

Mr. POWER: If my suggestion were followed it would make thirty-three items instead of eleven, so that it would not be to my advantage, but at the same time it would save a great deal of confusion if we discussed it subject by subject: the training scheme, until it was finally exhausted; then, operations in Canada, until they were thoroughly exhausted; and then overseas. I fear that otherwise we shall get confused in spots. But that is part of the job; I do not mind.

Mr. ADAMSON: Mr. Chairman,—

The CHAIRMAN: Is the hon. member speaking on the point I have brought before the committee?

Mr. ADAMSON: I had rather intended to make a general statement, but I can see the advantages of the minister's suggestion, of dividing the operation of the air force into its three main component parts. If the committee will allow me, I will endeavour to confine my remarks to the joint air training scheme, but if I digress or transgress a little I hope the Chairman will not be too strict.

Mr. GILLIS: I do not wish to interrupt the hon. member, but the Chairman asked a question, and the minister has made a suggestion. I think that, so that we shall not get into the tangle which we had with the national defence estimates (army), we should have some idea as to how we are to proceed. Personally, it seems to me that if the sheet which is before us now is followed item by item, that is the most expeditious way you can get the business done. If you adopt the suggestion of the minister, you open up the field of discussion on different branches of the service, and you will, I think, just ramble around until further orders without being on anything specific. In my opinion, if we take this and discuss it as it is set out, we shall not go far astray.

The CHAIRMAN: It seems to me, then, the opinion of the committee is that we should proceed item by item.

Mr. DOUGLAS (Weyburn): That does not solve the minister's problem.

Mr. POWER: The minister is quite willing. I merely threw out the suggestion, thinking it might be helpful to the committee, but I am quite willing to go ahead with the items as they are laid down here; I have no objection.

Mr. DOUGLAS (Weyburn): It is agreed, then, that we follow these fourteen items, and it will be understood that each of them

[Mr. Stirling.]

has three divisions; that is, for instance, "1. Civil salaries and wages". That has to do with three things: commonwealth training, overseas, and western hemisphere defence; and that will apply to each item as we go down.

1. Civil salaries and wages, \$18,620,637.

Mr. ADAMSON: I will endeavour to confine my remarks as much as possible to certain basic questions. Before we go into the air estimates we should get ourselves orientated, as to how we wish to discuss the problem. I believe the proper way would be to regard oneself, as to what one would like to do, how one could improve the air training or the Royal Canadian Air Force, as though one were in the position of minister. I believe the minister's position is that what he would like to learn from any discussion is, how can what is admittedly an excellent show be made even better? That seems to me to be the basis upon which discussion of these estimates should be made.

I suggest that it has not been sufficiently emphasized what air power has done for the united nations. As time goes on, we shall see that the date of August 15, 1940, was the turning point of the war, the day on which the war could have been lost, and the day when the air power of Great Britain prevented the war from being lost. The war was not won then; it was prevented then from being lost. In any discussion of air power, sufficient credit cannot possibly be given to the fighting services of the Royal Air Force during the battle of Britain.

The Royal Canadian Air Force is in a particularly happy position, because it is an entirely volunteer and voluntary organization. It has none of the difficulties of two classifications of fighting men; it has no air men who serve only in Canada. Admittedly there are ground crew and aircrew; but the ground crew are, I believe—and this is the first question I would ask the minister—composed as far as possible of men who are not fit for aircrew. Of that I am not sure, but I understand that an attempt is being made to get ground crew who, on account of either age or other disability, are unable to act as aircrew.

It is rather peculiar, but the army started off as a definite unit and the air force started off as merely a part of the whole scheme of united empire or, at that time, British air power and we now hear talk of the army being divided and of the air force becoming more and more a Royal Canadian Air Force with thirty-eight operational squadrons, or