

*Keeping Up with the Jones's:  
Admiralship, Culture, and Careerism in the Royal Canadian Navy,  
1911-1946.*

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Unlike British and American naval historians, who have written extensively on their Admirals, Canadian scholars have yet produced any books which focus exclusively on the Royal Canadian Navy's (RCN) senior chiefs. Although the recent publication of two seminal articles on Admirals L.W. Murray and H.T.W. Grant demonstrate that historians are trying to reverse this trend, the lack of material on the RCN's senior leaders represents perhaps one of the most serious gaps in the historiography.<sup>1</sup> As a result, little commentary has been made regarding the command style, personality traits, and capabilities of the navy's top brass. But it is Canada's fourth Chief of the Naval Staff (CNS), Vice Admiral George C. Jones, who represents the greatest enigma to naval historians. Much of the focus on Jones has centered on the belief that he played some type of role in the replacement of his predecessor as CNS in January 1944. Describing his activities as a "whispering campaign," some scholars have speculated that when Jones was the Vice Chief of the Naval Staff (VCNS), he went behind Vice Admiral Percy W. Nelles's back and fed the naval minister, Angus L. Macdonald, with information that was intended to discredit the CNS.<sup>2</sup> Unfortunately, insufficient primary source documentation has made it impossible to determine whether or not Jones was involved with Nelles's downfall. In fact, one individual has argued that this mystery may never be solved because senior officers ordered Jones's assistant to destroy the Admiral's personal papers after he died on 8 February 1946.<sup>3</sup> More recently, however, a number of sources have become available to the public which finally permits a more careful analysis of Jones's activities as a senior flag officer.

In order to explain Jones's role in Nelles's replacement this paper will be divided into three segments. First, it will analyze Jones's career from the time he joined the RCN as a cadet in 1911 until he became a Captain in the late 1930s. These formative years are

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<sup>1</sup> Marc Milner, "The Historiography of the Canadian Navy: The State of the Art," in Michael Hadley, Rob Huebert, and Fred Crickard, eds., *A Nation's Navy*, (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1996), 33. David Zimmerman, "New Dimensions in Canadian Naval History," *The American Neptune*, Vol. 60, No. 3, (Summer, 2002), 263-272.

<sup>2</sup> Marc Milner, *The U-Boat Hunters*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1994), 51, 81-82; David Zimmerman, *The Great Naval Battle of Ottawa*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1989), 182.

<sup>3</sup> Interview with Admiral Collins by William Glover, 4 February 1992, DHH, William Glover Papers, 97/8, 15. Collins served as Jones executive assistant for a couple of weeks in 1946. After Jones died, Collins "was told to clear out any private papers, private, and I mean private correspondence, and see that it didn't see the light of day, which I did. Does that tell you something..."

important because Jones's experiences in the navy's career-driven culture not only affected his personality, but also shaped his understanding of what was required from an officer to advance within the service. In effect, it was during these years that Jones learned the tactics and strategies that he would later employ against Nelles. Second, it will look at how Jones acted as a senior staffer, laying particular emphasis on his actions as the VCNS. This represents the period when Jones's overly ambitious mentality dominated his personality and a pattern in his behaviour emerged. With each senior appointment that brought him closer to the top, Jones became more aggressive and employed increasingly dubious means to reach his ultimate goal of becoming the next CNS. Finally, this essay will use Jones's career to examine an issue that consumed the RCN's senior leadership throughout the Second World War. This involved the perception that the RCN's flag officers spent too much energy jockeying for position and "plotting" for each other's "stripe."<sup>4</sup> Often described as "careerism," many believed that when officers reached the more senior levels they became political creatures who strategically competed with one another in the hopes that their actions would improve the chances of promotion over their peers. No other officer at NSHQ played this game better than Jones, and as a result his careerist mentality is worthy of closer analysis because it had a remarkable impact on the navy once he replaced Nelles.

At a broader level, a study of the effect that careerism had on Jones is important because this issue is still relevant to today's Canadian Forces (CF). For example, in a recent study on Canadian military culture, historian Allan English has observed that the bureaucratization and civilianization of the CF after unification in 1968, has produced a non-adaptive culture which is,

... built on business practices and efficiency rather than the virtues of the traditional warrior ethos often espoused by the military. Officers, particularly senior officers, who spend a significant part of their careers in the national capital, are perceived to be more interested in their careers than in service to the nation. This should be a cause for concern not only because this culture may be dysfunctional, but also because nonadaptive cultures often demonstrate high resistance to change.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Interview with Lieutenant Commander EJ Downton, 20 November 1982, DHH, BIOG D, 31.

<sup>5</sup> Allan D. English, "Understanding military culture: A Canadian Perspective," April 2001, <http://pubs.drdc.ca/pcow1e.html>, DCIEM-CR-2001-047, 7.

Clearly, careerism is a factor in the modern military's culture, but without historical examples it is difficult to determine how pervasive it was within the three branches of the military prior to unification. In fact, an Officer Corps study produced by the CF in the late 1980s, found it difficult to determine whether various ethical problems within the service were systemic or transitory, because there were not enough historical and empirical studies to place these issues into context.<sup>6</sup> By studying Jones's experiences it is possible to draw conclusions on the affect that pre-unification careerism had on the navy and its culture. An argument will be made, therefore, that Jones was consumed by careerism to such an extent that he engineered a smear campaign against Nelles throughout 1943 that was designed to clear the path for his own advancement. Moreover, this essay will further illustrate that excessive careerism was systemic in the navy's culture, and that this not only affected how Jones acted as an officer, but also that it was counterproductive to the service's cohesion.

At the age of sixteen, Jones was enrolled as an Engineer Cadet in the newly created Royal Naval College of Canada (RNCC). After his first semester, however, Jones had developed an interest in command and so switched to the executive branch. A diligent student, he often ranked fourth or fifth in a class of approximately twenty students. He also achieved a first class standing at the Royal Naval College, HMS *Berwick*, which he attended throughout 1913. Overall, Jones had done well as a student,<sup>7</sup> but it would not be until he served at sea with the Royal Navy (RN) during the First World War that he began to stand out from the crowd.

Barely three years old at the onset of the First World War, the Canadian Naval Service had few ships that were capable of operating beyond its territorial waters.<sup>8</sup> As a result, RCN officers who wanted to test their meddle in battle had to do so with the RN. Many volunteered to serve on RN ships, especially since combat experience was known to bring accelerated promotion. Jones was no exception. After graduating from RNCC, he served on a number of British warships, and by the end of the war he was a full

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 92.

<sup>7</sup> Commodore Walter Hose to H Steele, 15 April 1921, NAC, Jones Personnel File, NAC, 0-37330.

<sup>8</sup> Gilbert Tucker, The Naval Service of Canada, (Ottawa: King's Printer, 1952), Vol. 1, 351.

Lieutenant as well as the executive officer of HMS *Vanquisher*. Put another way, Jones's war record was impressive and it served him well in the immediate post war period.<sup>9</sup>

In 1920, the Canadian navy acquired two destroyers, HMCS *Patriot* and *Patrician*, from the RN. Besides the aging cruiser HMCS *Aurora*, which was commanded by a RN officer, these were the largest ships in the Canadian navy. Jones was selected to take the *Patriot*, earning him the distinction of being the first man from the original class of RNCC cadets to command a major Canadian warship.<sup>10</sup> Moreover, in the early 1920s Jones had impressed a number of RN officers who found him to be "zealous" and extremely ambitious. This was high praise from the parent service, especially since it was reputed that the RN was tougher on "colonial" officers.<sup>11</sup> Likewise, the Canadian CNS, Commodore Walter Hose, was equally impressed with Jones, describing him as "tactful, good tempered, and very cheerful, very zealous and hardworking. A fine character."<sup>12</sup> Jones was doing well in the service and his personality seemed to match his progress. But by the time he entered the promotion zone to Lieutenant Commander, Jones discovered that merit alone was not enough to keep him ahead of his peers, and he soon understood why the college had stressed that "ambition and competition here [in the navy] are secrets of success."<sup>13</sup>

For most of the time that Jones was a Lieutenant he was consistently ranked behind three men. By the mid-1920s, however, two of his competitors were no longer in the service, leaving L.W. Murray as his chief rival. With Murray already six months ahead, Jones was upset that another classmate, R.I. Agnew, was now two and half months

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<sup>9</sup> Office of Director of Public Information, Commodore George C Jones (career summary) 17 July 1941, DHH, Biog J; VG Brodeur interview in *Salty Dips*, (Ottawa, Privately Printed, 1999), Vol. 6, 44, George Bruce, *Sea Battles of the Twentieth Century*, (London: Butler & Tanner, 1975), 41-49. Eager to get to sea, he entered a competition in the fall of 1914 that would see four Canadian cadets posted to HMS *Good Hope* which was preparing to search the South Atlantic for Germany's East Asiatic Squadron. This was a golden opportunity because the selected Cadets would be the first Canadian naval officers to see combat during the war. Jones was disappointed as he was passed over for this appointment. In reality he was lucky. The *Good Hope* was sunk in the Battle of Coronel, and the four winning cadets became the Canadian navy's first casualties. In this instance, Jones's youthful exuberance nearly cost him his life. The cadets killed in this sinking were midshipman Malcolm Cann, William A. Palmer, John V Hathaway, and Arthur W. Silver.

<sup>10</sup> Tony German, *The Sea is at our Gates*, (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1990), 86; Roger Sarty, *The Maritime Defence of Canada*, (Ottawa: The Canadian Institute of Strategic Studies, 1996), 95; *Royal Naval College of Canada (1911-1922) Class List*, 1 March 1968, DHH.

<sup>11</sup> William Glover, "Royal Canadian or Royal Colonial Navy" in Michael Hadley, Rob Huebert, and Fred Crickard, eds., *A Nation's Navy*, (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1996).

<sup>12</sup> Hose to minister, 1924, NAC, Jones Personnel file.

<sup>13</sup> *Sea Breezes*, December 1917, Vol. 1, No.4, 4.

his senior. A harbinger of things to come, Jones's solution was to write a carefully crafted letter to headquarters asking that he be granted additional seniority. Impressed with Jones's initiative, the CNS took this matter up with the minister.<sup>14</sup> How much sway the letter carried remains a mystery, but there can be little doubt that Jones believed that it had done some good as both he and Murray were promoted on 1 January 1925, while Agnew remained a Lieutenant for another two and a half months. The politician within Jones had surfaced, and from this time onwards he became hardened and would expend much time and energy ensuring that none of his peers ever again gained an advantage over him.

With Agnew once again his junior, Jones set his sights firmly on Murray and over the next two decades their relationship grew into one of the most intense and hate-filled rivalries in Canadian naval history. Jones's goal was to get one step ahead of Murray and stay there. This was because, as two of the first RNCC-trained cadets to reach the senior officer ranks, Jones had determined that Murray was his chief competitor in a race for the top slot in the navy's hierarchy.<sup>15</sup> Jones had become obsessed with outperforming Murray throughout the inter-war period, which made him more manipulative and aggressive in managing his own career. Much of this was the product of Jones's ambitious personality, but it would appear that the nature of navy during the inter-war period also played a role.

The RCN was small and neglected throughout the 1920s and 1930s. Consecutive Canadian governments spent as little as possible on defence, and in 1933 the Chief of the General Staff, Major General A.G.L. McNaughton, actually recommended that the navy should be abandoned so that he could stretch the dwindling budget to bolster the army and air force. This initiative failed, but throughout this period life in the navy remained tough. It was a tiny service that was run by a small and tight-knit group of officers who found it easy to keep tabs on each other's careers.<sup>16</sup> With such limited opportunities for commands and senior appointments, competition between these officers could be fierce.

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<sup>14</sup> Career Chart, Jones, Murray, and Agnew, Personnel files, NAC; January 1917, September 1917, January 1918, May 1918, June 1918, March 1919, June 1928, Naval Lists, DHH; Jones to Naval Secretary, 4 August 1924, NAC, Jones Personnel file. The only two Lieutenants from the original RNCC class who had more senior over Jones and Murray were WM Maitland-Douglas and RC Watson. Maitland-Douglas was killed in March 1918 while Watson disappears from the naval list in the early 1920s.

<sup>15</sup> Canadian Naval List, 1925, DHH.

It was even reputed that ambitious naval officers tried to marry into wealthy families in the hopes that their wives' political connections would assist their careers and supplement their meager incomes.<sup>17</sup> Marriage patterns of the more determined senior officers support this hypothesis, and Jones was no exception as he wed the daughter of British Columbia's Lieutenant Governor in 1932. While Helen Jones's popularity in the naval community helped counterbalance his increasingly austere personality, her father's financial resources also came in handy as Jones later admitted that he never would have become CNS had he not "married money."<sup>18</sup>

Getting promoted in the inter-war RCN, which also came with a much-needed raise in pay, was a slow and sometimes agonizing process. Reluctant to release trained officers, the senior staff was not always prepared to weed out those who were performing poorly. Moreover, advancement was strictly based on seniority rather than merit.<sup>19</sup> To put this system into a modern context, officers would not get much credit for favourable Personal Evaluation Reports (known as S206s at that time), but would instead gain seniority for the successful completion of training courses. This further explains Jones's letter to Hose in 1924. Unhappy that Murray and Agnew had gained seniority for specializing in navigation, Jones correctly argued that he had not been given an opportunity to take training courses because he was busy commanding a warship. In Jones's words, this made it "unfair that in a small service I should be penalized owing to being employed on services that other officers were not considered suitable for; and that my seniority should be accelerated on the result of passing through the staff college." Such promotion schemes contributed to a disfunctional culture, and by doing so encouraged young officers to use unorthodox methods to gain time on their colleagues. It was this system, therefore, more than any other factor that fueled Jones's rivalry with Murray, whose career progressions were always close and extremely competitive.

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<sup>16</sup> German, *The Sea is at our Gates*, 59- 60.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid*, 61.

<sup>18</sup> Connolly Diary, 14 February 1945, NAC, Connolly Papers, MG 32 C71, Vol. 2-8; Office of Director of Public Information, 17 July 1941, DHH, Biog J. Jean Donald Gow, *Alongside: The Navy, 1910-1950, An Intimate Account*, (Quyong Quebec: Chesley House Publications, 1999), 19; Katherine Roberts to Roger Sarty, 19 December 1991, DHH, Biog J.

<sup>19</sup> Wilfred Lund, *The Rise and Fall of the Royal Canadian Navy*, (Victoria: Unpublished PhD thesis, 1999), 35.

Often Jones was given appointments and promotions only weeks or even days before Murray. For example, having both been promoted to the rank of Commander on 1 January 1929, Jones was later given command of the destroyer HMCS *Skeena* a mere two weeks before Murray took over her sister ship the *Saguenay*. Likewise, he was promoted to the rank of Captain on 1 August 1938, while Murray was confirmed in the same rank on the next day. To the layman this might seem trivial, but in naval circles it was significant and symbolic. By now, most officers in the RCN were aware that Jones and Murray were “jockeying for the top job,” and this day of seniority showed who was winning the “neck and neck” race. Both were clearly in a position to eventually relieve the first generation of senior officers, and many wondered which one would cross the line first.<sup>20</sup> In a broader context, this day of seniority served as message from NSHQ that careerism between senior officers was not only encouraged but also rewarded. Moreover, the fact he had been singled out for seniority proved to Jones that he outmaneuvering his rival. The real challenge, however, would come one year later when Canada declared war on Germany.

Already in command of the river class destroyer, HMCS *Ottawa*, Jones was also made “Captain (Destroyers)” in Halifax during the opening months of the war.<sup>21</sup> This was an important post, as it meant that Jones was in charge of all the RCN’s naval assists in the port. Given that the RCN was totally unprepared for the war, Jones had to improvise and he worked tirelessly to meet the challenges of this command. In 1940, he took over the *Assiniboine* (another river class destroyer), became a commodore, and was given the new title of Commodore Commanding Halifax Force. Later that year, Murray, who had been working at NSHQ as the Deputy Chief of the Naval Staff, was sent to Halifax to relieve Jones so that the latter could assume a newly created position called the Commanding Officer Atlantic Coast (COAC). This gave Jones administrative control over the RCN’s entire war effort in the Atlantic. Much to Murray’s chagrin, it also made Jones his boss.

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<sup>20</sup> Horatio Nelson Lay, *Memoirs of a Mariner*, (Stittsville, Ont: Canada’s Wing’s, 1982); Lay to Marc Milner, 8 October 1981, NAC, Lay Papers, MG30E420, Vol.1; Captain Eric S. Brand, Interview by E.C. Russel taped interview transcript, 22 February, 1967, DHH, Brand Papers, 84/145, Vol 7, 6; Marc Milner, *North Atlantic Run*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1985), 93.

<sup>21</sup> History of HMCS *Ottawa*, DHH, 8000.



Although little is known about their working relationship in Halifax, it is interesting that this arrangement lasted for only three months before Murray was given an appointment in the United Kingdom. Moreover, when Murray returned to Canada he was sent to the base at St. John's, Newfoundland. Eventually known as the Flag Officer Newfoundland Force (FONF), Murray was once again in Jones's shadow but at least he did not fall under his direct command. However, even the distance afforded by the Gulf of St. Lawrence was not enough to prevent the two men from coming to loggerheads. Both the COAC and FONF commands needed more ships and personnel to meet their operational requirements. The problem was that the RCN was still expanding and so there was not enough of either to satisfy the demand. What was available went to the commander who fought hardest for it. As a result, Jones and Murray were once again competing with each other, but in this instance it was for the materiel of war. Of course, this was also related to their careers, as it was more likely that their command would succeed with additional ships and personnel.

Officially, Jones and Murray were cordial in the exchanges but it was obvious that their dislike for each other was growing. This was particularly evident when NSHQ had to arrange for Commander C.R.H. Taylor to temporarily take over the *Assinboine* so that command could be transferred from Jones to Murray.<sup>22</sup> Aware that neither man could tolerate being in close quarters with the other, headquarters was willing to take special measures to ensure that they remained apart. After all, they were in a dead heat for the next senior staff position and it was expected that some animosity would exist between them. But Jones was more aggressive than Murray, and would soon get his long awaited opportunity to make his move for the top. The war demanded tough commanders and this suited Jones's personality perfectly.

Jones had a considerable reputation within the navy. Opinions varied as some individuals described him as "a damn good captain," or even "a remarkable man," while yet others characterized him as a "tyrant," who was "reasonably efficient, but a sort of

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<sup>22</sup> Jones Personnel File and Murray Personnel File, NAC; Milner, North Atlantic Run, 93-94; Tucker, The Naval Service of Canada, 315.

cold figure.”<sup>23</sup> Jones was harsh on his subordinates and demanded much from them. If they did not deliver or were undisciplined he could be ruthless:

GC Jones was tough on the ship’s company. I remember him standing at the defaulter table, with his telescope in his hand, saying I’ll fix this. And waving his telescope about and the poor bugger standing behind the table there, shaking in his boots and old GC Jones would weigh him off in no uncertain manner. And in not a very good manner in which to treat a ship’s company. An able seaman standing there who was probably [only] ten-minutes over leave or something.<sup>24</sup> In Jones defence, however, his reprimands were doled out in a more-or-less equal manner, as he made no distinction between the way he scolded officers as compared to the men. For example, a junior officer, who was the victim of one of Jones’s tirades, described the experience as follows:

He was a very capable officer. The only thing you had to watch was his terrible temper. I ran afoul of it once... I made the unfortunate error of going to his cabin to take certain work in which he had required to be up-to-date by that day, and I just got the word, “Sir” out of my mouth and I was told in no uncertain terms to get out... his precise words were for me to, “Shut my f---ing mouth and get out.” This so enraged me that I was very tempted to, as of that date, to desert, because I had never had anyone speak to me that way or ever since. And through the then First Lieutenant... an apology was passed down to me and I calmed down and resumed my duties. But that left a bit of a scar with me for some years afterwards.<sup>25</sup>

Many others had similar experiences. In fact, his temper was legendary as even the Naval Information Department was forced to admit in a press release that “Jones is credited with a sharp ‘bark’ but an unbounded enthusiasm for his men modifies his ‘bite’.”<sup>26</sup> This was true. When Jones felt he had gone too far with his disciplinary tactics, he would apologize. Moreover, he rewarded his subordinates with generous leave periods. But he was also relentless, telling them that he would double their punishment if they were even “one minute adrift” from these reprieves.<sup>27</sup>

This type of aggressive leadership style was common amongst officers who were aiming to further their careers. In an attempt to impress superiors they often tried to achieve miracles by pushing subordinates to the limit of their endurance. Although they tended to rely on strict discipline to influence the behaviour of their juniors, the more

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<sup>23</sup> Interview with Lt (N) MacFayden, and Interview with Wade, DHH, Glover Papers, 97/8; Interview with Angus G Boulton by Hal Lawrence, DHH, Biog B.

<sup>24</sup> Interview with Angus G Boulton by Hal Lawrence, DHH, Biog B.

<sup>25</sup> Interview with Lieutenant Commander DAJ Higgs by Hal Lawrence, DHH, Biog H.

<sup>26</sup> Office of Director of Public Information, Commodore George C Jones (career summary) 17 July 1941.

successful careerist was acutely aware that every man had a breaking point and would therefore reward them at just the right moment. Ambitious officers who failed to recognize this point did so at their own peril. For example, the commanding officer of HMCS *Iroquois*, Commander “Scarface” Holmes, was forced to deal with a mutiny after he had punished his men for a relatively minor offence by revoking their shore leave. Holmes’s career never truly recovered from this incident.<sup>28</sup> But Jones had found an acceptable balance, and although some of his subordinates resented him, he managed to get the job done. In the end, this was all that matter to Jones’s superiors at NSHQ.

In the strange mystique of the navy, however, sailors often find ways to even the score. For Jones, the resentment towards his ambition manifested in the form of the unflattering nickname “Jetty Jones” which, according to naval lore, had two possible origins. One claimed that as Captain (D), Jones would order other ships to sea while his own stayed alongside the jetty. For example, when Jones commanded the *Ottawa* it became known as “O Block,” implying that the ship had in fact become a barracks or permanent fixture. The same applied to the *Assiniboine* when Jones’s flag was transferred to that ship. Like the *Ottawa*, it was also viewed as an extension of the jetty and in one instance a destroyer set sail exposing the side of the *Assiniboine*, which now had “JETTY JONES” painted on her side in large letters.<sup>29</sup> The inference was that Jones was either afraid of sailing or just lazy, having become too accustomed to a luxurious life on shore. Such ideas were ludicrous. In reality, as Captain (D), Jones had been saddled with administrative responsibilities that did not allow him to go to sea as much as other commanders. Eventually, NSHQ realized that it had been a mistake to give officers a sea command along with the Captain (D) appointment. Having learned this lesson at Jones’s expense, all future officers who held this position would remain on the base.

The other possible origin of the nickname was equally unpleasant. This view held that Jones was a poor ship-handler. Unfortunately, determining whether or not Jones’s seamanship skills were inadequate is problematic, because his personnel file was

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<sup>27</sup> Interview with Lieutenant Commander DAJ Higgs by Hal Lawrence, DHH, Biog H.

<sup>28</sup> Michael Whitby, “Matelots, Martinets, and Mutineers: The Mutiny in HMCS Iroquois, 19 July 1943,” *The Journal of Military History*, (January 2001, Vol. 65, No. 1), 384.

<sup>29</sup> “Jetty Jones,” September 1969, DHH, Biog J; Interview with Commodore RI Hendy by Hal Lawrence. DHH, Biog H. Interview with Rear Admiral HN Lay by Hal Lawrence, DHH, Biog L.

purposely stripped of all evaluation reports.<sup>30</sup> This is highly suspicious, and although it is impossible to determine who sanitized Jones's file, there is other evidence which suggests that his skills as a "ship driver" were lacking.<sup>31</sup> Regardless, the true significance of this nickname is that it represents a backlash from sailors who felt that they merely represented the rungs on Jones's career ladder. Of course, none of this mattered anymore. His command had moved ashore and he was there to stay. Perhaps NSHQ realized that this was where he belonged as Jones's real strength lay in staff work.

Through hard work and unnerving diligence, Jones had done well as the COAC. These efforts were rewarded. On 1 December 1941, Jones was made a Rear Admiral. As usual, his promotion was clouded in controversy because Murray was also due for his Rear Admiral's stripe. By now, however, it was apparent that Jones had a powerful patron at NSHQ. This was the CNS, and instead of promoting both men on the same day as was expected, Nelles opted to maintain Jones's single day of seniority over Murray. Many officers were intrigued by this move because they had a personal stake in the leadership race between Jones and Murray.<sup>32</sup> Providing a clear example that careerism ran rampant throughout the navy's senior levels, a number of Commanders and Captains had designated themselves as either "Jones men" or members of the "Murray crowd." In fact, the hostility was so intense between these groups that great care was taken not to invite opposing members to the same social functions.<sup>33</sup> With the lines firmly drawn between the two, it was difficult for younger officers to remain neutral. For some the decision of which Admiral they would support was based on a sense of loyalty that had developed while they had served with one of these officers, but others hoped that their allegiance would be rewarded when "their Admiral" eventually became CNS. This type of calculated choice also posed certain risks as "backing the wrong Admiral" could adversely effect future promotions and appointments. As a result, those in the Murray

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<sup>30</sup> Interview with Admiral Collins by William Glover, 4 February 1992, DHH, William Glover Papers, 97/8, 15. Moreover, unlike all other senior officer's personnel files, Jones's docket is the one which is missing every evaluation report.

<sup>31</sup> Interview with VG Brodeur in *Salty Dips*, (Ottawa, Privately Printed, 1999), 58.

<sup>32</sup> Walter Gilhooly (Director of Naval Information) to DSSD, 22 December 1941, and NSHQ fleet signal, 22 December 1941, NAC, Jones Personnel file. Interview with Rear Admiral HN Lay by Hal Lawrence, DHH, Biog L; Interview with HN Lay by Mark Yeo, NAC, Lay Papers, MG 31E420.

<sup>33</sup> Lay to Milner, 8 October 1981, NAC, Lay Papers, MG30E420, Vol.1; Lund, *The Rise and Fall*, 77.

camp viewed Jones's day of seniority with much concern and it would not be until several months later that it became clear what Nelles had in mind.

By early 1942, NSHQ was in a virtual state of chaos because it was operating under the direction of the Naval Council. Consisting of a small staff of senior officers, this system worked well in peacetime, but was falling apart under the pressure of war. As a result, headquarters opted for the "board system" which meant that the Naval Council would be abolished and its responsibilities divided between a Naval Board and a Naval Staff. Under this new arrangement, the Naval Board was to consist of the highest-ranking officers in the RCN, and their task was to advise the minister on whether or not the policies created by the Naval Staff should be accepted. This organization, which was put into effect in January 1942, had created a number of new senior appointments. Of particular importance was the position of Vice Chief of the Naval Staff which was replacing the Deputy Chief of the Naval Staff. Originally, the purpose of the DCNS was to assist the CNS with his administrative duties and therefore had no specialized function. But the VCNS was to have real powers and would be second in command of the entire navy.<sup>34</sup>

By virtue of being the DCNS at the time of these changes, Commodore H.E. Reid became the first VCNS. Although he had done well in the navy, Reid was ill-suited to the burden of staff work as it had once been reported that he was "inclined to be overcome if the problem is too big (or sudden) to be coped with." Likewise, Nelles was unhappy with Reid's performance at VCNS:

An over ardent advocate of the Committee system with which he tables most of his problems. This might be mistaken as being unable to make up his own mind. This is only partially true, but I have observed that he is easily swayed and dominated by stronger minds. Slow thinking, hide bound and inelastic.<sup>35</sup> Nelles needed a strong personality to help him deal with the administrative crisis at NSHQ, and this was something that Reid was not. In fairness to Reid, however, it is important to note that he had neither the required rank nor stature to keep this appointment and was therefore merely filling this position until Nelles could find a

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<sup>34</sup> Tucker, *The Naval Service of Canada*, 418-428.

<sup>35</sup> Reid S.206 (performance report), 1 December 1942, and S.206, September 1940, NAC, Reid Personnel file.

suitable replacement. In reality, Jones and Murray were the only officers who could be considered for this appointment.

It is unclear whether Nelles ever seriously contemplated Murray for the VCNS position. Although he thought highly of Murray, he did not believe he was “a sufficiently strict disciplinarian with either the officers or ratings. This I attribute to dislike of hurting humans rather than to any weakness of character.” Unlike Jones’s leadership style, Murray was much more personable. He was also a little less career driven as was evident by the fact that he would often place his men’s welfare before his own personal aspirations. While Murray’s subordinates actually liked and admired him, these were not the attributes Nelles wanted for his new VCNS.<sup>36</sup> Nelles rewarded the efficient but ruthless Jones over the more likable Murray, providing yet another example of how giving ardent careerists preferential treatment was the rule rather than the exception at NSHQ. This meant that Jones was only one step away from achieving his ultimate goal, as he would be groomed as Nelles’s successor. Naturally, Nelles assumed that this would occur whenever he decided to step down, but Jones had other plans.

Life at headquarters was hectic. Senior officers took little time off and some even slept in their offices just so that they could stay on top the workload. Jones’s work ethic as COAC had proven that he was ideally suited to this type of environment. Quickly familiarizing himself with the routine at NSHQ, he devoted much of his attention to supervising the Naval Staff and their efforts to turn the RCN into an effective fighting force. Jones had his work cut out for him, as the fleet was beginning to show signs of cracking under the constant strain of operations. But the problems with the RCN’s escort fleet also provided Jones with an opportunity to undermine Nelles’s credibility with Macdonald. Since Jones would use the RCN’s shortcomings as ammunition in his smear campaign against the CNS, it is first necessary to briefly outline the condition of the navy during the fall of 1942.

Beginning in September, the Canadian navy suffered some of its worst defeats at sea. Indeed, the statistics were disturbing. Almost half of the Allied forces on the North Atlantic belonged to Canada, and yet eighty percent of the losses during the fall of 1942

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<sup>36</sup> Murray S. 206, 31 October 1934, NAC, Murray Personnel file; Robert Caldwell, “The VE Day Riots in Halifax, 7-8 May 1945,” *The Northern Mariner*, (January 2000), Vol. 10, No.1), 3-20; James Cameron, *The Martyred Admiral*, (Hanport, NS: Lancelot Press, 1980).

occurred while merchant ships were being escorted by the RCN. The British were extremely concerned. From their perspective, the RCN's major problem was that its escort crews were poorly trained. Subsequently, they wanted the RCN transferred to RN control for retraining.<sup>37</sup> This was an affront to Canadian pride as the RCN was to hand the majority of its escort groups over to the British. Following Nelles's lead, NSHQ tried to mount a defence against the transfer. Unfortunately, the disaster of convoy ONS 154 in late December (which lost an unacceptable fourteen merchant ships to only one U-boat damaged) took the wind out of their sails. In January, the RN proposal was accepted with the proviso that the four RCN escort groups would be returned no later than May 1943.<sup>38</sup>

While he was COAC, Jones was aware that the RCN's training policies were inadequate and so he realized that the transfer was a valuable opportunity. As a noted Anglophobe, however, this was a bitter pill for Jones to swallow as it indicated that the RCN was unable to manage its own affairs. Although few outside of the navy understood the significance of the transfer, Jones believed that it reflected poorly on NSHQ's leadership and served as evidence that the RCN would never sail to glory as long as Nelles was at the helm. Moreover, this showed that the CNS had weaknesses that could be exploited. Nelles's position no longer seemed so secure and the next time a problem arose within the fleet Jones would not sit idle on the sidelines. Instead, he would take advantage of any situation that would undermine the CNS's authority in the hopes that the minister would lose confidence in Nelles. Given that he had only been at headquarters for four months, Jones's decision to move against Nelles was both bold and risky. But Jones had his own reasons for aggressively pursuing the CNS's job.

In March 1943, the RCN had won a major concession from both the Americans and British, as it was decided at the Atlantic Convoy Conference in Washington, DC, that a Canadian naval officer would direct the western portion of the Battle of the Atlantic. Assigned the new title, Commander in Chief Canadian North-West Atlantic (CinC CNA), Murray, who as the COAC was the natural choice for this position, suddenly became the

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<sup>37</sup> Marc Milner, "The Royal Canadian Navy and 1943: A Year Best Forgotten?" in Paul Dickson, ed. 1943: The Beginning of the End, (Waterloo: Canadian Committee for the History of the Second World War, 1995), 125.

<sup>38</sup> Milner, "Royal Canadian Navy Participation in the Battle of the Atlantic," in The RCN in Retrospect, ed. James Boutilier, (Vancouver: The University of British Columbia Press, 1982), 169-172.

only Canadian to command an operational theatre in the Allies' entire war effort.<sup>39</sup> Much to Jones's chagrin, the prestige attached to this appointment was considerable. Although Jones's position as VCNS was technically superior to the CinC CNA, Murray was now being ranked amongst the great men who were directing the fight against Germany's U-boats, such as British Vice Admiral Sir Max Horton, and his American counterpart, Admiral "Ernie" King. As a result, Jones often found himself playing second fiddle to Murray who was being portrayed as "Canada's new naval hero" in the nation's media.<sup>40</sup> This raised the possibility that Murray's national popularity in conjuncture with a strong showing as the CinC CNA, might allow him to surpass Jones as Nelles's successor. Murray once again represented a threat to Jones's aspirations and would become more dangerous with each day he served as the CinC CNA.

Jones's health, however, was perhaps the most compelling factor which influenced his decision to initiate a smear campaign against Nelles. This was because Jones had suffered from a heart attack in the spring of 1942, which he purposefully hid from both the navy and his doctor. The only individual who witnessed this incident was Jones's assistant in Halifax, Lieutenant William Slater. After the war, Slater described the effect that this had had on Jones as follows, "And I, who had kept Admiral Jones fateful secret since that night in March 1942 when he collapsed and I stood by helping him to come out of it and he swore me to secrecy, anxious only to finish out the war in [the] harness."<sup>41</sup> Jones was determined to become the CNS or die trying. But as it was assumed that Nelles would not retire until the end of the war, Jones faced the stark reality that he might not live long enough to see his dream come true. His only chance, therefore, was for Nelles to be removed prematurely. But in order for this to happen the minister would have to believe that Nelles was not properly fulfilling his duties as outlined in the Naval Services Act. Consequently, Jones began to discuss naval problems directly with Macdonald in the hopes that this would convince the minister that Nelles was not up to the task.

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<sup>39</sup> Milner, "The Royal Canadian Navy and 1943: A year best forgotten?," 123-134.

<sup>40</sup> See 29 March 1943, [The Globe and Mail](#), [The Montreal Gazette](#), [The Ottawa Citizen](#), [The Vancouver Sun](#), [Winnipeg Free Press](#).

<sup>41</sup> William Slater to RC Hayden, 14 October 1959, DHH, Biog J.



There was good reason why Jones felt that he could speak so freely with the minister. Not only had both men lived in the same Halifax neighbourhood in their youth, but also as the Premier of Nova Scotia in the 1930s, Macdonald had many encounters with Jones while the latter commanded the RCN's East Coast fleet. Due to this exposure it was reputed that besides being one of Jones's bosses at NSHQ, Macdonald was also his friend.<sup>42</sup> This type of clout naturally came in handy for Jones, but it was not the only political connection that he had at his disposal as the Director of Operations Division (DOD), Captain Horatio Nelson Lay, RCN, was Prime Minister William Lyon Mackenzie King's nephew. Perhaps the most notorious member of the "Jones men," Lay became a valuable participant in the VCNS's attempt to oust Nelles. Having established his political network, Jones only needed an opportunity to strike. He did not have to wait for long.

In late February 1943, a former reserve officer named Andrew Dyas MacLean published an article in which he viciously attacked the navy by claiming that a severe morale problem had developed within the officer corps because the permanent force discriminated against naval reserve officers. Having caught the attention of both the press and parliament, MacLean's attack on the service was a public relations disaster for the navy. While Jones disliked MacLean and disagreed with the vast majority of his allegations, he later realized that the entire affair was having a considerable impact on the minister.<sup>43</sup> This epiphany occurred when MacLean had launched his second assault against the navy in March 1943. MacLean was proving an embarrassment to Macdonald, telling Canadians that the minister had failed to properly supervise the navy. As public interest in MacLean's campaign grew, Macdonald began to question the reliability of his CNS. Although Macdonald was guilty of neglecting the navy, he became suspicious of Nelles, believing that the CNS was not telling him all that he needed to know.<sup>44</sup> This was Nelles's Achilles heel, and Jones would design a strategy which was to further undermine Macdonald's flagging confidence in the CNS over the MacLean Affair by redirecting the minister's attention to the fleet's training deficiencies.

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<sup>42</sup> Halifax Telephone Directory, 1925-1933, National Library of Canada; Interview with Vice Admiral David Allan Collins by Hal Lawrence, DHH, Biog C, 36. Interview with HN Lay, DHH, BIOG L

<sup>43</sup> Jones minute note, 26 January, NAC, Connolly Papers, MG32 C71, Vol. 3-10.

This would show the minister that there was, in fact, another problem within the navy that Nelles had not informed him about.

Largely due to operational demands on the North Atlantic, the transfer of the RCN's escort groups was neither as long nor as complete as originally envisioned by the British.<sup>45</sup> With RCN warships returning to Canadian control much earlier than anticipated, the entire transfer appeared to be a gigantic waste of time. In Jones's view, NSHQ still needed to make training a priority, but this was not the issue that Nelles was stressing to Macdonald. Instead, Nelles had told Macdonald in early February 1943, that the navy needed to initiate an immediate modernization program because fifty-nine of the RCN's seventy-one Corvettes were woefully behind the RN in acquiring up-to-date antisubmarine equipment. Modernizing these ships would not be easy. Most of this equipment was designed and built by the British who naturally gave their ships priority over the RCN. Although this was hindering the RCN's ability to modernize, the Naval Staff realized that an even greater problem was that East Coast shipyards did not have the facilities, space, or personnel to handle the RCN's refit requirements.<sup>46</sup> Put another way, even if the RCN had this equipment during the spring of 1943, it would have sat rusting on the jetty because the shipyards could not fit it onto the escorts in a timely manner. Correcting the refit crisis was an enormous undertaking as it called for the expansion of Canada's Maritime Shipyard Industry. Since this would require extensive funding from the federal government as well as the cooperation of other ministries, Nelles turned to Macdonald for assistance.<sup>47</sup> An active participant in all this planning, Jones was aware that the Naval Staff considered it essential that Macdonald comprehend the gravity of the refit situation. This was because the minister was the only individual who could persuade other government departments to help correct this problem. Since Macdonald had already been distracted by the MacLean scandal, it was important for the Naval Staff to form a united front and collectively tell the minister that the refit crisis required his full consideration. As a result, Jones's attempt to turn Macdonald's attention to training issues only managed to complicate this process.

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<sup>44</sup> Richard Oliver Mayne, "Equal privileges for greater sacrifices': Insurrection in the Canadian Naval Reserve, 1942-44," Course Paper, Queen's University, 2002.

<sup>45</sup> Roger Sarty, *Canada and the Battle of the Atlantic*, (Montreal; Art Global, 1998), 128.

<sup>46</sup> Naval Weekly Reports to the minister, 25 February 1943, DHH, NS 1000-5-7, Vol.2.

Of course, it could be argued that Jones felt he an obligation to tell the minister about the training problem because Nelles was reluctant to discuss it. In fact, Jones had once scolded an officer for refusing to bypass a superior, stating that “it was his duty to represent this fact to a higher authority, however, distasteful this course might be.”<sup>48</sup> While Jones may have actually believed this logic, it is clear he was feeding the minister information that was intended to pit Macdonald against Nelles. This can be determined from the fact that he gave conflicting opinions to each of these men, stressing the training deficiency to the minister while at the exact same time telling Nelles that the refit situation was “probably the most serious problem with which we are faced at the moment.”<sup>49</sup> This type of misdirection was a dubious tactic, but it was working. Not only was Macdonald suddenly asking Nelles probing questions about the state of the RCN’s training, but he was also using terminology which could have only come from a naval officer. Although their relationship had already been strained by the MacLean Affair, Nelles assumed that there must be another factor which could account for the minister’s odd behaviour. The only reasonable explanation was that someone within NSHQ was talking to Macdonald behind his back.

However, Jones was not Nelles’s original suspect. Instead, it was assumed that Lay could use his kinship with the Prime Minister as a means to gain access to Macdonald, and was therefore the more likely candidate. As a result, Nelles began to keep close tabs on the DOD. Sensing that Nelles was treating him differently, Lay went to see the CNS for an explanation. His description of this meeting identifies the extent of CNS’s suspicions,

Nelles said, “Well, I don’t see why you should have hurt feelings because ...you haven’t been very loyal to me.” I said, “What do you mean, Sir?” “Well, you have been talking to the Minister behind my back about the lack of efficiency in training of the new Canadian escort vessels... I said, “Sir, I have never spoken to the Minister about the efficiency of Canadian escort vessels. But as a matter of fact, I have reported to the Vice Chief of the Naval Staff who is my superior... Nelles said, “I don’t believe you.” So I said to him, “Well, Sir, Admiral Jones is in the office next door. Why don’t you ask Jones and see whether or not what I

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<sup>47</sup> Nelles to Macdonald, 25 March 1943, DHH, 1000-5-7.

<sup>48</sup> VCNS to Macdonald, Disturbance on the Iroquois – July 19 1943, NSS HMCS Iroquois (1942-1943) 8000, DHH as quoted in Michael Whitby, “Matelots, Martinets, and Mutineers: The Mutiny in HMCS Iroquois, 19 July 1943,” 390.

<sup>49</sup> Jones to Nelles, on Lay to Jones, 22 March 1943, RG24, Vol. 3996, File 1057-1-35, Vol.1.

say is true.”...Nelles did so. He got Jones in, repeated the conversation to him. Jones, a bit red in the face, said, “That is quite true. Lay has reported to me on several occasion that he doesn’t feel the training of the new escort vessels is adequate and I am trying to do something about it now.” ...there was a move on foot to have Nelles replaced as CNS... I imagine that Jones and Angus Macdonald had been discussing the matter and that this is the reason that Nelles felt that I had been telling Angus Macdonald all the shortcomings of the training establishment.<sup>50</sup>

By accusing Lay of disloyalty, Nelles had accidentally ferreted out the true mastermind. He now knew that Jones was undermining his authority. But Nelles had been right to suspect Lay. For example, King recorded in his diary on 29 March that, “After dinner Nelson Lay came to talk over privately matters of concern to himself in the Dept. of Naval Affairs. He told me of his advocacy of special division to deal with submarine warfare... What is needed more than numbers and size is proper training.”<sup>51</sup> Moreover, Lay met with his uncle one week later and this time he was more critical of the CNS:

He [Lay] feels Nelles resents some of the suggestions and criticisms he has made... which he feels very strongly have not been given the attention they should in the Department of Naval Affairs. Has had talks with the Minister and has given him quite frankly his views and suggestions. Macdonald told him that he had not been able to go into some of these matters and had to rely on the Chief of Naval Staff... Nelson [Lay] had been on the right track. He has, perhaps, been too outspoken and is a little headstrong. On the other hand, I rather share his opinion of Nelles as not being any means a man large enough for the task in hand. The whole Department has proceeded on the basis of expansion rather than adequate training.<sup>52</sup>

Therefore, Lay’s attempt to convince Nelles that he was not involved in any smear campaign was less than honest. In fact, Lay was perhaps the most valuable asset in Jones’s political arsenal. On the other hand, it should also be remembered that Lay was responsible for exposing Jones’s scheming to Nelles. Lay’s reasons for doing so, however, was not the product of any wavering allegiance to Jones. Instead, he did this because the minister had personally arranged an East Coast appointment for him that Nelles was now threatening to block.<sup>53</sup> Faced with the disturbing prospect that the CNS

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<sup>50</sup> Lay, *Memoirs of a Mariner*, 148.

<sup>51</sup> King diary, 29 March 1943, DHH 83/530, 185: 231.

<sup>52</sup> King diary, 05 April 1943, DHH, 83/530, 185: 255.

<sup>53</sup> Lay interview with Hal Lawrence, DHH, BIOG L.

would take an active interest in all his future career moves, Lay had little choice but to turn on Jones. As such, the navy's culture did not leave much room for personal loyalty, which was easily cast aside whenever it threatened to interfere with an officer's own career.

In reality, however, Jones's plan had little chance of succeeding as Macdonald was firmly fixed on defeating MacLean's campaign against the navy. Moreover, even had he wanted to, Macdonald could not have replaced Nelles at this time because both the press and parliament would most likely have interpreted such a move as a sign that MacLean was right. A shrewd careerist, Jones knew when to retreat as it had become obvious that the MacLean Affair was not going to produce the conditions that would lead to Nelles's downfall. The problem was that Nelles now knew that Jones was speaking to the minister behind his back. This led to some interesting antics at NSHQ, which would have been humorous had they not represented a sad reflection of the grip that excessive careerism had on the navy's culture. For example, during a private conversation with another officer, Nelles sneaked over to his adjoining door with the VCNS's office and abruptly opened it. Unable to hear Nelles's footsteps through the keyhole, the unsuspecting Jones fell into the room. The fact that Jones was never dismissed for his "spying" indicates that the CNS was willing to tolerate some underhandedness in a career-driven service. But there were also limits in this culture and Jones had to be mindful that he was developing a dangerous reputation at NSHQ, especially since one officer argued that "...there was undoubtedly a movement against him [Nelles], an underground movement. Frankly I think Jones was very much in it. He was a great politician... he never did anything without thinking how it was going to affect him."<sup>54</sup> Yet another had formed the same conclusion, "Jones is by nature discourteous and appears satisfied to rely on his ill manners and political pull to reach the top. He is the most disliked of all the senior RCNs."<sup>55</sup> For some, Jones was a Judas and as a result he would have to select his battles carefully.

As with the MacLean Affair, Jones's next opportunity to malign Nelles was the product of a complaint lodged by a reserve officer. This was the Assistant Naval

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<sup>54</sup> Captain Eric S. Brand, Interview by E.C. Russel taped interview transcript, 22 February, 1967, DHH, Brand Papers, 84/145, Vol 7, 27, 35-36.

<sup>55</sup> Captain Massey Goolden Diary, 24 October 1943, DHH, Biog G.

Information Officer at NSHQ, Lieutenant Commander William Strange, RCNVR. In August 1943, Strange by-passed normal military channels so that he could alert Macdonald to the fact that the seagoing fleet was demoralized by the lack of modern equipment on their ships. Given that Macdonald had finally silenced MacLean, the news that there were rumblings amongst the fleet hit the minister like a bombshell. Without telling Nelles about Strange's report, he immediately asked for an assessment of the RCN's modernization program. On 1 September, Nelles sent him a series of memos from various staff officers with a note stating "I think this covers the situation." Although Macdonald was dissatisfied with this response he never told Nelles as much, and as a result the Naval Staff assumed that the matter had been settled.<sup>56</sup> Unlike the rest of the Naval Staff, however, Jones knew better. For example, once Strange realized that his modernization report had had the desired impact on Macdonald, he wrote to a friend that "the Minister is going strongly into this matter himself, and I understand that VCNS will, before long, be going over to England to take up these matters with Admiralty. Please keep this information entirely to yourself for obvious reasons..."<sup>57</sup> This indicates that Jones not only understood that Macdonald was dissatisfied with Nelles's response, but was also willing to look into these matters on his behalf. Jones's attempt to get involved with Macdonald's efforts to uncover the "truth" about modernization is important, especially since the minister was extremely wary of Nelles's "perfunctory report," which "intimated that there was nothing to worry about."<sup>58</sup> Unable to reconcile this conclusion with the dire warnings contained in the Strange report, Macdonald began to suspect a cover-up. The truth was not nearly so sinister or conspiratorial.

Nelles had been giving the minister regular briefings on the modernization problem throughout the year, but this information was always presented in terms of how it related to the refit crisis. In fact, only two weeks before he had received Strange's report, Macdonald had attended a Naval Board meeting where he was told that the refit crisis "is so urgent and of such vital importance that time does not permit of a full investigation of all factors contributing to it. It is considered essential that the broad lines on which improvement is to be effected must be established immediately and that steps

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<sup>56</sup> Nelles to Macdonald, 26 November 1943, PANS, Macdonald Papers, MG2, F276/39.

<sup>57</sup> Strange to Adams, 21 September 1943, DHH, EC Russel Papers, 91/298.

<sup>58</sup> Interview with Mr. John Connolly by LCDR TR Daly, 26 January 1945, DHH, 1700-196/96D.

be taken at once to effect a radical change in the existing conditions.” Nelles’s fatal flaw was that he assumed Macdonald understood that the modernization issue was linked to the refit crisis. Since he had only recently discovered what the word “refit” meant in a naval context, Macdonald actually had no idea what his naval advisors were trying to tell him.<sup>59</sup> Instead of asking for clarification, however, Macdonald chose to hide his ignorance, and as a result he mistakenly concluded that Strange was reporting on another problem within the fleet which the Naval Staff had never discussed with him. From Nelles’s perspective, therefore, the minister’s request for an update on the fleet’s modernization was interpreted as a sign that Macdonald was finally taking a more active interest in the refit crisis. Aware that Macdonald was unsatisfied with Nelles’s response, Jones was the only officer who could have cleared up this misunderstanding. Instead of reconciling the minister’s growing distrust of Nelles and the Naval Board, however, Jones chose to stoke the fire. It was in this context that Jones tried to gain the minister’s confidence by offering to go to the United Kingdom. This would have let Jones manipulate the information from the overseas officers for his own means. Unfortunately for Jones the minister had other plans.

Given his apprehension over the modernization question, Macdonald needed someone he trusted, and so he turned to his executive assistant, John Joseph Connolly. Connolly was a brilliant man, who had proven his ability to protect the minister from dangerous scandals during the MacLean Affair. This situation was no different, as he knew exactly what to do. Since Strange’s information had come from RN regulars and Canadian reservists who were stationed at St. John’s Newfoundland as well as the British naval base at Londonderry, Northern Ireland, Connolly would visit these locations for himself and conduct his own investigation. Although Jones had failed to win Macdonald’s confidence, the magnitude of Connolly plans was still encouraging. The more so because Connolly was looking for evidence to support the hypothesis that Nelles had hidden a debilitating equipment problem from the minister. Unfortunately, it is difficult to assess the exact role that Jones played in this inquiry, but there is enough

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<sup>59</sup> Naval Board Minutes, 27 July 1943, DHH, Nelles to Macdonald, 26 November 1943, PANS, Macdonald Papers, MG2, F 276, Interview with LCdr Hill, April 1943, PANS, Macdonald Papers, MG2.

evidence to show that he was actively involved with the first leg of Connolly's investigation.

Ever since his first attempt to undermine the CNS had been discovered in March, the officers who were loyal to Nelles had closely monitored Jones's activities. As a result, Jones was forced to curtail his smear campaign. But the potential trouble that Connolly's investigation could cause Nelles was an opportunity that Jones could not pass up. Naturally, accompanying Connolly on his trip would provide the best chance to influence the Executive Assistant's conclusions. The problem was that travelling overseas with Connolly would attract too much attention. However, since NSHQ officers regularly traveled to the East Coast it was possible that he could get to St. John's without raising suspicion. Therefore, Jones announced that he wanted to conduct an "inspection trip" of the Maritimes.<sup>60</sup> This was clearly a ruse.

Jones arrived in St. John's on 7 October 1943 and left on the same day that Connolly departed for Londonderry. His next two stops were Sydney and Halifax, Nova Scotia. In Sydney, he reviewed the command's headquarters, dockyard and the base's personnel, and while in Halifax he completed a thorough inspection of *Stadacona* before returning to Ottawa. In contrast, his only duty in St. John's was a one-hour tour of the RCN hospital, which he visited with Connolly at his side. Although Jones stayed at the base for two days, he did not inspect its naval facilities or personnel, nor did he partake in any activities usually associated with an official visit.<sup>61</sup> Put another way, had any of Nelles's officers analyzed this trip they would have discovered that Jones performed no official functions in St. John's, making this stop a lengthy, and more or less pointless, detour from the inspections he conducted in Sydney and Halifax. Instead, he kept a low profile at the base, indicating that it was serving another purpose.

Jones's presence in St. John's coincided with a fundamental shift in the nature of Connolly's investigation. During his first two days at the base, Connolly found that most officers preferred to discuss other issues, and so he began to form the impression

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<sup>60</sup>Nelles to Macdonald, 26 November 1943, PANS, Macdonald Papers, MG2, F276/39; FONF, Halifax War diaries, August 1943, War Diaries, DHH.

<sup>61</sup> NOIC St. John's War Diary, FONF Monthly ROP, October 1943, DHH, 1000-5-20, Vol. 4; Sydney Monthly Reports, DHH, NSS 1000-5-21, Vol. 2; *Stadacona* War Diary, DHH, NS 1000-5-13, Vol. 20; Jones Personnel File, NAC; Connolly diary, 8 October 1943, NAC, Connolly Papers, MG32 C71, Vol. 2-6.



that modernization was not a key concern. His investigation was stagnating, but this suddenly changed once Jones appeared.

As the FONF, Reid, and his Captain (D), Captain JM Rowland, were the two officers in St. John's who were in the best position to give Connolly and an assessment of the fleet's equipment. Yet Connolly had waited until Jones had arrived before he went to see either of them.<sup>62</sup> Given that Connolly was investigating a perceived flaw with NSHQ's modernization policy this pattern is odd, because it was less likely that Reid and Rowland would feel free to give frank and critical observations in the presence of a flag officer from Ottawa. But Jones actually took the Executive Assistant to meet Reid and Rowland and it was during these discussions that Connolly was convinced that: "The general impression which I previously had, namely, that R.C.N. ships were very poorly equipped with the latest mechanical appliances, was confirmed."<sup>63</sup> Whether Jones actually attended this meeting is a mystery, but it is clear that he was participating in the investigation, especially since Connolly had written to his wife that, "GC Jones arrived and with him I had lunch at Commodore Reid's... [he] leaves here tomorrow. He should be home in a few days. *We've* [italics added] been lucky with weather."<sup>64</sup> Moreover, it is interesting that Connolly made reference in a letter to Macdonald that he had "talked to GC Jones" about some of the problems he was encountering in St. John's.<sup>65</sup> This indicates that, unlike the rest of the Naval Staff, Jones had at the very least an inclination of what was transpiring, and yet apparently said nothing to Nelles once he returned to Ottawa in mid-October.

Once back in Ottawa, Jones bided his time until Connolly had returned from the overseas portion of his investigation. The results turned out better than Jones could have hoped. Taking Connolly under his wing, British Commodore G.W.G. Simpson, who was in charge at Londonderry, had given the Executive Assistant complete access to the base, officers, and Canadian ships under his command. Simpson was in fact the mastermind behind Strange's report, and because of his efforts Connolly was not only convinced that the RCN suffered from a debilitating equipment crisis, but also that the Canadian Naval

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<sup>62</sup> Connolly Diary, 07 October 1943, NAC, Connolly Papers, MG32 C71, Vol. 3.

<sup>63</sup> Connolly to Macdonald, 8 November 1943, NAC, Connolly Papers, MG32 C71, Vol. 3, 'Equipment on RCN ships part 1 n.d. 1943.'1.

<sup>64</sup> Connolly to Ida Connolly, 9 October 1943, NAC, Connolly Papers, MG32 C71, Vol. 1.

Staff had “conspired” to conceal this condition from Macdonald.<sup>66</sup> This set the stage for a bitter showdown between Macdonald and Nelles.

Macdonald’s opening salvo to Nelles consisted of an anonymous memo that Connolly had received while he was overseas.<sup>67</sup> This document, which was in fact an extract from a letter between Simpson and his immediate superior, explained how NSHQ had botched the upgrading of the fleet and charged that “the modernization of Canadian Corvettes is an extremely simple matter.”<sup>68</sup> Nelles passed this letter on to the staff officers “most concerned” and asked for opinions. They were outraged. In fact, with no way of knowing that he was actually attacking a man of Simpson’s rank and stature, one staff officer even went as far as to claim that “the man is mad.”<sup>69</sup> Such emotionalism was understandable. Simpson’s account was scandalous. Not only was it filled with factual errors, but also revealed that the British had no idea of the challenges the Naval Staff had faced in its efforts to modernize. However, there was one lone voice that did not respond with anger. “I... do not consider it damaging criticism of our whole repair organization,” Jones told Nelles on 12 November, continuing with “rather, I interpret it as constructive criticism, containing suggestions for improving.”<sup>70</sup> This was typical of Jones’s behaviour throughout the confrontation between Nelles and Macdonald. While never overtly siding with Macdonald, he kept his distance from Nelles and did not participate in the Naval Staff’s defence of NSHQ’s modernization policy. Naturally, Jones had no idea how this situation was going to turn out and so in the early stages at least, he proceeded with caution.

By late November the confrontation began to spin out of control. On the surface at least, it appeared that NSHQ had split into two camps with the minister and Connolly on the one side, and Nelles and his followers on the other. In reality, however, there was a third group operating within this environment. Sensing that it was only a matter of time before the situation turned explosive, Jones and his supporters secretly passed documents

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<sup>65</sup> Connolly to Macdonald, 9 October 1943, PANS, Macdonald Papers, MG2, F 297.

<sup>66</sup> Interview with Mr. John Connolly by LCDR TR Daly, 26 January 1945, DHH, 1700-196/96D.

<sup>67</sup> Connolly to Nelles, 10 November 1943, PANS, Macdonald Papers, MG 2, F276/44.

<sup>68</sup> Simpson to Horton, nd, PANS, Connolly Papers, MG 32 C71, Vol. 3.

<sup>69</sup> Griffiths to Nelles, 16 November 1943, PANS, Macdonald Papers, MG 2, F 276/26; Johstone to Nelles, 13 November 1943, PANS, Macdonald Papers, MG 2, F 276/25.

<sup>70</sup> Jones to Nelles, 12 November 1943, PANS, Macdonald Papers, MG 2, F 276/22.

to Connolly that strengthened the minister's case.<sup>71</sup> But such activities were difficult to hide. Calling them the "skids under Nelles party," Captain Eric Brand, RN, who was the Director of Trade, was disgusted when he discovered that Jones and his officers were manipulating the confrontation for their own purposes. As a British officer on loan to the RCN, Brand had managed to avoid the petty politics that existed amongst the navy's top brass because the RN was responsible for his career progression. Although he did not have a personal stake in the confrontation, Brand decided that it would be wrong not to expose these efforts to torpedo the CNS, especially since he was certain that Jones "...had quite a hand in the Nelles business. Quite a hand – just quiet remarks [to the minister], you know."<sup>72</sup> He went to Nelles with this information, but remarkably the CNS did not seem to care. His apathy confused Brand. He had just uncovered a "Brutus" amongst the "Senators," and yet this "Caesar" was not going to stop the plot. Unwilling to let his chief fall at the hands of such an unscrupulous officer, Brand took it upon himself to stop Jones before it was too late.<sup>73</sup> Since Nelles had not listened, Brand reasoned, perhaps the other side would. He therefore turned to Connolly.

Brand had had a long association with Connolly. After developing a friendship, Brand had even taken Connolly to St. John's in late 1942 so that he could get first hand experience of naval life on the East Coast. As with Nelles, however, Connolly also seemed disinterested in his revelation about Jones,

John Connolly had recently been to England + had come back with all sorts of complaints about the lack of equipment in Canadian ships – This was causing strained relations between Percy Nelles + the minister – which were providing Jones + some others with good opportunity to get the skids under Percy – as I had warned him [Nelles] some time before – but he took no notice. I had several talks with Connolly trying to explain to him what was really happening – but to no avail as it turned out.<sup>74</sup>

In the end, Brand gave up, believing that "the pressure against Nelles was too strong."<sup>75</sup> But he was not alone, as another British officer serving with the RCN, Captain Massey Goolden, also found Jones's shenanigans equally distasteful,

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<sup>71</sup> 29 November 1943, Minute note Jones to Connolly, on SCO (L) to Sec NB, 29 October 1943, DHH, 1000-5-35, Vol. 1.

<sup>72</sup> Interview with EC Russel, Brand Papers, 84/145.

<sup>73</sup> Brand Diary, DHH, Brand Papers, Nov 1943, 81/145.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid.

<sup>75</sup> Interview with EC Russel, Brand Papers, 84/145.

We [Goolden and Brodeur] discussed Murray and Jones and the intrigues that are apparently going on to get rid of PN [Percy Nelles]. If Jones gets there heaven help the RCN for the next 15 years. Looking back it is all rather amusing to me. Brodeur told me about his relationship with the great magnificent Murray and he told me about the gangsterism of GC. I knew it all before...<sup>76</sup>

Both of these RN officers believed that they were about to witness the first *coup d'état* in the RCN's history. In reality, however, neither Brand nor Goolden understood the larger politics that was driving the confrontation between Macdonald and Nelles.

The real stumbling block in this acrimonious debate between Macdonald and Nelles was the issue of blame. As long as the minister demanded that the Naval Staff accept full responsibility for the modernization quagmire there would be no resolution. From Macdonald's perspective, it was only a matter of time before the public discovered that Canadian sailors had been placed at greater peril because the equipment on their warships was insufficient. This would most likely mark the end his political career, unless he could shift their wrath to another target. Therefore, Macdonald wanted to play the victim who had been unfairly kept out of the loop by grossly incompetent and negligent naval officers. Naturally, Nelles rejected this argument, and by defending his officers became Macdonald's primary scapegoat.<sup>77</sup> Since Nelles's removal was serving a political purpose, Jones's meddling was not a major factor in the minister's actual decision to replace the CNS. But this does not mean that Jones did not contribute to Nelles's final downfall.

Given the weakness of Macdonald's argument, Nelles should have survived the confrontation. Indeed, not only was Macdonald's health failing (having recently been diagnosed with a "life threatening" duodena ulcer), but also his resolve had weakened to a point where he seriously considered resignation.<sup>78</sup> The only reason he did not quit, however, was that Connolly had developed an ingenious plan to save his career. This involved creating a meaningless overseas post for Nelles. In an attempt to conceal the modernization problem from the public, Macdonald would announce that Nelles was

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<sup>76</sup> Massey Golden, RN, Diary, 11 December 1943, DHH, BIOG G.

<sup>77</sup> Richard Oliver Mayne, "A Political Execution," *The American Review of Canadian Studies*, Winter 1999, Vol. 29, No. 4.

<sup>78</sup> Interview with Mr. John Connolly by LCDR TR Daly, 26 January 1945, DHH, 1700-196/96D, Fredrick Gibson, *Ottawa at War: The Grant Dexter Memoranda, 1939-1945*, (Winnipeg: The Manitoba Records Society, 1994).

being transferred so that he could direct the RCN's contribution to the upcoming invasion of Europe. This would serve three purposes. First, it would prevent any difficult questions from the press and parliament as to why Nelles was no longer the CNS. Second, if the public ever discovered the condition of the fleet, Macdonald could then "spin the transfer" by claiming that he had actually fired Nelles.<sup>79</sup> Finally, it would send a powerful message to the Naval Staff: Nelles's career was effectively over, and anyone else who resisted the minister risked the same fate. But Connolly's plan would have failed had it not been for Jones and his careerist mentality.

The list of candidates to replace Nelles was short. Murray was one option, but Connolly did not think he would relinquish his position as CinC CNA. There was also some doubt as to whether he would participate in any plan that would disgrace Nelles.<sup>80</sup> Had Jones also refused, Macdonald would have been in serious trouble. This is because every other flag officer lacked seniority. As a result, the press and opposition would have found it highly irregular had any of these officers suddenly been promoted above both Jones and Murray.<sup>81</sup> But none of this really mattered. With his long awaited goal now at his fingertips there was little chance that Jones was going to save Nelles. In mid January 1944, Nelles realized that he could no longer sit in the saddle of power at NSHQ, and gracefully handed the reigns over to Jones.

Overall, the press reacted favourably to both Jones's promotion and Nelles's transfer, and the official opposition failed to ask any probing questions.<sup>82</sup> Connolly's plan had worked. For some of those who were in the know it was a different story, as Brand recorded in his diary that,

On 14<sup>th</sup> Jan – Minister announced that Percy Nelles was being kicked upstairs + going as a full Admiral to the UK to direct the Canadian Naval Mission.  
...Actually he had nothing to do in England but have a front row seat in the invasion spectacle – GC Jones took over as CNS which he had been scheming for some time but he was always pleasant enough to me.<sup>83</sup>

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<sup>79</sup> Connolly to Macdonald, 30 November 1943, NAC, Connolly Papers, MG 32 C71, Vol. 3.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid.

<sup>82</sup> Ottawa Journal, 15 January 1944; Montreal Gazette, 15 January 1944.

<sup>83</sup> Brand Diary, DHH, Brand Papers, November 1943, 81/145.

Likewise, Goolden had a similar reaction,

Meanwhile at Ottawa the bombshell has at last exploded. Nelles is going to England, GC has reached his goal and I expect all is in a turmoil. ...I feel ashamed to have any connection with the RCN at times! Though the fellows who are doing the real work at sea are splendid. ... I hope Murray will keep quite, if so I think he will win in the last lap. He is the only RCN senior officer who is doing a real Flag officers job and apparently doing it well. I hope.<sup>84</sup>

Perhaps the most interesting aspect of Brand and Goolden's comments is that they are unique when compared to other documentary collections from this period. Currently, the National Archives of Canada and the Department of National Defence's historical section hold the personal papers of twelve senior RCN staff officers; none of which contain a single criticism or significant comment regarding the transfer of power from Nelles to Jones. One can only speculate as to the reason behind this anomaly, but it is a distinct possibility that they did not believe that Jones had done anything unusual. As British officers, however, Brand and Goolden were "outsiders," and as such their experiences with the RCN are important because they provide valuable, and largely unbiased, observations on the affect that excessive careerism had on the navy and its culture.

Although the RN was by no means free of excessive careerism, both Brand and Goolden were shocked that it was so prevalent in the RCN. For them, Jones's success in replacing Nelles stood as an extreme example of a problem that plagued the entire senior staff. This was particularly evident when Goolden later reflected on his time with the Canadian Navy in which he listed the following problems as amongst the most serious:

3. No two senior officers trust each other; they are always striving to get ahead of each other, they have less loyalty amongst themselves than they have from us [British officers] if only they could see that and not be always under the impression that we want to usurp their jobs. The 'Nelles' episode brings some of this out into the open.
4. The Minister (a veritable politician) has too much power and the Board does not really function as such. The 'Nelles' episode likewise displays this fact. Everything is done below board and not above – I hold no special brief for Nelles but if it was desirable to terminate his 10 years of rule as CNS one would have thought that at least he might have been consulted as to his relief.

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<sup>84</sup> Massey Golden, 16 January 1944, Diary, DHH, BIOG G.

5. Leaving Nelles out of it, how can the service function seniority and efficiently with GC [Jones]– LM [Murray]– RR [Reid] and that despicable creature VB [Brodeur] intriguing and jockeying for their own suds [jobs].”<sup>85</sup>

Goolden was right to question the efficiency of the senior staff. In itself, competition for promotions and appointments is healthy providing officers continue to follow the military’s ethos of placing “one’s service before oneself.”<sup>86</sup> As Goolden’s observations indicate, however, the RCN’s leaders had reversed these priorities, and by doing so had created a dysfunctional and non-adaptive culture that had a number of adverse consequences for the navy.<sup>87</sup> First, instead of collectively tackling the equipment and training deficiencies within the fleet some senior officers, such as Jones, used these problems for their own advantage. This hindered NSHQ’s ability to effectively deal with these complicated issues, and ensured that they did not always receive the full attention they deserved. Second, jockeying for position took up much time and energy that should have been spent on the welfare of the service. Finally, excessive careerism had produced a poisonous atmosphere of mistrust, paranoia, and disloyalty at NSHQ, which interfered with the free flow ideas. It was the Naval Staff’s job to develop innovative policy, and sometimes that required senior officers to take chances. This was less likely to occur, however, if staff officers were afraid that a poor idea might be used against them by a rival who wanted to sabotage their career, and according to one individual the “whole atmosphere stifled initiative.”<sup>88</sup>

Given Brand and Goolden’s criticisms, it is tempting to blame the top brass for the prevalence of careerism at NSHQ. But it must be remembered that as British officers they had not experienced life in the small and highly competitive pre-war Canadian navy. Most of the RCN’s current leaders had been taught how to act as naval officers during these formative years. The lessons they had learned in this cutthroat environment had left a lasting impression as it was understood that officers who failed to “guard their ‘careers’

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<sup>85</sup> Glover, “Royal Canadian or Royal Colonial Navy,” 271; Massey Golden, 26 May 1944, Diary, DHH, BIOG G.

<sup>86</sup> Brig-Gen. David Broadbent, “Military Society: Change or Decay?,” *Canadian Defence Quarterly*, Vol. 11, No. 4, (spring 1982), 24-27; Captain Donald A. Neill, “Ethics and the Military Corporation,” *Canadian Military Journal*, (Spring 2000), 27-39; English, “Understanding military culture: A Canadian Perspective.”

<sup>87</sup> English, “Understanding military culture: A Canadian Perspective,” 37.

<sup>88</sup> Strange to EC Russel, 9 December 1968, DHH, EC Russel Papers, 91/298, Vol. 4.

with extraordinary caution,”<sup>89</sup> did so at their own peril. This indicates that excessive careerism was a systemic problem in the navy that dated back to the formation of the service in 1910. Since this was all they had ever known, this non-adaptive culture was extremely resilient to change. Put another way, it was unrealistic to expect that excessive careerism would suddenly stop when the Second World War began.

This would also explain why Nelles seemed so ambivalent when Brand told him about Jones’s meddling. In fact, even after this discussion Nelles still told Macdonald that he considered Jones one of “the best officers available to NSHQ.”<sup>90</sup> As has been seen, Brand was not telling Nelles anything that he did not already know or at least suspected. After all, Jones had a track record for going to the minister that dated back to March 1943. Although there can be little doubt that Nelles was annoyed, and perhaps even hurt by Jones’s disloyalty, he seems to have accepted that careerism was part of the game. Brand could not understand this mentality, and instead interpreted excessive careerism amongst the RCN’s most senior officers as a sign that the young Canadian navy had not yet matured into a professional service.<sup>91</sup> Perhaps to some extent this was true, but dealing with excessive careerism had long been a fact of life for officers at NSHQ. As a result, Jones’s race for the top with Murray, and his subsequent attempt to oust Nelles, was perceived as a natural by-product of a highly competitive service. This indicates that it was the navy’s culture, rather than the attributes of a particular individual, that produced officers like Jones.

While careerism might have been tolerated at NSHQ, it was viewed with disdain amongst the fleet. Of course, sailors tended to get more agitated with seagoing officers who tried to further their careers by exposing a ship to unnecessary danger in combat, but they were also troubled by the antics of the senior leadership in Ottawa. Therefore, careerism at NSHQ had a demoralizing effect on seagoing sailors, as it was difficult to respect senior officers who spent most of their time competing for promotions, while they risked their lives against the elements and the enemy. To them, Headquarters became a remote and foreign world that had apparently lost track of the realities of war. This angered many in the fleet, and in one instance an officer even posted a “port order” that

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<sup>89</sup> Ibid.

<sup>90</sup> Nelles to Macdonald, 26 November 1943, PANS, Macdonald Papers, MG 2, F 276/34

<sup>91</sup> Donald MacIntyre, U-Boat Killer, (London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1956), 154.



listed the enemies of the RCN as: “(1) The German Reich (2) Naval Service Headquarters (3) Imperial Japan.”<sup>92</sup> Jones’s appointment as CNS only served to reinforce this perception. Despite Jones’s efforts to conceal his “scheming,” many seagoing officers had at least heard rumours of his nefarious campaign against Nelles, and as a result his success was viewed with contempt:

We all thought it uproariously funny when Vice-Admiral George C. Jones, a solid, unspectacular officer... was given “a new image” by the PR people and launched in the media as Admiral “Tiger” Jones! We did not think it so funny when we began to realize that we were being manipulated to accord with political purposes ashore, and that the public was accepting the ridiculously excessive accounts of media men at face value.<sup>93</sup>

From Jones’s perspective, his tactics to replace Nelles had paid off but it had come with a price as he further undermined the fleet’s confidence in their most senior leaders.

In fact, even though he no longer had to compete with his contemporaries, careerism still effected how Jones acted as CNS. Jones had plans to consolidate his power, and as a cunning opportunist he knew that he had to wait until Macdonald and Murray were out of the picture before he proceeded. As a result, after Macdonald retired in April 1945, Jones pounced on the chance to get rid of Murray who was being held responsible by government for the VE Day riots in Halifax. Although the government’s case against Murray was flawed, Jones mimicked the tactics he had used against Nelles. He neither defended Murray nor provided any moral support, and after the Rear Admiral was forced to resign, Jones usurped the CinCCNA appointment instead of giving it to another flag officer. As the position of VCNS had never been filled after he became CNS, Jones now held the three highest posts in the Canadian navy. Such a power grab was unprecedented, but Jones was not finished. Since neither Macdonald nor Murray was around to stop him, Jones did the unthinkable – he abolished the Naval Board. This ensured the new (and inexperienced) naval minister, Douglas Abbott, could only turn to Jones for advice.<sup>94</sup>

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<sup>92</sup> *Salty Dips*, Vol. 2, ed. Mac Lynch (Ottawa: Privately printed, 1985), 200.

<sup>93</sup> James Lamb, *The Corvette Navy*, (Toronto: Macmillan Press, 1977), 136.

<sup>94</sup> Naval Board Minutes, July 1945 to February 1946, DHH; Murray and Jones various correspondence, May to June 1945, DHH, Murray Papers, BIOG M.

Jones's totalitarian control over the navy caused many problems. Without the Naval Board or a VCNS, all final decisions on naval policy had to be made by Jones before going to the minister. But since he was also the CinCCNA, Jones also had to be on the East Coast. As a result, he tried to run the navy from Halifax. The effect that this had on the service was remarkable, as the American Naval Intelligence officer at NSHQ reported back to Washington that,

Naval Service Headquarters is in a state of confusion. Since the riot in Halifax on V-E day, Vice Admiral Jones, Chief of the Naval Staff, has spent nearly all of his time at Halifax. The result has been, with no responsible head functioning at Naval Service Headquarters, senior officers on duty here have remained in a state of confusion with no idea as to the policy of the Canadian Navy, the reason principally because no policy has apparently been formed. The result is that Naval Service Headquarters are beginning to lose the best of their officers through resignation.<sup>95</sup>

This was how the navy operated for the last eight months of Jones's reign. When Jones died suddenly of a heart attack (in conjunction with hypertension),<sup>96</sup> the navy was left leaderless because there was no VCNS, and Jones had refused to groom a successor. As an interim measure, Reid was asked to delay his planned retirement so that he could act as a "caretaker CNS" until a suitable replacement could gain the necessary experience to take over. In the mean time, Reid would be responsible for rebuilding the Naval Board as well as undoing much of the damage that Jones had done.<sup>97</sup>

Consumed by careerism, Jones's climb to the top had taken a considerable toll on the navy. But it is difficult to lay the blame squarely on his shoulders. He was, after all, the product of a service that both encouraged and rewarded excessive careerism. Two full generations of senior officers had lived within this environment, and so had come to accept careerism as a natural part of the navy's culture. Moreover, it was during this period that Jones and many other officers had been taught the tactics of how to quickly advance within a small and highly competitive navy. Jones thrived within this environment because he had mastered these techniques. Most of his experience had come from his leadership race with Murray, and by the time he became VCNS, Jones's

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<sup>95</sup> Glenn Howell US Intelligence Report, 23 July 1945, DHH, 92/184, Folder 8, USNA RG 38, REG 23371

<sup>96</sup> Jones Death Certificate, 27 February 1946, NAC, Personnel File.

<sup>97</sup> Naval Board Minutes, February to July 1946, DHH, Wilf Lund, "Vice-Admiral Harold Grant; Father of the Post WR Royal Canadian Navy," in *Warrior Chiefs*, Berd Horn and Stephen Harris, eds, (Toronto: Dundurn Press, 2001), 193.

tactics had matured to the point where he possessed the confidence to initiate a smear campaign against Nelles. But Jones's pattern of feeding information to Macdonald and taking advantage of various problems within the navy, while contributing to the minister's eroding confidence in the CNS, was not the reason why Nelles was replaced. As an integral part of Connolly's plan to save Macdonald, Nelles's transfer was actually wrapped up in larger political considerations. As a result, the central role Jones played in Nelles's downfall was that he became the linchpin that ensured that this plan worked. Instead of saving Nelles, therefore, he had maneuvered himself into the perfect position to replace him. This was the key to Jones's success. A brilliant opportunist, Jones manipulated confrontational situations with the aim of ending up in an advantageous position. Not only had he done this to Nelles, but he also repeated this pattern when Murray ran into trouble over the Halifax riots. In the end, Jones's careerist mentality had made him arguably the most powerful Admiral in Canadian history, but such a distinction had come at great expense to both other officers as well as the navy itself.

For today's navy, the effect that Jones's careerist mentality had on the service has long since faded from memory. In itself, however, careerism does not harm the Canadian military. In fact, a healthy competitive spirit for promotions can actually be beneficial because it encourages officers to perform to the best of their ability. Instead, it is excessive careerism that needs to be avoided. Examples such as a 1995 National Defence survey, which discovered that military personnel believed their senior leaders "were too concerned about building empires and following their personal agendas," indicate that extensive careerism can still have an adverse effect on morale.<sup>98</sup> This expression of dissatisfaction shares a remarkable similarity with the sentiments expressed by some sailors when Jones relieved Nelles. Naturally, careerism in the post unification CF is different from the naval culture that produced officers like Jones, but with further study it might be possible to discover whether excessive careerism is systemic or transitory. Put another way, this essay suggested that excessive careerism was a systemic problem in the navy between 1911 and 1946, but without more analysis and additional case studies it is impossible to determine whether this trend continued to the unification period. Such an understanding would allow the CF to determine which

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<sup>98</sup> "Executive Summary - Somalia Commission," nd, <http://www.dnd.ca/somalia/vol0/vol0e.txt>, 8.

aspects of careerism contribute to a functional culture, while at the same time eliminate the negative ones that have had a detrimental impact on the service. At the very least, Jones's decision to change the administrative structure of the service to suit his own personal agenda should serve as a harbinger of what can happen to a military organization when excessive careerism remains unchecked.

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