

3. PROGRESS OF COMMONWEALTH AIR TRAINING PLAN, STATEMENT BY THE MINISTER OF NATIONAL DEFENCE FOR AIR, MARCH 17, 1941.

In an informal way I should like to discuss the air training plan in particular and to explain to the committee in a broad and general way just where the money which the committee is asked to vote this year—\$250,000,000—is going.

As I said this afternoon in answer to a question by the leader of the opposition (Mr. Hanson), the estimates, broadly speaking, are divided into three parts. It is proposed to spend during the year 1941-42: on the home war establishment, \$154,000,000; on the overseas war establishment, \$15,800,000. Then there is the commonwealth air training plan, and if the committee will permit me I shall deal for the moment only with the commonwealth air training plan, being quite willing to answer in due course any questions that may be asked with reference to the other two branches of the service.

There has been a great deal of confusion in the minds of the public and of members of the house and in the press as to the air training plan. It is a huge, complex and complicated undertaking, but in a word it is this: The government of Canada is a contractor for the whole British Empire to turn out—and this is what I wish to emphasize—an output of air crews, consisting of pilots, gunners and observers. That is the job of work we undertook to do. All else—aerodromes, buildings, aeroplanes, trained technicians, instructors—is only incidental to the process of doing the job we were asked to do, namely, to turn out thousands of pilots, gunners and observers, and I submit to the committee that we should be judged on the results of the job of work which we have been asked to do.

We are at the same time partners and contractors for our partners. The partners are the United Kingdom, New Zealand, Australia and Canada. We are contracting, but at the same time we are contributing, in that we contribute about 65 per cent of the joint funds and 90 per cent of the raw material, which is the young men who go into the plan and afterwards become the output, the air crews that are handed over to the Royal Air Force as members of that force. We are producing for the Royal Air Force the human units which belong to the Royal Air Force as they are graduated from our schools. I hope to make that clear to-night because I have not perhaps made it clear enough on other occasions when I have addressed the house. Our contract calls for the delivery of a certain number of human units at certain specified times.

Canada was selected from among the nations of the commonwealth to undertake this job, partly on account of our freedom from prospective