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In Defence of Canada

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Eayrs, James. *In Defence of Canada*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1965. 382 p.

This extraordinarily frank and trenchant study of the national security policy of Canada from November 1918 to October 1935 opens up for the first time vast areas previously unexplored by Canadian historians and political scientists. James Eayrs is the first outsider to have gained access to the files of the Canadian military establishment, long the closed preserve of official historians. In addition to tapping this rich vein of source material, he has drawn upon the private papers of all the prime ministers of the period and of many of the cabinet ministers, top civil servants, and other key public figures. The book is of general interest rather than a rigorous analysis, "for the reason that there was little national security policy of Canada rigorously to analyze" (p. ix). The book opens with a brilliant introductory survey of Canada's postwar withdrawal into North American isolationism. Then there are brief accounts of the Siberian expedition and the political problems of postwar rehabilitation. Three chapters are devoted to the subsequent peacetime roles of the skeletonized Army, Navy, and Royal Canadian Air Force, including a valuable account of Major General A. G. L. McNaughton's work camps for the unemployed of the early 1930's, "perhaps the most important assignment carried out by the Canadian military during the years between the two world wars" (p. 124). The book concludes with a penetrating study of command problems and early efforts at unification of the services and with a vivid picture of the struggle for survival of all three services under a series of depression budgets, which culminated in McNaughton's resignation as chief of the general staff in 1935. Eayrs, a veteran of the lower deck, has no great respect for generals, admirals, and air marshals, but McNaughton is clearly the hero of this inglorious period of Canadian military history.

The author has achieved an incisive analysis of Canada's military affairs and of the built-in conflict between service professionals and their political masters. He is convinced that the military and diplomatic components of national security policy are indissolubly combined in practice, and should be in analysis. His skill in this combined operation of political analysis and military history has been demonstrated beyond question in the present volume.

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