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Albert B. Corey

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## CANADIAN BORDER DEFENCE PROBLEMS AFTER 1814 TO THEIR CULMINATION IN THE 'FORTIES

By ALBERT B. COREY

In the realm of Canadian-American relations there has been no greater myth than that of the three thousand miles of continuously undefended border. Fortunately, although orators have regaled their expectant audiences with unhistorical ebullitions, realistic historians, especially during the past score of years, have been attempting to explain how the border remained comparatively undefended, even when circumstances required defensive measures to be taken.

A study of the defence of the frontier leads to the conclusion that it cannot be approached exclusively in terms of British policy or of United States policy. It must be studied in relation to both. As a corollary, it needs hardly to be urged that British and American policies were both forged out of self-interest and out of what each country conceived the intentions of the other to be.

In 1815 the government and people of the United States were relieved to be at peace with Great Britain once more. But peace imposed a series of problems of its own. First, how large a standing army should be maintained? Second, where should detachments of the army be placed and where should fortifications be constructed in order to provide maximum protection against Britain in North America? Third, what policy should be pursued with respect to the establishment of permanent naval forces on the Great Lakes?

The first of these questions was more quickly answered than the others, for on March 3, 1815, the United States army was reduced from 33,000 to 10,000, which for those days, as the sequence will show, was considered to be not only a large force but one which would be quite adequate to meet any emergency. An army of this size, it was agreed, if properly distributed, would place the United States in a strong defensive position.

The second question involved domestic as well as foreign problems.<sup>1</sup> In 1815, the frontier from the Atlantic to Detroit, more especially the New York frontier, appeared to present no pressing need of extensive defence because of the natural barriers of river and lakes, and the absence of Indians. Consequently only skeleton posts were retained at Plattsburg, Sackett's Harbor, and Niagara. Of this policy President Monroe approved in his message to Congress in December, 1817, after he had made a tour of the frontier from Ogdensburg to Detroit during the previous summer.

It was in the west that difficult issues arose. With the advance of settlement, Americans encroached more and more upon Indian lands, with the result that during the thirty years after the peace there was constant danger of Indian uprisings. This appears to be a purely domestic problem but for a score of years it was affected seriously by the presence among the Indians of foreign traders and agents, and by the continuance of British gifts to Indians who crossed over annually to Canada from the peninsula of Michigan.<sup>2</sup> United States policy came, therefore, to be directed toward

<sup>1</sup>The following four paragraphs are based chiefly on two books: E. B. Wesley, *Guarding the Frontier: A Study of Frontier Defense from 1815 to 1825* (Minneapolis, 1935); H. P. Beers, *The Western Military Frontier, 1815-1846* (Philadelphia, 1935).

<sup>2</sup>D. R. Moore, *Canada and the United States, 1815-1830* (Chicago, 1910), 56-64.

the shifting of troops westward and the building of forts from Detroit to Mackinac and thence to Prairie du Chien.

Upon accepting office as Secretary of War in 1817, John C. Calhoun, who remained thoroughly suspicious of the British to the end of his life, decided to push still further west to the Red River and the Mandan villages on the Missouri, both of which areas continued to remain centres of British interest. In fact, the period from 1815 to 1819 represents a rapid advance of posts into the Indian country. In 1819, however, the advance was slowed up by an economy programme which was made necessary by the panic of that year and by the cost of Jackson's campaign against the Seminoles in Florida in 1818. Once slowed down, the building of forts continued at a leisurely pace. In 1821 the army was still further reduced to a paper strength of 6,183. Of this number sixty per cent were stationed in the western posts until after 1830. There they restrained the Indians, assisted American traders, and, in general, encouraged settlement.

While forts were being built farther and farther west, posts nearer the lakes, with the exception of Detroit, began to be evacuated as early as 1818. The impression that one receives from a study of the disposition of troops and the establishment of forts after 1815 is that the United States did not fear attack by the British along the river and lake boundary. Even if there were a latent fear of attack, the suspicious Calhoun, who was largely responsible for pushing westward, probably expressed a universally held opinion when he said that the defence of the St. Lawrence and lake frontier was best served by the astounding increase of population south of that line. So little did the United States fear attack along this frontier that in 1836 there were no troops at the posts at Sackett's Harbor and Niagara, and apparently none at Plattsburg. In Maine alone were there a few companies of infantry and artillery.<sup>3</sup>

While it is thus possible to describe the almost complete absence of United States military strength along the St. Lawrence, it needs to be added that the naval agreement of 1817 also aided in establishing a sense of security from attack. This famous agreement was not only born of necessity but it was a measure of statesmanship as well.<sup>4</sup> The absence of any reference in the Treaty of Ghent to the question of right of search resulted in a continuance of this practice on Lake Erie after the war. From Pittsburgh to Buffalo to Philadelphia resentment was voiced in the press and complaints were sent to Washington and to Quebec. Measures to prevent the stopping and searching of vessels were quietly taken, but it was not until after J. Q. Adams had written to Castlereagh, March 23, 1816, that instructions were sent from the Colonial Office to Gore and later to Sherbrooke to discourage the practice of searching American vessels. From these circumstances there emerged the Rush-Bagot Agreement of 1817, the object of which was to maintain on the lakes only such forces as would be large enough to prevent smuggling during time of peace.

The story of this agreement does not end at this point, for in 1817 both the United States and Great Britain had large numbers of ships in various states of disrepair, and the naval authorities in both countries were loath to order immediate reduction to the level agreed upon. In fact, as late as 1832 a Canadian observer was led to remark upon the number of naval

<sup>3</sup>*Register of Debates* (Senate), XII, 387, Feb. 5, 1836.

<sup>4</sup>Moore, *op. cit.*, 30-4.

vessels stationed at Kingston.<sup>5</sup> But if neither the British nor the Americans ordered immediate demolition, they did at least refrain from refitting old ships with new equipment and from building new ones. It was not until 1831 that the United States reduced the number of its ships to the level agreed upon, and it was not until 1834 that the British took similar steps.

It was, of course, not to the interest of the United States to reduce its armaments until the British showed some signs of carrying out their obligations. But the British did not do so until they were assured that in the event of war they would not be prevented from moving troops and supplies to Kingston and the west. When this assurance was secured by the completion of the Rideau Canal, then and then only did the Admiralty order the reduction agreed upon in 1817. Even then they did not order immediate reduction for fear of creating a wrong impression in Canada and the United States. Instead they merely ordered the cessation of all repairs. Eventually in 1834 they took final and definite steps and the Rush-Bagot Agreement came into full effect in fact.

The hesitation of the British government in this matter gives us the clue to its military policy during the decade after 1815. The Duke of Wellington was its engineer, if not its spokesman. In 1819 we find him recommending to Bathurst the erection of strong fortifications at Quebec, Montreal, and Kingston, the strengthening of works on the Richelieu River, the shortening of lines of communication between Quebec and Lake Huron, the control of shipping on the Great Lakes, and the establishment of a permanent force of 13,000 men in Canada.<sup>6</sup> That these measures were designed for defence rather than for offensive action is evident, for the Duke was convinced that it was "undesirable to attempt any attack upon the United States from Canada". The growth of population along the northern border of the United States which made that country safe from attack was the very factor which rendered Canada subject to attack in case of war between Great Britain and the United States.

That it was desirable to provide for the defence of Canada was the conclusion of the military commission appointed by the Duke in 1825. The commission's report<sup>7</sup> covered in detail the possible means of defending the whole of the frontier between the Canadas and the United States. It paid incidental attention to Nova Scotia because that province, it was felt, could be attacked successfully only from the sea. The report pointed out that Canada was vulnerable at three points—Montreal via Lake Champlain and the Richelieu River, Kingston via Lake Ontario, and the Niagara peninsula via Lake Erie. Amherstburg, because of its distance to the west, was ruled out as a probable point of concentration of American forces.

The emphasis placed upon the likelihood of successful attack against the United States may be measured by the space devoted to that subject. One section alone, that is Section 52, entitled "Vulnerable Points in America", dealt with this matter. Pointing to the very meagre opportunities of attacking the United States by way of the Richelieu and Lake

<sup>5</sup>G. Hume, *Canada As It Is* (New York, 1832), 31-2.

<sup>6</sup>Public Archives of Canada, *Series Q*, vol. 274, pp. 253-5.

<sup>7</sup>*Copy of a Report to His Grace the Duke of Wellington, Master General of His Majesty's Ordnance, &c., &c., &c., Relative to His Majesty's North American Provinces by a commission of which M. General Sir James Carmichael Smyth was president, Lieut. Colonel Sir George Hoste, Captain Harris members* (Lithographed) (London, 1825).

Champlain or of cutting communications by way of the Erie Canal, the commission arrived at the decisive opinion that "from the peculiar geographical situation of the United States, . . . no military Operation whatever can be undertaken from His Majesty's North American Provinces (by land) or that any blow can be struck from thence which would be sensibly felt by the Government of the United States".

Having thus ruled out offensive action against the United States and the likelihood of American attack against Amherstburg and the west and attack against Nova Scotia by land, the commission set about recommending defensive works for the St. Lawrence area.<sup>8</sup> The total cost was estimated to be: for canals, £239,000; for the Canadas, £1,141,218; for coastal defences for Nova Scotia, £266,000. Whether from lassitude, or concern over domestic problems, or lack of funds, or all three reasons, the British government failed to carry out the recommendations to any considerable extent, with the exception of cutting the Rideau Canal. By 1840, little had been done toward fortifying the Canadas except at Quebec and Kingston and at both of these places the projected works were by no means complete.<sup>9</sup>

This, then, was the situation when the Canadian rebellions and the succeeding period of filibustering disturbed an otherwise relatively quiet scene. The United States seemed to be little concerned about the defence of the river and lake frontier and had been withdrawing its posts in the west, with the important exception of Detroit. The British, little concerned over the west, had taken some measures to protect the St. Lawrence. Both countries had settled down to acceptance of peace-time naval establishments on the Great Lakes.

The Canadian rebellions and the filibustering which followed, and the renewed dispute over the north-eastern boundary shocked both the British and the United States governments into action. In the first place, the importance of defeating filibusters as they arrived in Canada and the necessity of preventing them from organizing in the United States involved the increase of military forces to meet what may be called a local situation. But the feelings of hostility which ensued as a result of the burning of the *Caroline* in December, 1837, and the *Sir Robert Peel* in May, 1838, the organization and activities of the Hunters and other secret groups throughout 1838 to 1842, the Aroostook war in 1839, and the McLeod case in 1840 to 1841, all conspired to arouse an interest in promoting the defence of Canada as a matter of imperial policy and of promoting the defence of the United States as a matter of national policy, in case there should be war between Great Britain and the United States. These two questions we may consider in turn.

The Navy Island expedition which was organized in December, 1837, and the destruction of the *Caroline* at the end of the month forced the United States to dispatch some military detachments to the border and to request the assistance of state militias. After a delay of several months the Congress was persuaded in July, 1838, to increase the standing army from 7,958 to 12,608.<sup>10</sup> In the meantime, the government at Washington had secured the passage on March 10 of a new neutrality act<sup>11</sup> which measur-

<sup>8</sup>*Ibid.*, Appendix B.

<sup>9</sup>*Series Q*, vol. 271, pp. 189-93.

<sup>10</sup>*Congressional Globe*, VI, 480-501.

<sup>11</sup>For debates, see *Congressional Globe*, VI, 76-224, *passim*; and Appendix, 143-4.

ably strengthened the hands of both military and civil officers in that it gave them additional power to curb illegal expeditions. But although the government took these measures, the President and his associates had to be stirred to vigorous action. What accomplished this desirable end was the burning of the *Sir Robert Peel* in May and the dispatch of Durham's military mission to Washington in June. The United States government now sent Macomb, the general commanding the army, to the frontier. Within three months, from two thousand to three thousand troops were distributed at ten posts from Vermont to Michigan.<sup>12</sup> There they remained for several years.

While the United States was dallying, the immediate necessity of preventing insurrectionary activities led the Canadian authorities to undertake considerable reorganization and redistribution of troops, the raising of militia and volunteers, and the strengthening of defences. In June two extensive plans for defence were drawn up.<sup>13</sup> In July, Colborne, the commander of the forces in Canada, insisted that Upper Canada needed "a regular force of not less than 4,000 men . . . for some years".<sup>14</sup> Later in the year he called for still more men, and he even ordered troops from Nova Scotia on his own responsibility,<sup>15</sup> because he was "persuaded that when the Americans know that we are fully prepared to repel any invasion, they will give up their intention of joining the disaffected in Upper Canada and of supplying them with arms and ammunition".<sup>16</sup> He was convinced that "Brigands and organized Societies" in the United States "will not abandon their projects of invasion unless we increase our forces".<sup>17</sup> Colborne's insistence, Fox's despatches from Washington in which he claimed over and over again that the United States was unable to prevent Patriot activities, and Durham's influence, at length aroused the British government to action.<sup>18</sup> By the end of 1838 the regular forces in the Canadas had been increased from 7,600 to 11,703 effectives, and 1,923 more were on their way from the West Indies.<sup>19</sup> By 1840, Canada had 20,000 regulars.

While awaiting action from England, plans were laid and carried out

<sup>12</sup>*Series Q*, vol. 409, p. 353: Macomb to I. R. T. Jones [Lieutenant in the 43rd regiment and British secret agent who sent reports to Sir George Arthur], Oct. 30, 1838. Enclosure in Arthur to Glenelg, Nov. 14, 1838. Also *Series Q*, vol. 245, pp. 158-63: Colborne to Lt. Gen. Lord Fitzroy Somerset, private and confidential, Oct. 20, 1838.

<sup>13</sup>*Series Q*, vol. 246, pp. 88-9: "Proposed Distribution of the Troops in Upper and Lower Canada", June 2, 1838. By command, William Rowan, Military Secretary. Enclosure no. 4 in Durham to Glenelg, June 3. *Series Q*, vol. 249, p. 473: "Proposed Distribution of Troops of the Line in Upper Canada", June 27, 1838. By Charles Gore, D.Q.M.G.

<sup>14</sup>*Series Q*, vol. 249, pp. 504-6: Colborne to Somerset, July 10, 1838; *Series Q*, vol. 249, pp. 541-5: Colborne to Arthur, July 11.

<sup>15</sup>*Series Q*, vol. 249, pp. 588-90: Colborne to Campbell, Oct. 29, 1838; *Series Q*, vol. 245, pp. 214-5: Colborne to Glenelg, confidential, Nov. 12.

<sup>16</sup>*Series Q*, vol. 245, p. 180: Colborne to Somerset, Nov. 12, 1838.

<sup>17</sup>*Series Q*, vol. 245, pp. 249-52: Colborne to Glenelg, confidential, Nov. 30, 1838.

<sup>18</sup>*Series Q*, vol. 248, pp. 132-7: Enclosure no. 1 in Durham to Glenelg, Oct. 16, 1838; *Series Q*, vol. 248, pp. 154-6: Durham to Glenelg, confidential, Oct. 20; *Durham Papers*, sect. 2, II, 409-12; *Series Q*, vol. 256 B, pp. 223-6: Glenelg to Colborne, Dec. 11. For correspondence on recruitment see *Series Q*, vol. 249, pp. 591-609.

<sup>19</sup>*Series Q*, vol. 249, p. 612: "Return of the Effective Strength and Establishment of the Several Regiments composing the Force employed in British North America". Adjutant General's Office, Dec. 12, 1838.

to enlist 13,000 militia in Upper Canada and 4,990 volunteers in Lower Canada. They were to be used "for the protection of the frontiers against the godless American rabble . . ." <sup>20</sup> and to quiet discontent in the provinces. Arming these recruits was no simple matter because practically all of the 13,000 muskets distributed by the ordnance in Upper Canada had been lost track of. In consequence, in Buffalo, Detroit, Rochester, and other towns, every store was ransacked for arms, some few were distributed from Quebec where stores were low, while toward the end of 1838, 30,000 muskets and other equipment were sent out from England, with 10,000 more promised in the spring of 1839. <sup>21</sup>

Two other measures needed to be taken—barracks were required for additional regulars, and if the border were to be subject to continued attacks by marauders, defensive works needed to be strengthened or built at particularly vulnerable points. Owing to Lieutenant-Governor Arthur's persistence and to Colborne's own interest in defence, the latter ordered the army engineers to establish a line of posts from Lancaster (a few miles west of Montreal) to Sandwich. <sup>22</sup> Had they ever been completed they would have provided quarters for 4,250 men and storage for 19,650 stand of arms.

Military defence did not alone engage attention. Before the end of 1838 complications began to arise over the question of the increase of naval armaments, not because either the United States or Great Britain sought to throw over the agreement of 1817, but because the British, in the interest of defending Canada more adequately, began to follow circuitous and devious methods of increasing their forces. Durham, Colborne, and Arthur were all involved in this. In league with Fox in Washington, <sup>23</sup> they succeeded in persuading Palmerston of the necessity of increasing British naval forces on Lake Ontario and Lake Erie. Palmerston was readily persuaded. He instructed Fox to state officially in Washington that although the British government was animated by a desire to keep within the agreement "as far as is consistent with the paramount consideration and imperative duty of Self Defence", the inability of the United States to prevent acts of aggression against Canada forced the British to "consider themselves released from all restrictions" concerning the means they should use to defeat attacks. <sup>24</sup> In other words, Palmerston took the stand that the naval agreement was a peace-time measure which was inoperative during a period of border raids. This was an *ex parte* decision. Fortunately the United States government unofficially accepted this statement until such time as it would be forced by Congress or by public opinion to require exact compliance with the terms of the agreement. <sup>25</sup>

<sup>20</sup>The *Cobourg Star*, Aug. 22, 1838; also quoted in the *New York Observer*, Sept. 15.

<sup>21</sup>*Series G*, vol. 40, pp. 170-1: Glenelg to Durham, Sept. 10, 1838; *Series Q*, vol. 249, pp. 583-7: Colborne to Arthur, Oct. 29; *Series Q*, vol. 409, pp. 405-10: Arthur to Glenelg, confidential, Nov. 14; *Series Q*, vol. 413, pp. 62-7: Arthur to Glenelg, Jan. 2, 1839. For notices of shipment and amounts shipped to Canada in 1838, see *Series Q*, vol. 252, pp. 113-4 and vol. 252, p. 119.

<sup>22</sup>*Series Q*, vol. 249, pp. 464-7: Colborne to Arthur, June 25, 1838.

<sup>23</sup>*Series Q*, vol. 246, p. 183: Durham to Fox, June 25, 1838. Enclosure in Durham to Glenelg, June 25. Separate; *Series Q*, vol. 249, pp. 583-7: Colborne to Arthur, Oct. 29; *Series Q*, vol. 409, pp. 252-7: Arthur to Colborne, confidential, Oct. 31. Enclosure in Arthur to Glenelg, Oct. 31; *Series Q*, vol. 250, pp. 257-70: Fox to Palmerston, Nov. 19.

<sup>24</sup>*Series Q*, vol. 250, pp. 311-6: Palmerston to Fox, Dec. 15, 1838.

<sup>25</sup>*Congressional Globe*, VIII, 26; J. M. Callahan, *American Foreign Policy in Canadian Relations* (New York, 1937), 106-7.

Just when military and naval defence lost their significance as local frontier problems and became identified once again with defence as a matter of imperial policy for the British and as a matter of national importance for the United States, it is difficult to say. Throughout 1839 to 1842 filibustering continued. In 1839 the Aroostook war was ended by a *modus vivendi*. In 1840 McLeod was arrested, but not released until eleven months later. Tensions were everywhere increasing. Governments and people alike began to look to measures of preparedness in case war should break out.

In Canada the question of defence against the United States was never lost sight of, even if it was subordinated for a while to the more pressing need of checking unlawful expeditions from the United States and preventing counter-raids by Canadians. It was in April, 1838, that Sir George Arthur, with his weather eye always open to detect bad faith on the part of Washington, first insisted upon the need for carrying into effect the recommendations of the military commission of 1825.<sup>26</sup> Now was a time favourable to action of this sort "that under other circumstances, might excite the jealousy" of the United States.<sup>27</sup> By March, 1839, Colborne became convinced "that no time should be lost in making . . . arrangements for the permanent defence of the Colony. . .".<sup>28</sup>

One need not, therefore, look in vain for plans for defence. By a like token he need not be surprised to find a sharp division of opinion as to the best means of securing that defence. Colborne's plan,<sup>29</sup> submitted in March, 1839, recommending a strong line of posts to be situated at the most exposed points on the frontier, was not acceptable to Russell. Instead Russell proposed to establish military settlements on the frontier "as at once the most effective and the most economical plan of defence which could be pursued".<sup>30</sup> This proposal was not carried out. Colborne shortly had the satisfaction of knowing that the government would be open to consideration on the matter of frontier posts and that Russell had recommended to the War Office that the matter "should be forthwith taken into consideration, and finally determined".<sup>31</sup>

At this point Sir Richard Jackson, who had taken Colborne's place as commander of the forces in British North America, produced a memorandum in March, 1840.<sup>32</sup> In it he surveyed carefully the recommendations of the Secretary of War of the United States, of December, 1839. Two conclusions were to be drawn from Jackson's statements: first, that an attack on Canada could be made simultaneously from four points of concentration; second, that although the United States government would probably not carry out the secretary's recommendations, the British should perfect plans to counteract any possible American designs. To this end, on the assumption that Montreal would be the key-point of attack, Jackson recommended that a series of forts should be constructed around that city.

The British government's disapproval on the ground that Montreal

<sup>26</sup>*Series G*, vol. 184, pp. 4-8: Arthur to (Col. Sec.), Apr. 24, 1838.

<sup>27</sup>*Series G*, vol. 184, pp. 13-9: Arthur to (Col. Sec.), May 30, 1838.

<sup>28</sup>*Series Q*, vol. 258, pp. 23-31: Colborne to Glenelg, confidential, Mar. 18, 1839.

<sup>29</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>30</sup>*Series Q*, vol. 269 C, pp. 153-76: Russell to Thomson, Sept. 7, 1839.

<sup>31</sup>*Series Q*, vol. 260, pp. 465-6: ——— to R. Byham, Jan. 13, 1840.

<sup>32</sup>*Series Q*, vol. 271, pp. 171-85: "Memorandum upon Montreal and its immediate Frontier". Enclosure in Thomson to Russell, confidential, Mar. 12, 1840.

must not be made the central pivot of a defence system for Canada now led Jackson to make a careful investigation and to write a very long memorandum<sup>33</sup> which was in many respects as important a document as the Report of 1825, for it was responsible for getting action in London. Laying stress once again on the vulnerability of the whole of British North America, and especially of the Canadas, Jackson recommended a series of frontier posts, control over water communications to the west, and a group of forts around Montreal. If these were not approved, he advised maintaining a large regular army in North America. To all this Sydenham added that provision needed also to be made for keeping open communications between Montreal and the sea in view of the "much more critical" relations between Canada and the United States.<sup>34</sup>

In England the memorandum met a favourable response.<sup>35</sup> Anglo-American relations were so critical at this moment that the British government practically accepted all of the suggestions by providing £100,000 a year in addition to the regular military estimates. Their only aim was to defend Canada. They did not anticipate attacking the United States.

In the United States there was noticeable in 1840 a change in attitude from one of merely preventing lawless attacks against Canada to one of adequately defending the frontier in case of war. The change is seen best in the Senate and House resolutions in March and April,<sup>36</sup> the latter of which called for the War Department's plan for the permanent defence of all frontiers of the United States. The plan now made it reasonably clear that that country could not be invaded with success from the north.<sup>37</sup> When at length defence appropriations were considered in the special session of 1841, certain principles relating to national defence were generally well understood. They were that the navy and coastal defences must be looked to as the first line of defence against Great Britain. Land defences along the Canadian frontier were purely subsidiary, except as they would provide opportune posts from which to attack Canada. One may therefore expect to discover that the military appropriations bill provided, out of a total of \$2,226,000, only \$135,000 for barracks and defensive works at four points on the northern frontier, and \$100,000 for armed steamers on Lake Erie to offset the two which the British had on that lake.<sup>38</sup>

Although competitive armaments on the Great Lakes seemed thus to be beginning again, no competition did actually develop. In the following year, 1842, when filibustering had come to an end, and the Webster-Ashburton Treaty had settled serious controversies, and the United States had succeeded in ending the Seminole war, the army was reduced to 7,590. In 1846 the posts along the Canadian frontier ceased to be kept up and began to fall into decay. At the same time, British regulars began to be withdrawn from Canada and by 1852 there was only a skeleton force left. Defence problems began to disappear in an atmosphere relieved of serious tension. Of course, the settlement of the Oregon boundary controversy

<sup>33</sup>*Series Q*, vol. 274, pp. 213-68: "Memorandum upon the Canadian frontier". Nov., 1840.

<sup>34</sup>*Series Q*, vol. 274, pp. 202-4: Sydenham to Russell, Dec. 24, 1840.

<sup>35</sup>*Series Q*, vol. 274, pp. 205-8: Russell to Lord Hill, Feb. 22, 1841.

<sup>36</sup>*Congressional Globe*, VIII, 262-3 and 308-13.

<sup>37</sup>*Ibid.*, VIII, 524-5, July 14, 1840.

<sup>38</sup>*Ibid.*, X, 429.

and the war with Mexico also diverted the attention of the United States from British North America.

The study of defence during this period leads us to certain conclusions which, slightly modified, give us a clue to the defence of the Canadian-American frontier to-day. In the first place, Great Britain and the United States were not equally concerned over defending the same frontiers. The United States was far more vulnerable along the coast while the British were vulnerable along the St. Lawrence. Each country therefore became engrossed in the problem of defending its own vulnerable frontiers. It was a period when the British were still confident that Canada could be defended, whereas the United States was certain that it could not. This accounts for the nature of the proposals and the efforts that were made to make the frontier secure.

In the second place, a naval agreement was consummated concerning the only frontier over which serious disagreements and serious common problems began to develop. But these were not primarily problems of defence against attack. Both sides were vulnerable in the sense that they could destroy each other's lake towns. Yet neither to the United States nor to the Canadas was control of the lakes essential for their safety. Instead, one must seek as the reason for mutual concern those everyday irritations which loom large as causes of war, of which stopping and searching vessels is an example.

In the third place, the history of the defence of the frontier reveals that in periods of relatively little stress and controversy, the boundary was virtually demilitarized without benefit of treaty or agreement. From the British point of view it was too expensive to build and keep up posts and maintain an army for defence; from the United States point of view it was hardly necessary. Only in times of strain did defence against the United States assume a problem of major importance in British and Canadian policy. In this respect the later 1830's and the 1840's represent a milestone in Canadian-American and Anglo-American relations.

*Discussion.* Mr. Graham pointed to the contrast in the attitudes of the British toward the defence of the inland country before and after 1812. After 1783 the British government knew that it would lose that country if the Americans made any serious attempt to invade it. The rivers and lakes simplified rather than hindered invasion. It was Carleton's idea that Canada might be made secure with Spanish aid; but after 1803 it was a hopeless task to try to defend the country. About 1810 Castlereagh said that the inland country would have to be evacuated, and he was not even sure about Nova Scotia. In fact, military opinion in general was prepared to sacrifice the inland country.

Mr. Stacey said that Mr. Corey had given the impression that both signatories broke the Rush-Bagot Agreement; but the agreement only required that ships should not be "maintained", that is, kept in commission. But there was nothing to prevent them from keeping ships that were out of commission, and both in fact did. Mr. Stacey said he was increasingly impressed by the fact that the problem of Canadian defence was primarily a problem of communications. The British learnt in the War of 1812 that they must have communication with the United Kingdom, and for this reason built the Rideau Canal. The other problem was the inland winter

communication from Halifax to Quebec, made difficult by the settlement of 1783. Communication had to be by the Temiscouata route or its alternative, the Kempt road; or later by the Intercolonial Railway. Possession of the "highlands" threatened communications both by the St. Lawrence and overland.

Mr. Trotter referred to an old print showing boats in Kingston, roofed over, and with the naval dockyard in the background.

Mr. Stacey said about this that the vessels were destroyed only when they had become useless for re-fitting.

Mr. Corey agreed with Mr. Graham as to the vulnerability of Canada, but said that after the War of 1812 it was accepted that Canada could be defended if enough money were spent. In the United States, from about 1815 to 1842, there was a constant impression that there would be another war, and defence therefore was a real consideration. The British commanders, he said, put a low value on the Canadian militia.

Mr. Stacey felt that Mr. Corey was affected by the affairs of 1837-38, when the militia was unpopular. For a large-scale war, however, the militia was counted on. In 1837 the militia was hardly more than a rabble, but it could be organized in time of serious war.