

*Supply—National Defence*

The absence of a real requirement was soon recognized by the air force but the matter was not taken in hand until 1964, when a recommendation was made for the release of 500 aircrew subject to special benefits being available. Of the 500 aircrew released 284 were pilots, 89 of whom were short service and coming to the end of their contracts in any case. Of the remaining 195, 31 were already over age and the remainder, 164, were all within two years of retirement, due to age. In the normal course almost all would now be out of the service or on retirement leave.

It should be appreciated that forecasting pilot requirements in the civilian economy was difficult if not impossible at the time. Nobody foresaw the extent of the world shortage that now exists. The U.S. Federal Aviation Authority was 100 per cent wrong on the short side last year when it forecast the need for civilian pilots.

At the same time I want to deny that there is a serious shortage of pilots in the R.C.A.F. at this moment. As of December 31 our pilot strength was 2,325. The current R.C.A.F. establishment calls for 1,720 positions for which it is mandatory to have qualified pilots. In addition there are a number of staff positions in which it is considered desirable to have pilot experience. Nevertheless it must be recognized that the number of pilots leaving the service is increasing and if allowed to continue unchecked could create a serious shortage.

I might advise the hon. member for Saskatoon that discussions have been held with the pilots and measures are being recommended which we hope will be sufficiently attractive to keep an adequate number of highly qualified pilots in the service. One other point he raised is in respect of the requirement of pilots to work 70 hours a week in the air division in Europe. Their estimated work week including standing alert is estimated at 68 hours a week. This is very demanding indeed. While standing alert, however, they have a considerable amount of time which can be used in personal pursuits within the limitations of the alert, and many young airmen are taking advantage of the opportunity to further their studies and increase their academic standing in order to be better qualified, in the broad sense, for executive and other positions which might be opened up to them in future years.

It has also been alleged that there has been a serious decline in recruiting. Actually, the number of recruits taken into the service in

1965 was only about 5 per cent lower than the previous year. If one takes into consideration the booming economy, virtually no unemployment, the high salaries in civilian life for people able to absorb technical training, as do our recruits, plus the fact that our young men and women stay in school much longer, this small change should not be considered inordinate. Indeed many businesses requiring large numbers of personnel experienced even greater difficulty in 1965.

Reference was made to the shortage of naval personnel. It is true that more men are required, particularly in some technical trades. One of the basic problems is very directly related to former practices, however. It used to be the custom to take skilled personnel from one ship's company immediately or soon after returning to port and send them back to sea as part of another ship's company in order to have sufficient trained personnel to keep the ships in operation. The effect of this overwork and high sea-to-shore ratio for skilled and technical trades was a serious decline in morale.

To overcome this problem a new cyclic system of manning the ships was put into effect. It provides amongst other things for a better shore-to-sea time ratio for personnel. This improvement in working conditions has been well received and naval re-engagement rates, which were already higher in Canada than in the navies of our major NATO allies, are improving. The other side of the coin, however, is that more skilled tradesmen are required to man the same number of ships. Improved working conditions and the relaxation by the navy of many of its ancient and restrictive rules governing other ranks should assist in overcoming this problem in time. It is not a problem that can be quickly overcome due to the long training cycle and the extraordinary competition for manpower at all levels.

A large part of the discussion during consideration of these estimates has been in respect of our choice of aeroplane for the tactical ground support role. Most of the criticism has been irrelevant or inaccurate. We feel it is important for the R.C.A.F. to get into the ground support role, one which they performed admirably in the second world war but which they have not been directly involved in for some time.

The CF-5 has many advantages which particularly suit the Canadian requirement. It is light, relatively unsophisticated, relatively