

Canadian Air Force. We exercise no authority over them, we do not pay them. They are not identified in any way as Canadians. They belong to a different service from the Royal Canadian Air Force.

It is in connection with these personnel that there has been a demand that they be permitted to transfer to the Royal Canadian Air Force. I promised last year to take it up with the air ministry, and after long negotiations, air ministry has consented to the transfer to our forces if these men and women so desire. Instructions have recently been issued by us covering such transfers.

Since they are not identified with the Royal Canadian Air Force, I do not refer to them when reviewing our overseas operations.

Another and the most important class from the standpoint of numbers, and from the standpoint of Canada generally, are the thousands of Canadians, mostly aircrew, but with a goodly number of radio mechanics who were enlisted, trained and are paid by Canada, but are now on loan to the Royal Air Force and are serving with Royal Air Force units or formations.

Let me make myself perfectly clear. These personnel to whom I referred a moment ago joined the Royal Canadian Air Force in Canada, were trained by us and are entirely paid for by us. They still retain their Canadian identity. They wear Canadian shoulder badges, and as I said before, are paid by Canada. Their welfare, promotion, repatriation, and their interests are our duty and responsibility for they are only temporarily attached to Royal Air Force. They are located all over the world. They are not in Royal Canadian Air Force squadrons because with respect to radio mechanics they are specialists and do not by the nature of their occupation readily form themselves into units of any size. These radio mechanics are spread all over southeastern Asia, Africa and the United Kingdom individually or in small detachments. My information is that they compose 45 per cent of the strength of the Royal Air Force mechanics establishment.

With respect to the other category of Royal Canadian Air Force airmen attached to the Royal Air Force, namely aircrew, they are not in Royal Canadian Air Force squadrons because there are not now, nor likely ever will be, enough Royal Canadian Air Force squadrons to fit them into. These aircrew, flying men, are widely dispersed throughout Royal Air Force squadrons. It is because they are so widely scattered, in so many different units, that we meet with some difficulty in carrying out our responsibilities and duties towards them. Nevertheless by means of

liaison officers, and during the past year through pay officers, through more elaborate records, even though in some cases it means duplicating Royal Air Force records, through Royal Canadian Air Force sub-headquarters in various sections of the United Kingdom, in Italy, and in the middle east, and in India, we endeavour to keep in touch and to the best of our ability to keep track of their commissioning, rights to repatriation, and tours of duty.

The recent agreements, and better understandings with the air ministry, and more particularly with the more subordinate officers of the Royal Air Force, will go a long way to improving the situation of both aircrew and ground radio mechanics.

I believe it is better understood now that we undertake our responsibilities to these men, not with any desire to interfere with Royal Air Force organization, but because the parents of these boys, and the people of Canada generally, expect us to do so. Canadian parents have neither the channels open, nor the desire to approach the Royal Air Force and air ministry, with respect to the matters in which their boys are interested. Canadian people look to the Royal Canadian Air Force and the Royal Canadian Air Force must be organized to meet their demands.

Thirdly, and finally, we come to our own men in our own Canadian Royal Canadian Air Force squadrons. Originally there were three Canadian squadrons which went overseas as units. The number has now risen to forty-two in actual operations overseas. There are bomber squadrons, fighter squadrons, reconnaissance squadrons, coastal command squadrons, night fighter and intruder squadrons. In these forty-two squadrons identified as Canadian squadrons nearly all the aircrew are Canadian, the commanding officers are Canadian, the groundcrew are Canadian. The entire cost of the squadrons, including aeroplanes is borne by Canada, and their upkeep as Canadian units makes up a goodly part of our overseas expenditure. There are not nearly so many Canadian aircrew in Royal Canadian Air Force squadrons as there are scattered throughout the Royal Air Force. I have been asked many times why all Canadians are not in Canadian squadrons. The answer is that if all Canadian flying men were in Canadian squadrons we would require not thousands, as we have, but well over a hundred thousand groundcrew for the maintenance and service of these squadrons and their equipment. You cannot properly call a squadron a Canadian squadron, even though the majority of the aircrew were Canadians, if the ground-