

*Le gouverneur de Terre-Neuve au secrétaire aux Dominions**Governor of Newfoundland to Dominions Secretary*

TELEGRAM 168

[St. John's,] April 8, 1940

SECRET. The Commission of Government feels that the time has now arrived when an appreciation of the present position of the defence of Newfoundland is in order. As you are aware the defence of Bell Island from an attack from the sea is being dealt with in isolation as being of paramount importance from all angles. The personnel will be provided by Newfoundland Militia and a further number of these will be used as anti-sabotage guards.

When in Ottawa and Halifax the Commissioner for Justice interviewed the heads of Army, Navy and Air Forces and notwithstanding the speech of Prime Minister King on September 8th he could not obtain any assurance that instructions have been issued that the military, naval or air strategies of Canada are to include Newfoundland as a unit for defence. It was quite apparent that Newfoundland is being considered only in so far as the defence of Canada is concerned. Thus we have been requested to install radio receiving sets at our navigational aids on the South and West coasts which will be put out of operation on receipt of prearranged signals from Canada. Land at Red Bay in the Straits of Belle Isle has been sought for seaplane base. The use of Newfoundland Airport and of Botwood seaplane base also sought. In all cases we have agreed to comply with requests. The Navy and Air Force heads stated that the provision of ships to patrol Newfoundland coasts or planes for reconnaissance or defence purposes in Newfoundland is at present out of the question. New vessels for Canadian Navy will begin to be delivered in September and not until next year will there be any available for services on other than Canadian coasts. When the airplane situation will improve was not stated. Whilst both naval and air patrols from Halifax and Sydney will to some extent cover the South and West coasts the whole East coast from Cape Race to Straits of Belle Isle remains entirely uncovered by Canada. From the point of view of Newfoundland this area is of far greater importance than the South or West coasts. St. John's, Bell Island, Lewisporte and Botwood will all have substantial shipping during summer and autumn and pit-prop steamers in White Bay and North will be numerous. St. John's is entirely unprotected but might be made reasonably safe against submarine attack by mounting two medium calibre guns at mouth of Harbour and by placing mines at entrance. Lewisporte we understand will become port for storage of quantities of aviation spirit for bombers flying from America to United Kingdom and probably would justify protection similar to that of Bell Island. We cannot estimate the nature of the naval or airplane protection required to cover this coast but suggest that if Canada is basing planes on Botwood and Airport a base in the waters of the Peninsula of Avalon would appear to be worthy of consideration. The Newfoundland Government is uncertain at the moment as to whether the provision for the defence of Newfoundland is to