

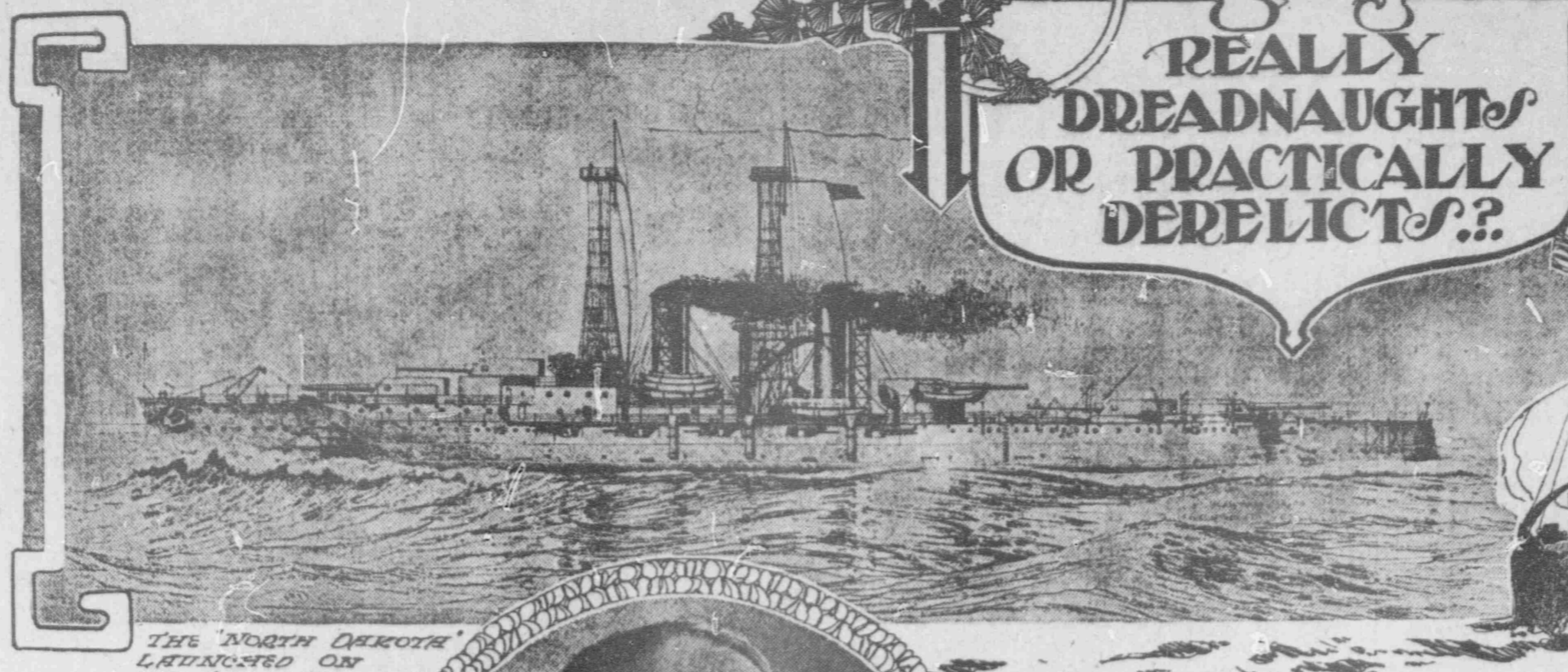
ARE OUR LATEST BATTLESHIPS

Authorized Board of Investigation Contradicts Charges of Naval Officers Regarding Value of the North Dakota.

REALLY DREADNAUGHTS OR PRACTICALLY DERELICTS?



COMMANDER W. S. SIMS.



THE "NORTH DAKOTA" LAUNCHED ON THE 10th OF NOVEMBER.



COMMANDER W. S. SIMS

It has come to pass that a duly authorized board of the sixty men in the United States who know most about naval construction have sat in conference at Newport, R. I., for three months and have considered the criticisms of those few men who have disparaged the big battleships of the nation now in course of construction and in the end have said: "Pooh! Pooh! It is the froth of folly!"

Such in effect is the manner of placing the official quietus on a controversy that has lasted through a year, has entered into the deliberations of the Congress, has called forth the most active attention on the part of the President, has engendered more feeling and animosity than any feud among men in the Government service for a decade, and which, if the findings of the conference are correct, has wrongfully placed the battleships of our navy under the charge of worthlessness.

It all started last January, when a magazine article was printed charging defects in the various vessels of the United States navy. The charges struck Congress, then in session, like a thunderbolt, and a committee was appointed immediately to investigate. When Congress adjourned, however, no report had been submitted.

In the meantime three commanders among all those in the Navy had been discovered who were pessimistic, as to the merit of the ships they commanded, and who expected that should they engage in a half hour tilt with an enemy that was their equal they would be shot to pieces, and that they would be helplessly adrift on a much-punctured hull.

These three men were Commander W. S. Sims, Naval Aide to the President; Commander A. L. Key, who formerly held the same post, but who had been on duty at the works of the Fore River Ship Building Company, and Commander F. K. Hill. These men were extreme in their clamor to the effect that the battleships were poorly built and the President was aroused. On July 2 the Navy Department under his direction directed that the general board working in connection with the War College make a thorough report upon the subject relating particularly to the battleships now building. In addition to the regular members of these two organized bodies various officers ranging from lieutenant to rear admiral were ordered to the War College to collaborate in the general conference.

These men were in conference for the greater part of the summer. Their meetings were always behind closed doors, and no intimation of the position they would take had been obtainable until just recently, when the ban of secrecy was lifted, and their findings were made public. Then were the critics confounded, and the Bureau of Construction and Repair exonerated for the design of the battleships now under construction are pronounced by the conference to be excellent ones and the same designs are recommended for the construction of the immediate future.

Over the North Dakota.
The battleship North Dakota, just recently launched at Quincy, Mass., was the immediate bone of contention. This vessel had been authorized by act of Congress in 1906. Bids were called for, and the contract awarded to the Fore River Shipbuilding Company. The Bureau of Construction and Repair approved, the department approved, Congress approved, and finally a special board, consisting of Assistant Secretary Newberry, Engineer in Chief Charles W. Rice, Chief Constructor W. L. Capps, Rear Admiral N. E. Mason, Capt. John F. Merrell, Capt. Raymond P. Rogers and Capt. Richard Wainwright, approved.

Then when the building was but just started the avalanche of criticism descended, it being crystallized chiefly in the letter submitted to the President by Commander Key. The following extracts from that letter show the intensity of those criticisms and the

points upon which the battleship type was most harshly attacked. First—"It is presumed that this vessel is built, primarily, to fight vessels of corresponding type built or building in foreign navies. If we assume that the modern twelve-inch gun will maintain in action a rate of fire of one shot per minute, the North Dakota, in the course of thirty minutes, in a broadside engagement with an adversary of the same general type, will have fired at her at a distance of about 6,000 yards 300 twelve-inch shells. To those familiar with the records of modern naval target practice, it will be conceded that she will probably be hit, within thirty minutes, by fully 100 twelve-inch shells filled with high explosive.

What Would Happen.
"If we consider what will be her condition after the thirty minutes' firing it will be generally conceded that all that portion of her protected by five-inch armor will be pierced a great number of times, that her five-inch battery will be an utter wreck, her uptakes between the main and upper decks shot away, her main deck, probably many of her compartments, and perhaps some of her turrets (artificially ventilated), will be uninhabitable on account of smoke and coal gas, and that the ship will be shot away, and, if she should be so fortunate as not to have her belt or eight-inch armor pierced, her reserve buoyancy will be reduced to last proportion of the ship above her new water line that is covered by her eight-inch and belt armor.

"In this condition, should the enemy haul off and attack a fleet of North Dakotas at night with a fleet of destroyers supported by armored cruisers, the Dakotas would be placed in a very precarious condition. It is clearly and absolutely certain that placing the five-inch guns and uptakes behind the citadel of five-inch armor and exposing them to the fire of ten twelve-inch guns for ten minutes, is merely assisting the enemy to quickly and completely wreck them, as the five-inch armor will not stop a twelve-inch shell, but practically insures their explosion with the accompanying great destructive effect from the fragments.

Criticism 12-inch Guns.
Third—"From such data as I am able to obtain it appears that our present 12-inch gun is about equal in power to the German 11-inch, and is less powerful than the English, French, and Japanese 12-inch guns. It is contrary to our traditional naval policy to equip our line of battleships with less powerful ordnance than our possible adversaries, and, if my information is correct, I think we are making a mistake in departing from our long established policy."

Fourth—"I have not heard any main feature of the design of the North Dakota more generally criticized than the location of No. 2 turret between the engine and boiler rooms. . . . It is the general opinion that it will be impossible to keep the temperature of this magazine from rising quite high, considerably above that of the other magazines. . . . As it is well known in order that our subject's powder may retain its ballistic qualities, that it should not be subjected to high temperatures, and there has been during the past five years five foreign naval vessels sunk by explosions in their magazines, it appears to be highly desirable to avoid, if practicable, this location of No. 2 turret in future designs. I am definitely informed by an expert designer, familiar with designs of naval vessels, that it is entirely practicable by lengthening the North Dakota type by about twenty-five feet and by adding about 300 tons to the weight, to locate the engine room directly abut the boiler room with No. 2 turret abaft about the engine room."

Fifth—"If those who are responsible for the design of the North Dakota have allowed for only 300 tons of coal

at normal draft, instead of two-thirds of her bunker capacity, as required by the rules of the Walker board, she will have a strip of belt armor twenty-eight inches wide more than five feet beneath her line of flotation at fighting draft, in excess of all that can be permitted under the allowance of weight for armor protection."

Sixth—"Our commanding officers cannot determine the overdraft of their vessels because they are not informed what weights the ship is supposed to carry at the different loads. . . . I further strongly recommend that the stability statements furnished to the commanding officers of our ships contain corresponding data furnished to the British naval stability statements; that is, that they show the precise weights carried at normal draft, deep load draft and light draft, with the exact draft of the ship when carrying each of these loads."

Seventh—"I have already shown in the first portion of this paper the utter inadequacy of the protection of her 5-inch battery and uptakes. It also appears possible, since artificial ventilation must be constantly employed, that the funnels may be considerably shortened and the long ventilating pipes and large cowls entirely done away with, as has been done in the English Dreadnought."

Regarding Light Armor.
"Resolved, That whereas 5-inch casement armor is readily penetrated by heavy projectiles at battle ranges, resulting in the scattering of many fragments of armor that would injure light guns, the conference concurs that these guns on the North Dakota would be in less danger behind armor than behind 5-inch armor when attacked by 12-inch projectiles.

This subject probably received more thorough and complete discussion than any other one subject that came before the conference. The resolution was rejected by the overwhelming vote of 22 to 10, indicating strongly the views of the conference with reference to the Key charges. Commander Key had criticized the placing of the torpedo defense battery. The following resolution expressed the view of the conference in the matter and was passed by a vote of 45 to 7.

Resolved, That in view of the present knowledge concerning the construction and efficiency of turrets for torpedo defense guns, the conference

does not consider it desirable to mount such guns in turrets on the North Dakota or vessels of her design."

There is a possibility of a flurry and a scare on the finding of the conference with reference to our 12-inch guns and the claim of Commander Key that they are inferior to those of the British. The conference took somewhat the view of the critic in this matter as will be seen by the resolutions it passed. The resolution was adopted unanimously.

Resolved, There is reason to believe that the main battery guns to be placed on board the North Dakota and Delaware are inferior in power to the English guns now being built for ships of like date of completion and that this inferiority should be corrected in the Florida and Utah."

Champion Our Guns.
The following resolution bearing on the same subject was passed by a vote of 33 to 6:

Resolved, There is reason to believe that the latest 12-inch guns afloat in the United States Navy are equal to the latest 12-inch guns afloat in the English navy. This indicates that the conference is assured that our guns are as good as England's at present, but that she is building a gun that is better than anything we have at present. The information of the conference on this subject is stated as not being absolutely authoritative, but Commander Key is largely sustained in his criticism on this point.

The danger that the critics had claimed because of the location of turret No. 3 between the engine room and the boiler was covered by the following resolution passed by a vote of 23 to 21.

"Whereas, that magazine of No. 3 turret on the North Dakota is largely surrounded by sources of heat and the better location appears impracticable, resolved, that we approved a provision for the refrigeration of this magazine."

The conference was informed that steps had already been taken in that direction. The following resolution on the same subject was passed unanimously:

"Resolved, that upon the statement of naval constructors and of the Bureau of Construction and Repair, the conference does not regard it as practicable to lengthen the North Dakota type by twenty-five feet with an increase of displacement of only 300 tons and to locate the three after turrets as indicated in paragraph four of Commander Key's letter, echeloning them in the vertical plane."

Regarding the Stability.
A resolution presented with reference to the supplying of commanding officers with statements showing stability and weight conditions of ships indicated that these statements had already been furnished and that the charge was largely without foundation. The resolution adopted was as follows:

"Resolved, That it is our understanding that the stability data mentioned in Commander Key's letter is now habitually supplied to ships. It is, however, the opinion of this conference that stability statement under different conditions of loading shall be accompanied by all other data convenient and necessary for service under sea conditions, such as having upper bunkers full and lower bunkers empty, taking deck loads of coal, and so forth."

Command Key alone objected to this resolution. As regards the protection of ventilators and uptakes by armor, in addition to that already provided for in this design, by the casement armor, the following resolution was passed without a dissenting vote: "Resolved, That the conference considers that splinter proof armor should be placed around the uptake and ventilator supply pipes within the citadel, between the upper limit of eight-inch armor and the upper deck in the North Dakota, to afford better protection of said uptakes and supply ventilator pipes."

This is practically the only change of any importance whatever which is recommended by the conference as a result of Commander Key's objection that this change required increased displacement, and that a great many improvements could be made to any ship if the designer was at liberty to increase displacement."

Indorse Construction.
Toward the end of the conference two resolutions of great importance were passed. The first of these, which secured a vote of 44 to 12, was as follows: "It is the opinion of the conference that no change in the thickness of armor on the North Dakota and the Delaware can be made with advantage, and that the distribution of the armor is in general satisfactory. The above refers in no way to the five-inch casement armor, which is the subject of other resolutions."

Then came the general indorsement of the North Dakota type, which will have so strong an influence on the building of the future, and which refutes the charges of the critics as far as the conference is concerned. It passed by a vote of 33 to 20.

"Proposition: Passing from the consideration of the specific minor defects, the conference believes that the design of the North Dakota and Delaware is an excellent one."

The conference showed its friendliness toward the man whose criticisms it had for the most part rejected by passing a resolution of thanks to Commander Key. It follows: "Resolved, That in presenting to the Navy Department his written criticism of certain features in the design of the North Dakota, which, in his opinion, were either objectionable or undesirable, in supporting these criticisms by arguments based on facts and figures, as he interpreted them and in so doing having furthered the cause of free discussion of vitally important professional topics through the assembly of this conference where the points at issue have received intelligent, and it is believed, highly fruitful consideration, Commander Key has rendered a great and invaluable service to the Navy of the United States, one for which he should receive the thanks of his brother officers."

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Japs Frightened by First Englishmen

Just ninety years ago, forty years before Commodore Perry's arrival, the Japanese sighted the first foreign ship off their shores. Now they have entertained Admiral Sperry and the American naval officers and bluejackets with all the pompousness of an advanced civilization. In 1818 Japan was not so cordial to the stranger off her coast, says the Lector Herald.

This is the fact discovered by a document at the Museum of Fine Arts brought to notice by J. Arthur MacLean, assistant curator of the Oriental and Japanese department. It is an unsigned Japanese diary dated 1818. It covers seven days and describes with some naïveté, but with a great degree of keenness the appearance of the first English ship. No translation has been made, but these are the main features of its account as given by one of the Japanese in the Oriental department.

Fishermen first saw the foreigner outside Uraga bay. Frightened by the tremendous size of the creature, they reported its appearance immediately to the daimyo, who was at that time the famous Aizu. After a serious conference with another important official of the section, he ordered the fishermen to bring it into the harbor. They did so, but finding that they could not understand a word of the language of these queer people, they were more terrified than ever.

So they carefully searched the vessel and removed all the dangerous weapons, and also the rudder. The sail they took as a great curiosity on account of its size. Then, they felt a little safer, but it wasn't a very comfortable feeling to have these dangerous foreigners around at any rate.

DRAG BRIDE BY HAIR TO HOME

GREENLAND COURTING METHOD

THE courtship and marriage customs among the Greenlanders were in early times simple and unceremonious enough, since we are told that when a lover's youth made up his mind as to the girl he wanted to adorn and be useful in his home, seized her by the hair or wherever he could secure a good grip on her, and dragged her to his own domain, where she was expected to "stay put" without any further marriage ceremony.

If an affiant bridegroom, he would perhaps soothe her lacerated feelings by presenting her with a new lamp or some other article of household utility. No matter how willing or even eager the bride was to marry a young man, Eskimo etiquette demanded that she should resist every attempt to drag her to her new home, and she must weep and wall bitterly once she was there. Indeed, she must continue to weep and wall for some days, and even run away to her own home, only to be dragged back again.

It is said that this extremely simple marriage ceremony is the only one still in use on the east coast of Greenland, and the laws governing divorce have as little "red tape" connected with them as have the laws of marriage. But it is maintained that as a rule married couples live on quite amiable terms, for the Eskimo are not fond of quarrelling, and they like peace in the house and with their fellow-men.

One rarely hears quarrelling and wrangling in an Eskimo home, and no class of people are fonder of their children than are Eskimo fathers and mothers. Not even the unwelcome girls are treated harshly, and as for the boys, they may go about as they will. Although they are given this large liberty they are often less "forth-pulling" than are many of our American children.

Wine a Revelation.
"The glass decanters and tumblers seemed a tremendous innovation to him, as did the wine within them, which was much stronger than the Japanese sake. It is quite significant that in the drawing of the Englishman made by the author from memory, he is represented with a bottle and a glass in his hand. Their swords impressed him as being very thin, like a saw, and so vastly inferior to the thick Japanese sword, but their cannon and guns he admired."

"Whatever a Japanese sees, he can draw," said Mr. MacLean. And certainly the sketches of the English ship, the Englishmen, and their swords and wine cask made by the author of the diary, show more than the average power of acute observation. At any rate they show the Japanese idea in 1818 of these "very healthy and tremendously large foreign devils," whom they are now delighting to honor.

STATION AGENT 50 YEARS.

Mrs. Ellen Holmes, the oldest woman railway station agent in Illinois, has been adjoined insane and committed to the Central Hospital for the Insane at Jacksonville, Mrs. Holmes had been in charge of the station at Chicago, Adams county, for over fifty years, and the depot, with its surrounding flower beds, was one of the most notable on the line.—Springfield, Ill. Journal.

FASHION NOTES.
Knicker—The fashionable woman's figure is like a mattress, bolster, and pillow are worn on the head.—New York Sun.

ENGLISH PREFER BOOKS OF SCIENCE
An "Investigator" on behalf of the Westminster Gazette gives in that journal some interesting facts. He states that there has been a remarkable growth of serious reading during the last few years; the borrowing of novels is declining all over the country, not more than 15 per cent of the work done by our public libraries is in that direction.

In the public libraries of the United Kingdom there are 4,900,000 reference, and 5,000,000 lending books; 1,000,000 reference books are consulted every year according to the records, and at least an equal number are taken from the shelves and consulted without being recorded. Every year 69,000,000 books are lent for home reading.

Giving further detail, the "Investigator" states that "the taste for history, biography, and travel is on the wane; readers are all for science and sociology, and new books on socialism are always in demand."—Progress.

BRIGGS—EVEN DIVORCE, NOWADAYS, OFFERS NO SURE RELIEF.

Griggs—How so? "Why, in nine cases out of ten a man is free to marry again."—Life.

WILLIAM ATHERTON DU PUE.
November 22, 1908