washington: U. S. Govt. Print. Off., 1961), p. 191.

Captain A. T. Mahan in writing The Interest of America in International Conditions devoted many references to each reason Taft espoused, certainly arguing from logic, but probably doing very little to improve the political palatability of either premise.⁹

If the Navy under Taft was to be a political muscleman, what harm was done by continuing to create a battleship heavy force? Certainly the index of naval strength rested upon the number and class of battleships and battle cruisers a navy possessed.¹⁰ In his annual reports for 1911 and 1912, Meyer hinted at the administration's reasoning in allowing the deficiency in auxiliary vessels, such as cruisers, scouts, destroyers, etc., to continue. He openly stated that the measure of naval strength respected by foreign powers was the quantity of dreadnoughts and battle cruisers available for duty.¹¹ He alluded to the hope that the European naval race would slow down, or that the congressional situation would improve sufficiently to allow appropriations for the buildup of a better

⁹In writing on the Anglo-German naval race, and in particular Germany's naval expansion, Mahan stated, "The United States now is compelled to see, not for the first time, that European politics affect American interests, directly and inevitably."; when writing of the Open Door policy, he wrote, "No nation not consenting is bound to it by established principles, but is at liberty to disregard it; except as constrained by force . . . ", Alfred T. Mahan, The Interest of America In International Conditions, (Boston: Little, Brown, 1910), p. 81, 182.

¹⁰Harris states, "The battleship was the symbol of naval power.", p. 148; the Sprouts state, "The unit of power was the first-line battleship.", p. 311; and the General Board stated, "That the basis of the material side of the fleet is the battleship of the first line . . . ", Annual Reports, 1913, p. 31.

¹¹Annual Reports, 1911, p. 38; 1912, p. 25.

rounded fleet.¹² On the other hand, a factor which helped to justify this imbalance in shipbuilding was the time required to complete ships of various classes. Estimates of time required from keel-laying to launching for a battleship were roughly three years, smaller classes required proportionately less time.¹³

An interesting aspect, which is apparent in retrospect, but which was not considered at the time, was the use of the destroyer to combat submarines. Even though fleet type submarines were introduced into the German navy after, and only after, a true seagoing boat was constructed,¹⁴ and therefore the need for a form of defense should have been apparent, no action to combat the submarine was taken. Due to a lack of any efficient sound detection apparatus or even depth charges until well into the course of the Great War, the destroyer would have been relatively ineffective vis-à-vis the submarine threat.¹⁵

Secretary Meyer soon realized that troubled times lay ahead for the Navy and the administration in many fields. He had an organizational

¹²Ibid., 1911, p. 38-42; 1912, p. 25-28.

¹³Ibid., 1911, p. 245-246. Report showing specific time frame for individual vessel contracts from contract date until launch date. Battleships generally had contracts from thirty-two to thirty-six months, and destroyer contracts ran for twenty-four months.

¹⁴Alfred P. F. von Tirpitz, My Memoirs, (New York: Dodd, Meade, 1919), v. I, p. 180.

¹⁵This not unusual lag of an effective defensive counter to a new offensive weapon is beyond the purpose of this paper, and is nicely handled in, Bernard Brodie, "Major Naval Inventions and their Consequences on International Politics, 1814 - 1918", Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Chicago, Chicago, Ill.: 1940.

problem of fractional spheres of control within each independent bureau which had been dealt with unsatisfactorily for at least twenty years. There was a shipyard problem, for he could see " . . . that sooner or later I shall have to struggle with Senator Hale on this whole subject . . . ".¹⁶ And a money problem was evident because in 1911 "Mr. Taft had committed himself to a reduction of ten millions in the Navy . . . ".¹⁷

His organizational problem had been studied during Roosevelt's last year in office by the Moody commission;¹⁸ however, Meyer studied the reports for the preceding twenty years and then formed what was known as the Swift Board. Although the Board officers were given free rein to find the problems and come up with recommendations to solve them, their conclusions were really nothing new. They determined that a new system to manage the fleet and coordinate the bureaus was needed, the General Board was obsolete and should be replaced by a war planning office with broad policy and coordinating powers, and that the General Board should be relegated to a role subservient to the war planning office with no power to initiate recommendations of its own volition.¹⁹ The resulting action by Meyer was an unusual measure, not exactly satisfactory to

¹⁶Meyer diary, 1 May 1909, Howe, p. 433

¹⁷Meyer to Theodore Roosevelt, 9 July 1909, Howe, p. 439

¹⁸Commission formally constituted on 27 January 1909 to appraise the Navy's organizational needs, headed by ex-Secretary W. H. Moody, Costello, p. 95.

¹⁹Meyer to Roosevelt, 10 March 1910, Howe, p. 467; and Costello, p. 95.

Congress, however not unsavory enough to cause legislation forbidding it. The Secretary established four sections: Military Operations of the Fleet, Personnel, Material, and Inspection. Each section was headed by an Aid and existing bureaus were grouped within a section, according to the kind of service performed. Individually, each Aid was the prime advisor to the Secretary on all technical questions within his section. Collectively, the Aids formed an advisory council on administration and departmental policy. Two of the Aids, Material and Operations, became ex-officio members of the General Board.²⁰ Although legislative approval of this action could not be obtained from Congress, the Aid system worked reasonably well throughout Meyer's tenure.

The shipyard problem created a more direct confrontation with Congress and generated conflict between the line and staff officers within the Navy. Although Meyer closed the yards at Pensacola and New Orleans, and recommended some much needed consolidation, he ultimately bowed to the pressure of such men as Senator Eugene Hale (Rep., Me.), when it came to outright conflict on the floor of the Senate. The naval split over control of functions within the yards was more easily patched over by compromise together with some long overdue reforms in the management and accounting fields.²¹

The money problem which never was, is, or will be new, was related

²⁰Meyer to Roosevelt, 10 March 1910, Howe, p. 468; Annual Reports, 1909, p. 8-10; and Costello, p. 97.

²¹For specific examples as well as reports of closure, see: Annual Reports, 1909, p. 15-19; 1910, p. 38-39; 1911, p. 24-28; 1912, p. 42-51.

directly to the shipbuilding program. Here Meyer had very minimal success. Congressional pressure against increased money outlays for ships stiffened because of hard times, intersectional disagreement, and political insurgency directed against the administration. The administration had its hands full with a Congress controlled by Republicans, one that grudgingly allowed only two battleships per year. The elections of 1910 gave the House to the Democrats with the immediate result that 1911, 1912, and 1913 were years of reduced naval appropriations.²² The administration had to fight to obtain authorization for one battleship annually, and made no headway in balancing the fleet. Meyer pared down the General Board's recommendations with an extra sharp knife, and the relative status of fleet strength continued to decline.

The result of the struggles with Congress was the development of a still more battleship heavy navy. Taft and Meyer were not blind to this fact, far from it. In his annual reports for 1911 Meyer stated that:

The Navy is very deficient in certain classes of vessels required for the maintenance and protection of the battlefleet. These vessels are battleship cruisers, scouts, destroyers, submarines, repair, supply, fuel, ammunition, and hospital ships and tenders to torpedo vessels.²³

After reviewing the fleet at New York in 1911, Taft stated:

The equipment of the fleet is excellent, except as to the number of destroyers and cruisers and colliers in

²²For exact figures, see: Table VI, Appendix II, page 67.

²³Annual Reports, 1911, p. 38.

proportion to the whole number. We had in the fleet today 22 destroyers, and to meet the full requirement there should have been approximately 100 destroyers, or an average of 4 to each battleship.²⁴

Although the administration was cognizant of this fleet deficiency, it was still of the opinion that "until more of the old battleships are replaced, it is wiser to provide for the battleships than to sacrifice battleship strength for vessels of less military value."²⁵ It also felt that even though more auxiliaries were needed before entering a war of large proportions, "it is satisfactory to know that the time in which such auxiliary vessels could be prepared is not prohibitive, and much less than would be needed to add battleships."²⁶

This practice of sacrifice fitted Taft's policies well. In capital ships the United States appeared formidable enough, particularly in her home waters, and could cause concern to any aggressor. Taft did not wish to decrease the relative status of the fleet and stated that the Navy needed to be kept abreast of other growing navies to maintain it "as an insurance of peace".²⁷ He deplored reduced naval strength for, "The world's history has shown the importance of sea power both for adequate defense and for support of important and definite policies."²⁸

²⁴Ibid., 1911, p. 31.

²⁵Ibid., 1912, p. 25-26.

²⁶Ibid., 1912, p. 18.

²⁷Fred L. Israel, ed., The State of the Union Messages of the Presidents, (New York: Chelsea House, 1966), v. III, p. 2528.

²⁸Ibid., p. 2527

But since Taft foresaw no immediate involvement in armed conflict he felt no urgent need to round out the fleet. In his mind the general tranquility of the era denied any real need to obtain the balanced naval strength required. His main ambition appeared to be one of moderate preparedness and sufficient naval power, at least on paper, to add some threat of force to administration foreign policies.

CHAPTER IV

WILSON AND HIS SECRETARY

It is not believed it is dealing honestly with Congress to make large estimates in the expectation that the national legislators will use the pruning knife. I have reduced the building program proposed by the General Board not because of opposition to the progressive plans of that able body of naval statesmen, but because it is deemed wise to suggest a budget that will be within the resources of our government.

-Josephus Daniels

In dealing with the Wilson administration, and specifically with the facet of preparedness, an obvious awareness that a conversion takes place is evident; however, who or what is the conversion agent is rather vague. The transformation to preparedness is evident in the Naval Appropriations Act of 1916, and many events which help change the administration from a stand of neutrality to one of preparedness are apparent. Rather than take one event and point to it as an absolute turning point, the chain of events as a whole must have contributed to the transformation of the administration's attitude.

Although the Democrats traditionally stood for a moderate naval policy, Wilson at the Baltimore Democratic convention of 1912 endorsed a plank in the Democratic National platform calling for continuing to maintain a strong navy.¹ For his Secretary of the Navy he chose Josephus Daniels, a man who had a past history of actively supporting

¹"Democratic Party Platform", New York Times, 3 July 1912, p. 5:2.

the naval policy of the Taft administration while dictating editorials to his own newspaper, The Raleigh News and Observer.²

Daniels in 1913 was aware of the advantage the United States derived from its geographical position. He realized that at least for the time being the major European navies were tied to their home waters and he felt moderately secure that no conflict would erupt in the near future.³ The Secretary started a practice of publishing the General Board's recommendations for new construction.⁴ Although he did not wholeheartedly endorse its recommendations, he stated that he was attempting to find a "golden mean", a policy consistent with the needs and economic capacity of the country. In his first building program recommended to Congress Daniels asked for three battleships, eight destroyers, and three submarines. These recommendations contained no scout cruisers and there was a deficient of four destroyers if the program were to be truly balanced in light of the initial publication of the General Board's recommendations on proportions for the fleet.⁵

In 1914, after Princip fired some catalytic pistol shots in Sarajevo, the administration told the country it "must be neutral in fact as well

²New York Times, 9 March 1913, Sect I, p. 3:5; and "The New War Secretaries", Army Navy Journal, 8 March 1913, p. 833:2.

³Annual Reports, 1913, p. 8-11, 29-34.

⁴The Annual Reports, from 1913 - 1916 contained the General Board's shipbuilding recommendations as an appendix, a practice never before used, and one which gave the General Board an open voice in fleet construction.

⁵Annual Reports, 1913, p. 33.

as in name . . . impartial in thought as well as in action",⁶ and Wilson set about to keep the United States from becoming involved in the conflict. Even though demands for preparedness began as soon as the war reports from Europe arrived, and people such as Admiral Fiske pointed out to the Secretary of the Navy the actual inability of the Navy to wage war,⁷ the Secretary in 1914 scaled down the General Board's recommendation for new construction to two battleships, six destroyers, and a few other lesser craft. His annual report dealt not on requirements to prepare for trouble, but upon the hope for an "international understanding to put an end to the feverish competitions in the building of costly engines of destruction."⁸ Additionally, Daniels apparently "conscientiously avoided any reference to a possibility of war in his plans and recommendations for the guidance of the Navy Department"⁹ and avoided the use of the words "war" or "preparedness for war" in attempts to justify fleet expansion.¹⁰ His greatest concern at this time was not in providing for the needs of the fleet, but in expending funds with the overly predominant thought of economy on his mind. This attitude was in perfect harmony with administration policy, for late in 1914 Wilson confirmed his intention to

⁶Woodrow Wilson, quoted in Armin Rappaport, Sources in American Diplomacy, (New York: MacMillan, 1966), p. 196.

⁷Fiske, From Midshipman to Rear Admiral, p. 540-541.

⁸Annual Reports, 1914, p. 55.

⁹Testimony of Admiral W. S. Sims, quoted in Naval Investigation, p. 3216.

¹⁰Ibid., p. 3213.

"continue the orderly, unhurried development of our power on the seas . . . which we will pursue at all seasons, without haste and after a fashion perfectly consistent with the peace of the world".¹¹ Wilson not only overlooked the existence of conditions which might necessitate preparing the Navy for action, but he also muzzled some of the better champions of preparedness by preventing all armed forces officers, active or retired, from making "public comment of any kind upon the military or political situation on the other side of the water."¹²

Between the recommendations by the Secretary of the Navy of 1914 and those of 1915, a change in heart toward naval preparedness had taken place. Daniels went on record asking for a five year building program of one hundred eighty-six ships of all classes, including six battle cruisers, ten scout cruisers, and fifty destroyers, along with ten battleships.¹³ Clearly, here was a direct challenge to the historic naval supremacy of Great Britain, a total departure from the traditional role of neutrality, and a naval program attempting to balance the fleet! What were the forces that prodded Daniels to depart so radically from his former position?

The most obvious sign Daniels had was Wilson's modification on his strict stand against preparedness. Wilson began leaning toward preparedness

¹¹Woodrow Wilson, "Annual Address to Congress", 8 December 1914, U. S. Cong. Record, 63 Congress, 3rd Sess., p. 19. (Emphasis added)

¹²Wilson to L. M. Garrison and J. Daniels, 6 August 1914, quoted in A. S. Link, Wilson: The Struggle for Neutrality, 1914 - 1915, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1960), p. 66.

¹³Annual Reports, 1915, p. 5.

by the summer of 1915. The Lusitania tragedy obviously prompted the move toward preparedness, and in July the President instructed Daniels to draw up plans for the full development of a fighting Navy.¹⁴ Additionally, in August Wilson told Colonel E. M. House that "he had never been sure that we ought not to take part in the conflict and if it seemed evident that Germany and her militaristic ideas were to win, the obligation upon us was greater than ever."¹⁵ Then in November in a speech before the Manhattan Club, the President hinted at a new long range naval program. He suggested the need to speed up our naval building program and to bring the fleet "to a point of extradordinary force and efficiency as compared with the other navies of the world."¹⁶ The President presented this naval building program to Congress and it exactly duplicated that which Daniels had submitted six days earlier in December 1915.¹⁷ At the conclusion of a nine stop speaking tour in February 1916, the President told a St. Louis audience that the country needed "the greatest navy in the world."¹⁸

This change in presidential viewpoint altered the balance of power

¹⁴Ray S. Baker, Woodrow Wilson, Life and Letters, (New York: Doubleday, Doran, 1937), v. VI, p. 8.

¹⁵Charles Seymour, The Intimate Papers of Colonel House, (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin, 1926), v. II, p. 84.

¹⁶Albert Shaw, ed., The Messages and Papers of Woodrow Wilson, (New York: Review of Reviews, 1924), v. I, p. 130.

¹⁷U. S. Cong. Record, 64 Congress, 1st Sess., 7 December 1915, p. 97.

¹⁸Woodrow Wilson, "St. Louis Speech", New York Times, 4 February 1916, p. 3:4.

in Congress. It brought a number of Democrats into partnership with the big navy Republicans and insured success to the greatest, most far-reaching Naval Appropriations Act seen in the country's history. The motivating forces behind the President's drastic change of policy are a subject of study in themselves, but certainly include the long run failure of the Lusitania negotiations and the general submarine crisis.¹⁹ Wilson's most intimate advisor, Colonel House, urged preparation repeatedly, telling his leader that "the United States was taking a terrific gamble trusting its security to Allied success."²⁰ Domestic politics were also a decisive factor; Republican association with the increasingly popular preparedness groups posed a testy challenge in the forthcoming elections.

The important object lesson here is that with Wilson's conversion to preparedness, he pushed a program which established a standard of naval power ultimately equal to that maintained by the most powerful navy in the world. This one act then merged naval policy with the foreign policy in existence since the days of Theodore Roosevelt and promised naval planners the necessary tools to carry through the administration's avowed foreign policies.

The administration's fears of a conflict with Germany were quite minimal during 1913 and 1914; but they grew largely as a result of the many face-to-face confrontations the United States had with Germany in

¹⁹Arthur S. Link, Woodrow Wilson and the Progressive Era, (New York: Harper, 1954), p. 179.

²⁰George T. Davis, A Navy Second to None, (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1940), p. 212.

1915 and 1916. The naval bills of 1914 and 1915 reflected the general mood that we would not enter into a shooting fray with any European power; however, the efforts of Wilson and House to solve the differences between Great Britain and Germany best point out how a German threat was viewed. Noble sentiment, moral persuasion, conciliation, etc., were the weapons to use in dealing with German problems. Even after the war commenced in Europe, no action by the United States against Germany was desired or felt imminent for quite a while. Some fear that a German victory would result, and specifically fear of the Germans controlling the British fleet gave American naval planners nightmares. Yet it was not until mid or late 1915 that a dread apprehension of German naval might gave a true cause to build the mightiest fleet in being. Even pronouncements about the specter of German naval might by Admiral Mahan and Colonel Roosevelt were used only as a crutch to support shipbuilding requirements.²¹ Only after Wilson's conversion to preparedness was complete was Germany realistically viewed.

²¹Mahan noted that Germany was the only power with great land and naval forces. He stated that any defeat of the British fleet might allow Germany to "spare readily a large expeditionary force for over-seas operation.", Alfred T. Mahan, The Interest of America in International Conditions, p. 162; and he wrote specifically to "The German State and Its Menace", Allen Wescot, ed., Mahan on Naval Warfare, (Boston: Little, Brown, 1918), p. 302-306. Roosevelt wrote, ". . . do you not believe that if Germany won in this war, smashed the English Fleet and destroyed the British Empire, within a year or two she would insist on taking the dominant position in South and Central America . . .". Roosevelt to Hugo Munsterberg, 3 October 1914, Elting E. Morison, ed., The Letters of Theodore Roosevelt, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1954), v. VIII, p. 823. For further examples, see: Theodore Roosevelt, America and the World War, (New York: Scribner, 1915).

Views about a Japanese threat are not so simply generalized during this period. First, the Japanese were interwoven in the European situation because of the Anglo-Japanese treaty of alliance. Secondly, the presence of even minimal European military might in Asia would of necessity be removed upon the commencement of a continental conflict. The British, as well as the Germans, certainly would be unable to maintain an Asiatic fleet if any naval confrontation were even remotely possible in Atlantic waters. Thus, America might well be alone in attempting to stem the imperialistic expansion of Japan, freed from the restraints of British or German power in the Far East.

Japanese-American relations had suffered in the pre-war years because of legislation in our western states which was openly discriminatory against Japanese immigrants. In order to give no further cause for Japanese apprehension at this time Wilson and Daniels decided that no Navy ship movements in the Pacific would be allowed and this was ordered, even though the Joint Board of the Army and Navy had recommended withdrawal.²² The Joint Board felt so strongly about this that another meeting was held, after the President had made his decision. Again the recommendation to move some ships was presented to the President, but this time the story was leaked to the press. Wilson was greatly upset, and threatened to abolish the Joint Board.²³ The relations were to suffer

²²E. David Cronon, The Cabinet Diaries of Josephus Daniels, (Lincoln: University of Nebraska, 1963), p. 66-67.

²³Ibid., p. 67-68

even more after Japan entered the war against Germany, took the southern Shantung peninsula, and eventually presented China with the "Twenty-one Demands".

The United States reacted diplomatically to these demands, appealing to London as well as Tokyo for compromise. After a series of notes and conferences during the period from January 1915 to May 1915, the U.S. succeeded in averting a clash between China and Japan. Additionally, every endeavor to find a peaceful solution which would not further the possibility of a Japanese-American conflict was made.²⁴ Rather than adding impetus to fleet construction, this confrontation probably helped stifle any drastic fleet increase;²⁵ and possibly the thought of antagonizing Japan led to the cancellation of plans to send the Atlantic Fleet to the 1915 San Francisco Exposition.²⁶

The confrontations with Japan during this era have prompted some writers to conclude that the United States was in reality building a Navy to face the probable enemy of the future, and that the enemy was Japan. One main support for this thesis, by O. J. Clinard, contends that "the difference between the United States and Japan were fundamental and permanent; those with Germany were temporary . . .".²⁷ Temporary or

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²⁴Clinard, p. 141-142.

²⁵G. Davis, p. 206.

²⁶"The Lesson of the Hour", Army Navy Journal, 15 May 1915, p. 1173:2.

²⁷Clinard, p. 171.

permanent, the conflicts which absorbed the attention of the public and Congress were those which eventually caused ship construction appropriations. Dr. Clinard states that the development of the Navy resulted from the failure of all other means of resolution to settle conflicts with Japan. He says that there can be little doubt "that the Naval Construction Act of 1916 was directed against Japan".²⁸ It will be shown later that Congress did not endorse this view, and that the Congress preferred to find reason for naval expansion in the German problem. The point Dr. Clinard amply illustrates is that problems existed in the Far East, because of the Open Door policy, American territorial possessions, and a host of other difficulties. Equally well dramatized is the fact that the United States possessed no Pacific forces capable of backing administration policy in the Far East with power.

Besides mirroring the administration's views on naval construction, Secretary Daniels made a number of changes internal to the Navy Department which affected its capabilities. Specifically, Daniels gradually abolished the Aid system, and established the office of the Chief of Naval Operations who ". . . shall, under the direction of the Secretary of the Navy, be charged with the operations of the fleet, and with preparation and readiness of plans for its use in war."²⁹ Although Daniels now had a tool to insure fleet readiness, he was totally indifferent to

²⁸Ibid.

²⁹Archibald Oden, comp., Navy Yearbook, 1917-1918, (Washington: U.S. Govt. Print. Off., 1919), p. 383.

strengthening the Navy and the first CNO, Rear Admiral William S. Benson, was delegated little authority and used sparingly.³⁰

Daniels' concern prior to the massive 1915 proposals for fleet increase served the Navy ill. Instead of using his position to gain material preparation, proper training, and readiness throughout the service, he squandered resources, time, and energy on relatively trivial matters. As stated earlier he gave little thought to battle planning. He attempted to develop a "great university" within the Navy. Although the classroom exercises were in theory required only during off-duty hours, in practice the school sessions took place anytime and utilized manhours better devoted to shipboard training.³¹ Daniels championed plans for reopening and expanding all the government navy yards,³² and called for the complete utilization of all existing public facilities. He would have excluded private industry from building warships.³³ His equally ambitious plans for establishing public facilities to provide the Navy with armor-plate,

³⁰Elting E. Morrison, Admiral Sims and the Modern American Navy, (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin, 1942), p. 324-325; Edward M. Coffman, The War To End All Wars, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1968), p. 89-90; and Vincent Davis, The Admirals Lobby, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1967), p. 22.

³¹Annual Reports, 1913, p. 6-7; General Order 53, 1 October 1913; and V. Davis, p. 20.

³²New York Times, 17 June 1913, p. 7:3; 14 July 1913, p. 2:3, 6 February 1914, p. 10:2.

³³Ibid., 15 June 1913, p. 1:2.

fuel, and ordnance detracted from the tasks at hand which needed to be accomplished.³⁴

No doubt the Secretary's initial programs were well-meant. When prodded by Wilson to expand the Navy, Daniels responded. However, more vigorous leadership by the Secretary could have given the Navy a firmer base from which to grow. Daniels' apathy regarding the security of the nation and complacency vis-à-vis the true state of the Navy's existing power are difficult to justify.

³⁴Ibid., 14 July 1913, p. 2:3; 31 January 1914, p. 8:2; and Annual Reports, 1913, p. 11-16.

CHAPTER V

THE NAVY AS CONGRESS VIEWED IT

The question of what is an adequate Navy for us is not one to be determined by our Naval Experts; it is one for the administration and Congress to outline. Many important international and far-reaching matters have a bearing on the course to be taken.

-Senator John W. Weeks

Exactly who did and will continue to formulate the broad guidelines directing United States naval shipbuilding programs is really an incontestable point. Congress is empowered by the Constitution to determine the need for a Navy, its strength, and its composition. Only in the light of all of the policies of the country can the Congress determine America's naval needs.

From the period 1910 to 1916 Senators and Congressmen probably reflected the national policy and spirit of their constituency even more closely than today. While this statement is admittedly one of conjecture, a very real awareness of the desires of the "people back home" is referred to often in congressional debate, and appears to be a vital consideration. Congressman W. A. Thomas (Rep., Ohio) probably used a classic phrase, ". . . derelict in my duty to my country and constituent . . .",¹ in 1910 while debating the Naval Appropriation Act of the year. Other legislators frequently used similar phrases, took opinion polls, cited letters written by the voters, placed petitions

¹U. S. Cong. Record, 61 Congress, 2nd Sess., 8 April 1910, p. 4431.

in the Congressional Record, etc.; and they did so more often than one would suppose when viewing only that portion of debate concerning Naval Appropriation Acts.

The predominant spirit in this era was isolationism, fostered by the early history of the country and aided by many sociological causes and ethnic backgrounds.² Therefore, the supporters of a large navy within Congress, or the big navy group, were probably further from the true desires of the country than those members who favored a Navy for coastal defense and commerce raiding. Within the big navy group several prominent leaders emerge, probably most notably Congressman Richmond P. Hobson of Alabama in the House, and Senator Henry Cabot Lodge of Massachusetts in the Senate. These two vigorous champions of the Navy had little in common, save perspective on naval affairs. Hobson was a former naval officer, had gained some fame during the Spanish-American War, and was a southern Democrat. Lodge was an affluent friend of Theodore Roosevelt, a nationalist, and a northern Republican. Hobson probably had more apprehension of Japan as a naval threat and was certainly vocal about any threat which affected the U. S. Navy. Lodge was, "in the eyes of the German Ambassador, 'an outspoken enemy of Germany'",³ and in truth did not like the Germans or Germany.⁴ Both men were well acquainted with

²Selig Adler, The Isolationist Impulse, (New York: Obelard-Schuman, 1957), p. 30-31.

³G. Davis, p. 117.

⁴For examples of Lodge's outspoken views about Germany, see: John A. Garraty, Henry Cabot Lodge: A Biography, (New York: Knoph, 1965), p. 248-249, 306.

Mahan's precepts and utilized his maxims as well as his name frequently during floor debates.

Other big navy advocates rallied around the ideas professed by Mahan and Theodore Roosevelt, and these two men dominated naval ideology until the outbreak of World War I.⁵ The Captain and the ex-President provided a nucleus to hold the big navy group together during lean years. Included in this group were such men as C. A. Boutelle (Rep., Me.), F. A. Britten (Rep., Ill.), T. S. Butler (Rep., Pa.), Eugene Hale (Rep., Me.), Fredric Hale (Rep., Me.), B. W. Harris (Rep., Mass.), R. P. Hobson (Dem., Ala.), J. T. Morgan (Dem., Ala.), C. A. Swanson (Dem., Va.), Carl Vinson (Dem., Ga.), D. I. Walsh (Dem., Miss.), and W. C. Whitthorne (Dem., Ky.).⁶

Although Republicans controlled Congress until 1911, battleships were authorized grudgingly in these years; however, Congress was overly generous when authorizations for submarines were passed out. In fact, as seen in Table V, Appendix I, page 66, the acts of 1910 and 1911 authorized eight more submarines than the General Board desired, and six more than Secretary Meyer asked for. The reason for this generosity was the congressional thought that here was a marvelous defense weapon, and cheap to build. The first hint of a non-defensive use of the submarine was the testimony of Cdr. E. W. Eberle (a future CNO), which was introduced during debate over the 1912 Naval Appropriations Act and stated:

⁵G. Davis, p. 140.

⁶Ibid., p. 499.

"Submarines may well be termed pirates of the sea, for they are peculiarly offensive weapons."⁷ The proposition that submarines were a great defense is further strengthened by noting the high numbers of submarines authorized in the Acts of 1912, 1913, 1914, and in particular noting the wording of the 1914 Act. The Act authorized "Eight or more submarines, one to be of seagoing type, to have a surface speed of not less than twenty knots, seven or more to be of coast and harbor defense type . . .".⁸ None of the earlier bills had directed that the submarines authorized were to be used as coast and harbor defense vessels. While it is true that the 1913 vintage submarine was almost exclusively considered a defensive weapon, the specific attempt by Congress to revive the theory of passive defense is unique. The spirit of isolationism called for a defensive navy, and the submarine construction of the era exemplified this. Of the forty-six submarines authorized from 1910 to 1915, only three were of the "sea-going type", and thirty-one were created specifically for coast or harbor defense.⁹

If Congress was so defensively oriented, how could they be prompted to authorize any offensive weapons, such as battleships, and why did they create such an unbalanced fleet despite the warnings previously mentioned?

⁷U. S. Cong. Record, 62 Congress, 2nd Session, 23 May 1912, p. 7031.

⁸Navy Yearbook, 1917 and 1918, p. 379.

⁹See breakdown in Table V, Appendix I, page 66; or Navy Yearbook, 1917, p. 317, 330, 351, 365, 379, 396.

In addition to the natural pride in the fleet, one partial answer appears to be that battleships could be accepted no matter which side you were on. True, the battleship could not be classed as a commerce raider, but it most certainly could be viewed as a tremendous defensive platform for the coastal areas.¹⁰ The big navy people and the Navy Department were perfectly willing to see a different viewpoint as long as the resultant appropriations served the proper need. The commerce raiding aspect soon fell by the wayside and until 1915, two concepts became fixed in congressional naval thinking. First was to build the heaviest first line ships which could outfight opposing ships of their class; and the other was a navy of second rank.¹¹ The theory that the Navy had been designated the first line of defense had been presented to the legislators,¹² now the tacticians only needed to choose the area where this line would be formed.

Traditionally, the Republicans were associated with big navy views, while the Democrats fought to restrain the expensive building of capital

¹⁰"Seagoing coast line battleship" was a class ship last authorized in 1899. In the previous Naval Appropriations Act, "harbor defense vessels of the monitor class" were authorized for the last time. Older small battleships which were unable to take their place in the line with the modern all big gun dreadnought types, were sometimes relegated the duties of coast and harbor defense. Older battleships were also redesignated "armored cruisers" or "protected cruisers" and as such had commerce raiding as well as defensive missions assigned. Navy Yearbook, 1917-1918, p. 133-134, 147.

¹¹G. Davis, p. 195.

¹²U. S. Cong. Record, 61 Congress, 3rd Session, 20 February 1911, p. 3011.

ships. Although this generality is basically correct, an equally true generality is that geographic area dictated interest in the Navy as much as party loyalties. Quite naturally the legislators from coastal states, particularly those with naval facilities within their districts, favored larger naval appropriations than their central state colleagues. Sectional attitudes appeared to be a cause of party disunity when the floor votes on naval appropriations were taken.¹³ While watching the Naval Appropriations Acts of 1910 through 1915 wend their ways through Congress, sectional as well as party groups are seen. The Act of 1916 cut through most lines, sectional or party, and became one of the hottest debates the Congress had seen for some time.

Spirited debate is probably a euphemism when describing congressional discussion over battleships. But the face-to-face verbal conflict between "hawks" and "doves" (to be a bit anachronistic) certainly raged. While the debates covered the whole spectrum of naval hardware, the majority of the time was spent on the topic of the need for battleships. Admittedly, more detailed discussion about scouts, destroyers, and other auxiliaries was held in committee meetings. But on the floor of Congress, once the ultimate compromise over the number of battleships had been reached, little time was devoted to the remainder of the fleet. A typical example of the

¹³G. L. Grassmuck states that "When party unity does break down, the cause is usually sectionalism.", and demonstrates this phenomenon persuasively with regard to Navy legislation for the period 1921-1941. George L. Grassmuck, Sectional Biases in Congress on Foreign Policy, (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1951), p. 14, 39.

amount of time spent on the auxiliaries during floor debate is the three pages of the Congressional Record for the Sixty-first Congress, Second Session, which contain all reference of substance concerning destroyers, repair ships, and colliers.¹⁴ When contrasted to the more than three hundred pages of debate for this same Congress on the Naval Appropriations Act, it would seem that auxiliaries weren't too carefully considered.

The Acts of 1910 and 1911 produced two battleships each, but not without a struggle. The lean years of 1912 and 1913 resulted in one battleship per year, and not until the war years did the Acts of 1914 and 1915 put more emphasis upon the fleet, producing five more first line dreadnoughts. None of these six appropriations produced any cruisers and none made a significant improvement in balancing the fleet. Congressional "doves" often pointed to the lack of sufficient auxiliaries as a reason for not building any more battleships.¹⁵ The "hawks" showed less inclination to point to this facet, possibly for fear that the battleship case would be weakened.

In 1910 and 1911 probably the greatest threat stated was that of Japan. Hobson was in a class by himself in pointing out the Japanese threat and the lack of proper American fleet strength in the Pacific. Hobson was not nearly as good with regard to the specter of Germany.

¹⁴U. S. Cong. Record, 61 Congress, 2nd Session, 8 April 1910 p. 4434-4437.

¹⁵Ibid., 31 March 1910, p. 4069; and 61 Congress, 3rd Session, 21 February 1911, p. 3080.

Many others chimed in, but on the subject of Germany it was more often the fact that Germany was replacing the United States as the number two naval power that predominates, rather than Germany as the threat. The "doves" liked to view the threat of Japan as only a pretext. Representative Richard Barthold (Rep., Mo.) and Senator M. E. Clapp (Rep., Minn.) both claimed to be able to predict when the annual Japanese war scare was due, merely by knowing when the Naval Appropriations Bill would come before the House.¹⁶ Others, including Congressmen L. P. Padgett (Dem., Tenn.), J. L. Slayden (Dem., Tex.), Julius Kahn (Rep., Cal.), J. A. Tawney (Rep., Minn.), and A. W. Gregg (Dem., Tex.), and Senator A. J. Gronna (Rep., N. D.), could see no threat from either Germany or Japan.¹⁷ Congressman Gregg even stated that the German attempts to obtain coaling stations in Columbia and the Japanese attempt to lease Magdalena Bay were both ruses to help gain more ships.¹⁸

Significantly, the "doves" spent more time repudiating the Japanese threat than everyone else did presenting one. A feeling that Japan was a significant consideration, particularly among the "doves", predominates until at least 1913. Although it was repeatedly pointed out that Germany had displaced us as second ranking naval power, Germany cannot be considered

¹⁶Ibid., 61 Congress, 2nd Session, 25 March 1910, p. 3779; and 23 May 1910, p. 6729.

¹⁷Ibid., 26 March 1910, p. 3833; 31 March 1910, p. 4065, 4069; 8 April 1910, p. 4427, 4430; Appendix, p. 276; and 61 Congress, 3rd Session, 21 February 1911, p. 3077.

¹⁸Ibid., 62 Congress, 2nd Session, 23 May 1912, p. 7029-7030.

the prime worry on the hill until just before the war. The increasingly loud hue raised about Germany's naval strength always stated how many units were needed to stay abreast of Germany. Table VI, Appendix II, page 67, shows that even though the reported naval expenditures for the years 1910 to 1915 were in excess of that amount spent by the Germans, the United States did not come close to having an equal amount of battleship or cruiser construction on the ways during this period.

Given that the Germans could build ships in their government yards more cheaply than the Americans,¹⁹ and that some error may appear in the dollar estimate, one fact and one question emerge from Table VI. The fact is that until the war broke out and Germany began to loose tonnage through sinkings, the United States would remain in third position among naval powers, unless France displaced her (and this was a contention on the floor of Congress²⁰) for at least a period of four years despite any efforts the country seemed likely to make. The question is, where was all the money going?

One place where the money was being liberally expended was on the maintenance of navy yards. This brand of "pork-barrel legislation" was nothing new; indeed the scramble for spoils had been part of naval

¹⁹Mahan stated that German funds in naval expenditures bring " . . . larger returns there than in the United States", Interest of America in International Conditions, p. 172.

²⁰J. S. Cong. Record, 62 Congress, 3rd Session, 24 February 1913, p. 3814; 63 Congress, 3rd Session, 29 June 1915, p. 2687; 64 Congress, 1st Session, 27 May 1916, p. 8820; 29 May 1916, Appendix, p. 1183.

legislation since before the Civil War.²¹ Although it would take a skilled accountant to stack the money in the correct piles over these years, and then a shrewd manager to note the absolute extent of waste, a glance at Table III shows a simple comparison of the reported expenditures for "equipment of vessels" and the maintenance expenditures spent by the Bureaus of Yards and Docks and Construction and Repair for maintenance, repair, and public works in the nine existing shipyards. No expenses for Naval Stations or purchases for machinery at the shipyards are included, merely operating expenses. Note that until 1914, it cost more to keep the yards open than it did to purchase the equipment the yards were to install.

TABLE III²²

Expenditures for Equipment of Vessels and Navy
Yard Maintenance

| Year | 1909 | 1910 | 1911 | 1912 | 1913 | 1914 | 1915 |
|--------------------------------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| Equipment of Vessels ^a | 3,755 | 3,981 | 3,863 | 3,843 | 3,843 | 4,550 | - |
| Yard Maintenance ^a | 4,840 | 5,371 | 5,882 | 5,949 | 4,093 | 4,214 | 4,153 |

^aExpenditures expressed in thousands of dollars.

It is not only eye opening, but very unnerving to realize in some small way the amount of money being distributed to play local politics.

²¹For examples, see: Sprouts, p. 121-123.

²²Figures for Table III extracted from: Navy Yearbook, 1917-1918, p. 662-668.

By 1909, eight of the ten Senators on the Senate Naval Committee had navy yards in their home states. The chairman was Senator Eugene Hale (Rep., Me.), known as the "Owner of the Navy", and he also held the number two spot on the Senate Appropriations Committee.²³ Later, Senator Benjamin Tillman (Dem., S. C.), Chairman of the Senate Naval Affairs Committee from 1913 to 1916 stated, "If there is any pork to be distributed, South Carolina must have its share." and then proceeded to hold up the appropriations act until the Charlestown navy yard had been given adequate work.²⁴ This pork barrel trend was not new, but was high on the frequency curve during the 1910 to 1916 era. In fact, particularly during the Taft administration, as shipbuilding declined and appropriations stayed fairly high one gets the feeling that Congress felt the shipyards were more important than the fleet.²⁵

Even though the fear of Germany did not predominate until the debate over the naval bill of 1914, a self-admitted "dove of peace", Congressman W. S. Goodwin (Dem., Ark.), stated that he thought there was not the remotest chance of a war with Germany.²⁶ He, significantly, did not consider Japan but spent his time repudiating what he considered to be the

²³O'Gara, p. 31.

²⁴Josephus Daniels, The Wilson Era, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1944), p. 338.

²⁵For supporting conclusions, see: Harris, p. 149; Howe, p. 446-450; and Sprouts, p. 297-300.

²⁶U. S. Cong. Record, 63 Congress, Special Session, 24 February 1913, p. 3826.

"naval threat of the year". Attention was divided in 1913 between Germany and Japan, and one must conclude that both powers received about equal consideration. Even the "annual war scare prediction", which the "doves" claimed always came in time to promote the building of battleships, was stated this time by Senator C. S. Thomas (Dem., Col.) with reference to either Germany or Japan.²⁷

The debate in 1913 also showed a general acceptance of the fact that the United States was no longer the second ranking naval power. Jane's placed the year as 1910, and Brassey's as 1911, that the U. S. Navy was displaced by Germany. However, the "doves" still held that we were maintaining the strongest navy in the world, apart from England, until 1913.²⁸ One cantankerous legislator, Congressman S. A. Witherspoon (Dem., Miss.), continued to hold that we had the second best Navy afloat, or possibly the best, but his reasoning was a little absurd. More and more indicators appeared to set the stage for a total shift toward a potential foe, and for the modest increases of 1914 and 1915, with the finale to come in 1916.

This year, 1913, then can be stated as the year in which primary emphasis shifted from Japan as the most serious naval threat to an equal emphasis on Germany in the eyes of American legislators. The process was gradual and coincided with an increase in good fortune for the Navy. The breakthrough had not yet been made, but the vote on battleships, one

²⁷Ibid., 28 February 1913, p. 4319.

²⁸Thomas A. Brassey, ed., The Naval Annual, 1911, (Portsmouth, England: J. Griffin, 1911), p. 68; and Jane's, 1910, p. 9.

hundred seventy-four Representatives in favor of one and one hundred fifty-six in favor of two, was considerably closer than in 1912 where Democratic caucus had determined the answer to the battleship question.

The Act of 1914 produced three battleships, fourteen lesser vessels, and an amount of surprising debate. Senator Thomas made the only lengthy speech dealing with Japan as a threat.²⁹ He was more than offset by the volume of words produced on the subject of the direct threat of the German Navy. In addition to many other speakers, even Congressman Hobson slighted Japan to deliver lengthy addresses about the German threat.³⁰

Other favorite topics which emerged during this debate over naval affairs were the conflict with Mexico, the Panama Canal, and the Monroe Doctrine. Curiously, these subjects seemed to follow a pattern and always led back to a threat from Germany. It was natural, because of the circumstances of the day, to involve Mexico in the debate over the Naval Appropriations Act. Then, by staying in the same general geographic area, the speaker could lead into the need for a Navy because of the newly completed Panama Canal; or, he could take a similar path and discuss the Monroe Doctrine, and the naval power required to enforce it. In most instances, Germany was cited as the power who would become the bogeyman in any of the above discussions. Actually, more controversy raged over

²⁹U. S. Cong. Record, 63 Congress, 2nd Session, 2 June 1914, p. 9638-9641.

³⁰Ibid., 23 April 1914, p. 7147-7153; and 28 April 1914, p. 7380-7382.

types of projectiles and navy yards than over who was the most likely foe or the necessary number of battleships. No apparent thought was given at all to an attempt to balance the fleet.

The naval bill of 1915 was fairly nondescript, produced two battleships, and nineteen smaller vessels. The debate was fairly sedate, and although an attempt was made to ammend the bill to include battle cruisers and/or scouts, this attempt was defeated.³¹ This attempt produced some awareness that the fleet was seriously out of balance, and more of the legislators than ever before appeared to be aware of the serious deficiencies caused by the lack of screening and other auxiliary vessels. Submarines also received a big play, in appropriations as well as in words.

A large amount of time was spent in discussing more mundane topics such as the officers "plucking board" and personnel for the Navy. One speaker, Congressman W. L. Hensley (Dem., Mo.), even interjected the thought that we should sit tight, let Germany and England mutually decimate each other, and wind up the ranking naval power without appropriating another cent.³²

Although diplomatic trouble with Japan was a reality of the day, little reference was made to this sore spot on the floor of Congress. The occasional reference tied to the Naval Appropriations Act was almost always apologetic, and is typified by Congressman F. H. Gillett (Rep., Mass.) who

³¹Ibid., 64 Congress, 1st Session, 5 February 1916, p. 3135-3136.

³²Ibid., p. 3113.

stated: "There is one possible antagonist--Japan. And I would like to say here that I appreciate how impolite and unwise it is to thus publically air our relations with other nations and to treat them as problematical enemies."³³

So, with the Great War well underway, preparedness movements on the upswing, and trouble around the corner, the Congress still left the Navy waiting.

The 29 August 1916 signing of the Naval Appropriations Act marked a new era in American naval history. It provided for a continuous program of construction to include one hundred fifty-six ships of all classes to be laid down before 1 July 1919.³⁴ It created a direct challenge to the historic naval supremacy of Great Britain and committed the nation to a policy not in keeping with the role of neutrality.

The congressional debate over the naval bill of 1916 was long, characterized by traditional party line and nonpartisan politics (particularly in the later stages), and quite biting upon occasion. The length of debate to which this bill was subjected is suggested by the fact that thirty-five major speeches were appended to the Congressional Record by legislators speaking on Naval Appropriations. This more than doubles the number of major addresses seen in the Record for naval bills of any preceding year of this era.

³³Ibid., 30 January 1916, p. 2742.

³⁴Navy Yearbook, 1916, p. 480-481.

The preponderant term used in debate was "preparedness". While the deterrent effect of a strong navy was used in the preparedness context, general preparedness without openly stating that it was preparedness for impending war was the most frequent argument. Although Congress probably viewed American war clouds on the horizon, political expediency deemed it necessary to refrain from actually suggesting that the United States was preparing for war!

As stated earlier, President Wilson had by now become a devotee of preparedness and certainly helped obtain a few needed votes in gaining acceptance of this bill. When the final vote on the Naval Appropriations Act of 1916 took place in the Senate, forty-seven Democrats joined the Republicans in casting "yeas". How many of these forty-seven were loyal Wilsonians reflecting the President's views can only be conjectured, but Wilson's support was obviously a decided factor.

Another factor which was decisive in this bill was the Battle of Jutland. The battle transpired just when the bill was being voted upon in the House, and it occupied the front pages of major newspapers for at least four days.³⁵ The New York Times even asked the question of how the apparent beating the battle cruisers took would affect the structure of the Naval Appropriations Act then before Congress.³⁶ Inasmuch as Jutland really gave no assurances about the future of the North Sea, post-Jutland

³⁵For example, see: New York Times, 3, 4, 5, and 6 June 1916.

³⁶Ibid., 3 June 1916, p. 1:1.

debate dropped away from talk of regaining second place among naval powers, and a spirit of providing a navy equal to the most powerful in the world was instilled into Congress. The post-Jutland debate also successfully completed a drive to compress the original five year program into a three year package. Jutland helped the battleship program without sacrificing any other class ship's construction, in that the ability of the dreadnought to absorb punishment was observed, as well as the necessity to have available proper scouting and screening vessels.

In drafting the Act, the Congress provided adequate balance in all classes of ships, enlarged and strengthened the Office of Operations, created a naval flying corps, increased both officer and enlisted personnel ceilings, and set up a reserve organization.³⁷ Altogether this was the most comprehensive piece of naval legislation thus far passed, and provided the naval power necessary to merge naval policy and the foreign policy of the United States. The new construction authorized is portrayed below in Table IV, and presents the magnitude of this bill. When contrasted with Table I on page 2, one can imagine the elation felt by naval planners.

³⁷Navy Yearbook, 1916, p. 400, 426, 427, 434, 440, ~~444~~, 480, 481.

TABLE IV³⁸

CONSTRUCTION AUTHORIZED BY NAVAL APPROPRIATION ACT OF 1916

| Ship Type | No. Authorized | Appropriations for first year |
|------------------|----------------|----------------------------------|
| Battleship | 10 | 4 |
| Battle Cruiser | 6 | 4 |
| Scout Cruiser | 10 | 4 |
| Destroyers | 50 | 20 |
| Fleet Submarines | 9 | - |
| Coast Submarines | 59 | 30 |
| Fuel Ships | 3 | 1 |
| Repair Ships | 1 | - |
| Transport | 1 | - |
| Hospital Ship | 1 | 1 |
| Destroyer Tender | 1 | - |
| Submarine Tender | 1 | - |
| Ammunition Ships | 2 | 1 |
| Gunboats | 2 | 1 |

³⁸Figures for Table IV extracted from: Naval Yearbook, 1916, p. 480-481.

CONCLUSIONS

WEIGHING THE EFFECTS

These notes show that the American Navy is in a state of active development in correspondance with a larger and wider policy. The personnel is to expand with the material side of the Fleet, and within a few years the United States will have assumed a much higher place in the naval scale of nations.

-John Leyland
Brassey's Naval Annual 1916

Now that seven years of naval history have been surveyed, what can be determined by the insights gained? Other than the drama of a Navy really starting to grow, what has been viewed?

First, it is evident that the General Board of the Navy did not meet its obligations in the area of planning. Though its authority to act was limited, the Board did not use its residual powers to perform its function of "providing plans of campaign" during the pre-war years, the very years when such planning must be accomplished. On the other hand, the General Board can be congratulated for holding to the only avowed naval building policy possessed by the United States during this era. The constant spotlighting by the Board of existing fleet deficiencies helped in gaining the proper goals when the massive fleet building program was created. The Board was probably the first group to appreciate Germany as the potential enemy, and correctly recommended the retention of the entire battle fleet in the Atlantic.

The Taft administration dealt with the naval problem posed by Germany to the best of its ability. By building a battleship heavy

fleet, the United States appeared much more formidable than it truly was, and certainly commanded much more respect than if capital ship units had been sacrificed to obtain the needed auxiliaries. However, when considering this policy vis-à-vis Japan, the Taft administration was playing with fire. The President and his Secretary of the Navy were quite fortunate that no Japanese incident escalated beyond control, for they had neither the means to cope with such a situation, nor the plans for gaining the necessary means. The naval policy they followed, although dangerous, was still probably the best possible choice for the times. The "in-house" policies of Secretary Meyer were commendable, and in consonance with the political realities of life. The Secretary attempted needed reform and reorganization at a time when it was required. Unfortunately, neither he nor the President possessed the political following or leadership necessary to institute the reforms that were desired.

The Wilson administration seemingly had all the political muscle it needed during this era. The only thing President Wilson needed to do was make up his mind with regard to direction of movement. Once preparedness was decided upon, the wheels started turning, and when oiled by the President, the machinery really moved. Secretary Daniels, colorful as he was, left something to be desired as the leader of the Navy. He did not properly appreciate the relative importance of the tasks at hand, nor did he utilize existing assets to the fullest extent. If the preparedness movement had not risen, it is quite conceivable that the United States Navy would have continued to decline in relative status.

Finally there is the Congress, whatever its shortcomings. The legislators on the surface appear to have been slow in recognizing the facts of life. The decline of the U. S. Navy into third position among world powers was not recognized until two or three years after it actually happened. Germany, as the most pressing threat was not appreciated until a year or two after naval planners had replaced Japan with Germany in the priority of naval threats. Although the fleet was seriously short of scouts, destroyers, and other auxiliaries, Congress would worry only about the number of battleships to be authorized.

Yet, despite all the surface shortcomings, the Congress represented the wishes of the people. Economic considerations are seen throughout the naval legislation from 1910 to 1915. The spirit of isolationism and the enervating drag of a depression were manifest openly in the preachments uttered in the debates on the hill. Only after the country became aroused, and it had become clear that the constituencies desired a truly powerful first line of defense, was appropriate legislation enacted. The reflection of the desires of the people can be seen by viewing naval legislation of the day, and this is a desirable and correct condition in any era.

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- APPENDIX I

TABLE V
- NAVAL VESSELS RECOMMENDED AND AUTHORIZED

| Recommended by the General Board. | Recommended by the Secretary of the Navy. | Authorized by Congress. |
|-----------------------------------|---|------------------------------|
| 1909. | (Secretary Meyer.) | (Act of 1910.) |
| 4 battleships..... | 2 battleships..... | 2 battleships. |
| 1 repair ship..... | 1 repair ship..... | 2 fuel ships. |
| 10 destroyers..... | | 4 submarines. |
| 4 scout cruisers..... | | 6 destroyers. |
| 1 ammunition ship..... | | |
| 1 fuel ship (oil tank)..... | | |
| 1910. | (Secretary Meyer.) | (Act of 1911.) |
| 4 battleships..... | 2 battleships..... | 2 battleships. |
| 1 gunboat..... | 1 gunboat..... | 1 gunboat. |
| 2 river gunboats..... | 1 river gunboat..... | 1 river gunboat. |
| 4 fuel ships..... | 2 submarines..... | 4 submarines. |
| 2 tugs..... | 1 fuel ship..... | 2 fuel ships. |
| 3 submarine tenders..... | 2 tugs..... | 2 tugs. |
| 16 destroyers..... | 1 submarine tender..... | 1 submarine tender. |
| 1 repair ship..... | | 8 destroyers. |
| 4 scout-cruisers..... | | |
| 2 destroyer tenders..... | | |
| 1 mine layer..... | | |
| 2 transports..... | | |
| 1 hospital ship..... | | |
| 1911. | (Secretary Meyer.) | (Act of 1912.) |
| 4 battleships..... | 2 battleships..... | 1 battleship. |
| 4 fuel ships..... | 2 fuel ships..... | 2 fuel ships. |
| 16 destroyers..... | | 6 destroyers. |
| 2 destroyer tenders..... | | 1 destroyer tender. |
| 5 submarines..... | | 8 submarines. |
| 2 submarine tenders..... | | 1 submarine tender. |
| 1 repair ship..... | | |
| 4 scout cruisers..... | | |
| 1 ammunition ship..... | | |
| 1 mine layer..... | | |
| 2 transports..... | | |
| 1912. | (Secretary Meyer.) | (Act of 1913.) |
| 4 battleships..... | 3 battleships..... | 1 battleship. |
| 2 battle cruisers..... | 2 battle cruisers..... | |
| 2 gunboats..... | 2 gunboats..... | |
| 16 destroyers..... | 16 destroyers..... | 6 destroyers. |
| 6 submarines..... | 6 submarines..... | 4 submarines. |
| 1 ammunition ship..... | 1 fuel ship (conditionally)..... | |
| 2 transports..... | 1 ammunition ship..... | 1 transport. |
| 2 tugs..... | 2 transports..... | |
| 1 submarine tender..... | 2 tugs..... | |
| 1 destroyer tender..... | 1 submarine tender..... | |
| 1 supply ship..... | 1 destroyer tender..... | 1 supply ship. |
| 1 submarine testing dock..... | 1 supply ship..... | |
| | 1 submarine testing dock..... | |
| 1913. | (Secretary Daniels.) | (Act of 1914.) |
| 4 battleships..... | 3 battleships..... | 3 battleships. |
| 16 destroyers..... | 8 destroyers..... | 6 destroyers. |
| 8 submarines..... | 3 submarines..... | 8 or more submarines. |
| 1 destroyer tender..... | | 1 submarine testing dock. |
| 1 submarine tender..... | | |
| 2 fuel ships (oilers)..... | | |
| 2 gunboats..... | | |
| 1 transport..... | | |
| 1 supply ship..... | | |
| 1 hospital ship..... | | |
| 1914. | (Secretary Daniels.) | (Act of 1915.) |
| 4 battleships..... | 2 battleships..... | 2 battleships. |
| 16 destroyers..... | 6 destroyers..... | 6 destroyers. |
| 3 fleet submarines..... | 8 submarines or more, 1 to be of seagoing type and 7 or more of coast-defense type. | 2 seagoing submarines. |
| 4 scouts..... | | 16 coast-defense submarines. |
| 4 gunboats..... | 1 gunboat..... | |
| 2 oil fuel ships..... | 1 oiler..... | 1 oil fuel ship. |
| 1 destroyer tender..... | | |
| 1 submarine tender..... | | |
| 1 Navy transport..... | | |
| 1 hospital ship..... | | |
| 1 supply ship..... | | |

Figures for table V extracted from: Annual Reports, 1915, p. 86-87.

APPENDIX II

TABLE VI
NAVAL EXPENDITURE AND BUILDING PROGRAMS

| GREAT BRITAIN | | | UNITED STATES | | |
|---------------|--------------------------|-------------------------------|---------------|--------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Year | Expenditure ^a | New Construction ^b | Year | Expenditure ^a | New Construction ^b |
| 1910-11 | 202.1 | 15 - 261.9 | 1910-11 | 133.2 | 6 - 189.1 |
| 1911-12 | 211.6 | 13 - 352.3 | 1911-12 | 127.8 | 4 - 109.0 |
| 1912-13 | 224.4 | 15 - 396.0 | 1912-13 | 129.7 | 5 - 144.8 |
| 1913-14 | 237.5 | 17 - 421.0 | 1913-14 | 142.7 | 5 - 151.0 |
| 1914-15 | 260.7 | 17 - 449.5 | 1914-15 | 148.3 | 5 - 160.0 |
| GERMANY | | | FRANCE | | |
| 1910-11 | 103.3 | 12 - 267.0 | 1910-11 | 74.1 | 4 - 125.7 |
| 1911-12 | 107.2 | 10 - 247.3 | 1911-12 | 80.4 | 7 - 161.6 |
| 1912-13 | 110.0 | 9 - 246.3 | 1912-13 | 81.7 | 9 - 214.1 |
| 1913-14 | 112.0 | 9 - 285.0 | 1913-14 | 90.2 | 9 - 215.0 |
| 1914-15 | 114.0 | 11 - 297.2 | 1914-15 | 123.8 | 9 - 216.8 |
| JAPAN | | | | | |
| 1910-11 | 36.9 | 3 - 71.8 | | | |
| 1911-12 | 43.0 | 5 - 140.0 | | | |
| 1912-13 | 46.5 | 4 - 120.0 | | | |
| 1913-14 | 48.1 | 7 - 144.0 | | | |
| 1914-15 | 69.1 | 6 - 177.0 | | | |

^aExpenditures shown in millions of dollars

^bNew Construction consists only of battleship and cruiser construction in units being built and displacement tons being built.

Figures for table VI extracted from: Navy Yearbook, 1911, p. 749-754; 1912, p. 748; 1913, p. 830; Jane's Fighting Ships, 1914, p. 32a; Navy Yearbook, 1916, p. 657.