

*AIR FORCE—ACCIDENTS IN CANADA

Mr. COLDWELL:

1. How many accidental crashes have occurred in the Royal Canadian Air Force in Canada, since May 1, 1942?
2. How many men have been lost in such crashes?
3. How many of the above crashes and deaths have occurred in the Atlantic ferry bomber command?
4. Have the causes of the above accidents been determined?
5. If so, what are the causes?

Mr. POWER: Mr. Speaker, on a number of occasions I have stated to this house that it was not in the public interest to answer questions respecting tragedies which have occurred in the Royal Canadian Air Force in Canada, and hitherto the house has supported this view. The question also involved personnel both in the training scheme and in the Atlantic ferry command who are members of the Royal Air Force; so, in order that I might be able to answer with some authority with respect to the Royal Air Force, and to get some authority for the answers made respecting the Royal Canadian Air Force, I cabled to Great Britain to the Right Hon. Harold Balfour, Parliamentary Under-Secretary for Air, and with his permission I would quote a portion—I do not want to quote it all—of the reply which he made to me. I shall be only too glad to place in the hands of my hon. friend who asked the question, and any other hon. member who may desire, the cable in extenso; but I would quote perhaps the more relevant parts so that it may get into *Hansard*. It is "for Power from Balfour":

Following is note of our practice with parliamentary questions about R.A.F. flying accidents and reports on them by courts of inquiry or by our chief inspector of accidents.

In general there are security objections in time of war to disclosure details but even when no question is involved our practice which has long been respected by both houses of parliament is to treat reports of courts of inquiry or of chief inspector of accidents as privileged documents which may not be divulged either in whole or in part.

This practice was expounded and defended in 1927 by the then prime minister in the estimates debated of the year (*Hansard*, 10th March, 1927).

Briefly the reason for nondisclosure of proceedings and findings of a court of inquiry is that if it were known that they might be divulged a restraint would inevitably be put both on witnesses and on court itself. It is of importance that all concerned with inquiry should speak their mind frankly and freely giving the fullest possible statement of fact and criticizing fearlessly where criticism is called for without regard to person or rank. Any other attitude could not fail to diminish the value of proceedings and findings as foundation on which remedial measures must be based.

Similar consideration bona fide of course to reports by chief inspector of accidents whose duty it is where necessary to criticize authorities concerned.

A further point is that the publication of reports of inquiry into accidents might cause needless pain to relatives of those who have lost their lives.

Now, with respect to the questions directly, taking them in order:

- 1, 2 and 5. It is not considered to be in the public interest to divulge this information.
3. As the ferry command is a unit of the Royal Air Force, this information cannot be released by the Royal Canadian Air Force.
4. An inquiry is held in every case. If the cause of the accident is not immediately apparent, a court of inquiry or an investigation is called. Until such time as the report of the court of inquiry or the investigator is received the cause of the accident is designated as obscure. However, it is almost invariably possible to determine the cause.

Mr. HANSON (York-Sunbury): If I may be permitted, may I ask the minister if he did not on a previous occasion give some figures with respect to accidental crashes. I quite agree with him with respect to the reports of courts of inquiry, but the number, I think, was given on at least one occasion.

Mr. POWER: I went further than that. I gave the numbers and I gave comparisons with what happened in Great Britain and, I think, in the United States. I may say I was asked not to do so again.

Mr. COLDWELL: May I just say that I am sorry the minister did not speak to me when I placed these questions on the order paper. I put them there because I thought there was an undue number of accidents and I was anxious to find out if a proper inquiry was made.

PRICE OF FLUID MILK IN NOVA SCOTIA

Mr. PURDY:

1. Are the recommendations of the dairy arbitration commission of Nova Scotia, asking for an increase in the price of fluid milk being paid by the distributors to the producers in the Halifax area, being acted upon?
2. If not, why not?

Mr. ILSLEY:

1. Milk prices in Nova Scotia have been under discussion between the Nova Scotia dairy arbitration commission and the wartime prices and trade board. Price adjustments and subsidies have been authorized to maintain milk supplies.
2. Answered by No. 1.