

PACT GIVES BIGGER ROLE TO R.C.A.F.

New Agreement for Commonwealth Is Tabled in Commons

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Ottawa, June 5. — Canada's air force in Britain is virtually constituted a unit separate from Britain's Royal Air Force and "subject to operational expediency," brought under Canadian control, it is revealed in the New British Commonwealth Air Training Agreement tabled in the House of Commons today by Prime Minister Mackenzie King.

The British partners in the Air Training scheme sat down to their deliberations immediately the United Nations conference on Air Training had risen and the discussions which led up to the agreement tabled in the House today noticeably have taken several days longer than was originally estimated. This new agreement supersedes as of July 1, 1942, that now in existence, and signed on Dec. 17, 1939, which was to have expired on March 31, 1943.

The agreement extends for two years—until March 31, 1945 — the Commonwealth plan.

Canada will bear one-half the cost of the expanded training program under the new agreement.

Australia and New Zealand will bear the cost of training the men

they send to Canada, and the United Kingdom will bear half the total cost, less payments made by Australia and New Zealand.

The cost of air training under the new agreement, to March 31, 1945, is estimated at \$1,500,000,000.

Not only is Royal Canadian Air Force overseas headquarters given general supervision over Royal Canadian Air Force personnel attached to the Royal Air Force, but under the new agreement the concurrence of Royal Canadian Air Force overseas headquarters is to be obtained in the selection of commanding officers for Royal Canadian Air Force squadrons and in posting of Royal Canadian Air Force officers of the rank of Wing Commander and above.

After citing Canadian control of the R.C.A.F. personnel reception centre in the United Kingdom, and the formation in England of a R.C.A.F. establishment to which R.C.A.F. officers and airmen awaiting disposal, convalescing after illness, may be sent, the agreement sets forth provision for the formation of a Canadian Bomber group to consist

of R.C.A.F. bomber squadrons. A Canadian Bomber Group Progress Committee with Canadian representation will be set up by the Air Ministry "in order to keep the implementation of this policy under constant review."

R.A.F. schools now in Canada will continue in the present position of retaining their R.A.F. identity but under the administration of the R.C.A.F. All future R.A.F. schools or units that come here will be merged with the Commonwealth Air Training Plan.

R.A.F. elementary flying training schools now established in Canada will be civilianized on similar lines to the British Commonwealth Air Training Plan, elementary schools except that the flying instructional staff and certain specialists ground instructional posts will be normally filled by R.A.F. personnel in uniform.

The agreement "recognizes" that by reason of operational requirements, fighter squadrons must necessarily remain under the control of the commander in chief of R.A.F. fighter command, but "in pursuance of the objective of national identification R.C.A.F. fighter squadrons, so far as possible, will operate from stations which will be made R.C.A.F. stations, manned by Canadian staffs."

Canadian Coastal Command squadrons overseas are to be manned as far as possible with Canadian personnel; the general principle is established that all pilots, observers, air bombers and navigators considered suitable according to the standards of their own countries, and who are recommended for commissions, will in fact be commissioned.

The new agreement, says the Government's summary, "reaffirms and reinforces the determination and capacity of the nations of the British Commonwealth to maintain the training of aircrews on a vast and increasing scale. It emphasizes the role of Canada as 'the airdrome of democracy' in this task."

Important New Features.

Major new features of the agreement as against the former agreement signed in December, 1939, and under which the plan now operates include:

Many more men will be trained in Canada than under the original plan as expanded from time to time;

Canada will supply a substantial portion of the trainees, but more will come from the United Kingdom than before;

The number of R.C.A.F. squadrons overseas will be increased (previously provision had been made for twenty-eight);

All pilots, observers, air bombers and navigators, considered suitable for commissions, according to standards of their own countries and recommended for commissions, will be commissioned;

The United Kingdom's share of the cost will as far as possible be in the form of aircraft, engines, parts, equipment, bombs and ammunition, but Canada will have sole discretion in determining the type and quantity of equipment required.

"Vigorous Enterprise."

"The original agreement was conceived in a spirit of vigorous enterprise," said the Prime Minister. "The agreement concluded today will be carried through in the same spirit and will play its part in building up with certainty and with speed air forces of overwhelming and terrifying strength."

Officiating at the conclusion of the agreement were Air Minister Power for Canada, Captain Harold-Balfour, Parliamentary Undersecretary for Air, for the United Kingdom; Sir William Glasgow, Australian High Commissioner, for Australia; and Air Commodore L. M. Isitt for New Zealand.

In his statement to Parliament Mr. King said: "No more dramatic or convincing evidence of the magnitude and effectiveness" of the air training plan could be found than the fact that a large proportion of the airmen who take part in the present mass raids over Germany were trained in the plan schools.

Members of Parliament and the people of Canada were filled with admiration for the Canadian airmen in the raids.

"We shall ever remember with gratitude what our brave young airmen are so valiantly doing to defend the security of their own Canadian homeland and to preserve freedom in all parts of the world," said Mr. King.

Gold Cup Presented to Power.

A happy conclusion to the meetings of the British partners who have been in consultation for over

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a fortnight was the presentation by Captain Balfour on behalf of the R.A.F. of a handsomely wrought gold cup to Air Minister Power as a token of the comradeship between the R.A.F. and the R.C.A.F. It bears the inscription: Presented to the R.C.A.F. by the R.A.F. A token of gratitude and admiration for the achievements of the R.C.A.F. in connection with the British Commonwealth Air Training Plan.

The cup was recently presented to the R.A.F., terms of the gift being that the R.A.F. should use it for whatever purpose it deemed best, with a hope that in some way it should be associated with Canada.

Donor of the cup was Edward Hack, an airman in the last war who is associated with the Air Training Corps in the United Kingdom.

The senior British delegate had a special word of appreciation for the women's division of the R.C.A.F., who provided the secretarial staff for the conference.

In accepting the cup for the R.C.A.F., Major Power said it would be specially treasured because it came from the R.A.F.

"The Royal Air Force has shown, through the days and months of its testing time that it is, without compare, the foremost flying and fighting organization in the world," he said.

"It has saved Britain, saved the Empire, saved civilization."

Referring to the conference generally the Air Minister said it was due to the insistence and foresight of the British Government that the air training plan was carried on and that everything was not thrown into the Battle of Britain. The wisdom of that policy had been demonstrated conclusively by events of the last week.

"Man Them and Fight Them."

"We are now in a position, thanks to this training plan carried on steadfastly and efficiently and with determination all over the British Empire, to be able to say to friends and foes alike: 'Give us the aircraft and we will, out of the air training plan, man them and fight them and achieve ultimate victory.'"

Sir William Glasgow said that Major Power and the R.C.A.F. by making the plan a success had done a great work for the Empire and the whole of the Allied Forces. He moved a vote of thanks to Major Power and Captain Balfour, Joint Chairmen of the Conference, which was seconded by Air Commodore Isitt.

Captain Balfour said: "I think it is a magnificent task, a magnificent achievement, which has been done by Canada and like Australia and New Zealand, we in the United Kingdom, united in the British Commonwealth of Nations, pay tribute and offer our sincerest thanks for what has been achieved.

"In doing so we look forward to the second phase of this joint air training plan to yield just as good and even finer results in the near future, until we achieve that ultimate victory which is the common aim of all of us."

Expansion Reflected.

The original estimate of the cost of the training program for three years under the old agreement was \$600,000,000 for three years of which Canada's share was to be about \$350,000,000. Reflecting both the expansion of the original program and unanticipated costs, the estimate of the cost of the new agreement for two years and nine months is \$1,500,000,000 of which Canada's share will be \$750,000,000.

Prior to the agreement a total of twenty-eight Canadian squadrons was authorized for overseas. These were three R.C.A.F. squadrons and twenty-five R.A.F. squadrons to be composed of and commanded by Canadians, both as to air and ground crew.

The new agreement provides for an increase and Mr. King said this was a "notable development."

Mr. King said the new agreement

made allowance to supply air crews for any additional number of squadrons Canada needs for home defense.

While Canada will continue to supply a large proportion of the recruits for the training plan schools, an increasing number will come from the United Kingdom and from other parts of the Empire through enlistment in the Royal Air Force.

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