

....I feel that you might like to have a very brief report from me on the progress of our armed forces.

We have today in the full-time active Navy, Army and Air Force over 48,000 officers and men, another 48,000 in the reserve forces and about 23,000 civilians mostly working in dockyards, etc., or a total of about 120,000 engaged full time and part time on our defence.

Recruiting for the active force has been entirely satisfactory. We have been getting men of the quality and at the rate we want. All three services will soon be enlisting only to fill vacancies caused by ordinary retirements and discharges. To the suggestion that is sometimes made that we should be taking all qualified men that offer, or even that we should have conscription in peacetime, I can give the answer that if we had another two hundred million dollars to spend on defence at the present time we would spend it on buildings and equipment rather than on increased manpower. Soldiers without equipment had better be doing something else. So long as we have sufficient trained officers and tradesmen, delay in getting into action would be caused by the time taken to provide equipment rather than by the time taken to train men.

As for officer training, we have nearly 6,000 training today to standards equivalent to a year's practical work and a university degree. In proportion to population we have more men training to such standards than, I believe, has any country.

As for equipment, we have developed an all-weather two-engine jet fighter, the CF-100, and its tests show that it is probably the leading aircraft of its type in the world, several years ahead of any country. Even in advance of successful testing we placed an order for the production of this aircraft.

Good progress is being made on the manufacture of the F86A, under license from the United States. This is the fastest single-seater fighter in production.

For the Navy we have ordered eight new vessels, three of them anti-submarine escort vessels of a totally new type, designed and made entirely in Canada. This ship is, we believe, well in advance of any comparable vessel.

We also have on order large quantities of radar and wireless equipment.

We are deliberately deferring large orders for Army equipment for two reasons.

First, at the end of the war, the Army was relatively very much better off than the other two services for modern equipment. A short time ago I found that out of 181 million articles which we estimated we would need for the Army during the first year of an emergency, we had in store or on issue 121 million, a pretty high proportion.

The second reason for deferring Army procurement is that there have been fewer changes in Army equipment than in that of the other services and the time may come soon when we may have anti-aircraft rockets, guided missiles and recoilless weapons of much greater efficiency.

Such is the cost of modern defence equipment that it can be confidently stated that no country in the world is providing its defence forces with as much money as they could profitably use.