



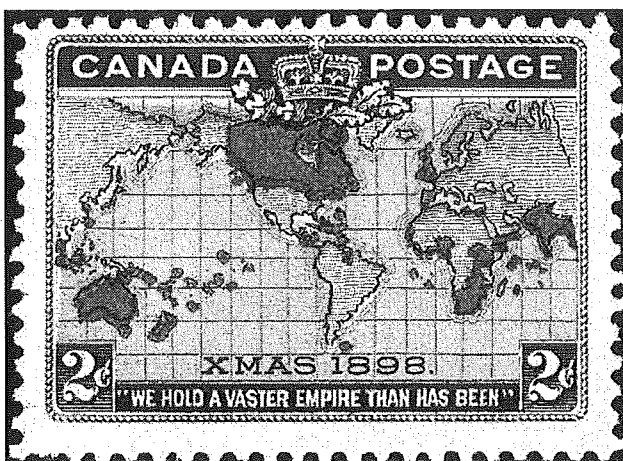
## Defending the Empire

In the 1890s, the British Empire was spread out all over the globe. It had the world's most powerful Navy. Canada was one of the many **dominions** that made up the vast Empire. It depended largely on Britain for its defence. It did not have the resources to build up a strong military. Canada's focus had been on growing the population and the economy.

### WORD POWER

**dominion** – a country that was part of the British Empire but had its own government

As part of Britain's efforts to keep up with Germany's new military technology, it demanded specific support from the countries in its Empire. The cost for building the latest version of steam-powered warships was very high. Britain expected the dominions to help with the increasing expense of defending the Empire. Britain also wanted to be able to rely on dominion troops and warships to fight in any wars the British were involved in.



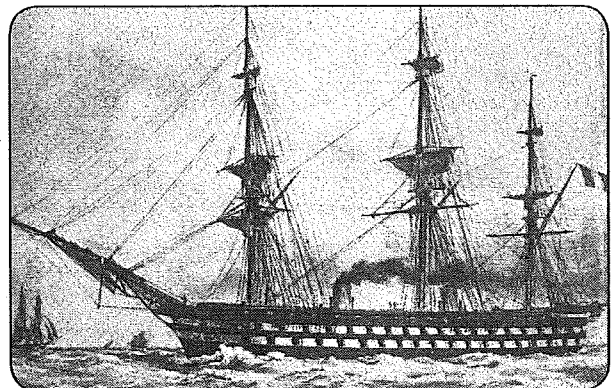
Stamp showing the British Empire in 1898

## Opposing Viewpoints

What Canada's role should be in defending the British Empire was cause for serious disagreement. As usual, opinions were split between English-speaking Canadians and French-speaking Canadians. Most English-speaking Canadians had strong ties to Britain. If the British Empire was at war, they felt it was Canada's duty to step in and help by supplying troops and financial aid.

The French-speaking Canadians held an opposite view. Since France was their homeland, they did not feel it was their duty to protect British interests. But they felt no allegiance towards France either. If Canada was directly attacked, they were prepared to defend it, but they had no interest in Britain or France.

Another controversial issue that emerged in the 1890s was the idea of **Imperial Federation**. Politicians who supported this idea thought that each dominion should develop its own strong navy. But in the case of war, those navies would be under the control of Britain. Some prominent Canadians thought Imperial Federation was a good way to ensure that Canada and the British Empire remained strong. They did not feel that Canada could make it as an independent country without Britain's support. However, many Canadians did not approve of handing over military control to the British.



An early steam-powered warship



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## Defending the Empire

Answer the following questions in complete sentences.

1. Why did Canada mostly depend on Britain for its defence?

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2. How did English-speaking Canadians feel about helping the British Empire if it was at war?

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3. What kind of support did Britain expect from the dominions to help defend the British Empire?

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4. What was the idea behind Imperial Federation?

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5. Why did some prominent Canadians think Imperial Federation was a good idea?

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6. How did French-speaking Canadians feel about sending troops to help defend the British Empire?

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