

output of the plan should be reduced, beginning about fourteen to eighteen months hence. It must not be forgotten that a recruit entering the plan to-day, with the backlog that we have, in all probability will not strike the front line for from eighteen months to two years; therefore if we are to make preparations for closing this scheme progressively sometime it behooves us to begin reasonably early. It was decided at this conference that the air training plan would continue after March, 1945—that is number 1—but that it would continue at a reduced capacity with the output reduced about fourteen to eighteen months hence. Most of those schools will not close until between December 15, 1944, and January 1, 1945. Let us remember that. We are not closing the schools suddenly, as has been said in the committee; but we are advising the interested parties that this training scheme must begin to close up sometime and this sometime starts next fall.

I should like the committee to bear this in mind. I have never given these figures before but I presume I have to. I do not think there is any great secret about them now anyway. Whereas last year we produced about 39,000 aircrew, in 1944, the year in which we are closing the schools, we are going to produce 41,600, and with the 100,000 already produced we are going to have a substantial number of aircrew. There will begin to be a slackening up when these schools are closed and a slackening up in 1945; but I hope it will not be forgotten that at the present time we have a surplus. We are still producing at peak capacity or practically at peak capacity, and we shall be doing so up until the end of 1944. In order to slacken our capacity in 1945 we have to begin now. At the present time there are in the United Kingdom enough trained front-line aircrew for the expansion of all the squadrons required by the British commonwealth. Back of that we have all the replacements we require. We have all the men we need for 1944; with what is produced in 1944 we shall have the men required for 1945, and I presume with the backlog of the accumulation we shall have all the men required for 1946.

Now, I ask myself why we should continue training men in a hazardous occupation if they are not absolutely necessary, and why we should spend very large sums of money required for training? I have forgotten the amount it requires to train a pilot, but it is something over \$20,000—

Mr. MACKENZIE (Vancouver Centre): \$25,000.

[Mr. Power.]

Mr. POWER: Yes, \$25,000 to train a pilot and a little more than that to train an observer.

Mr. GRAYDON: That covers overhead and everything.

Mr. POWER: That is the figure we have given. It costs somewhat less than that to train a gunner, and so on. I ask myself why we should continue training these men? After all we are contractors. We made a contract with the United Kingdom and the people of the governments of the British commonwealth to turn out aircrew in an unlimited quantity as long as they wanted them, but we cannot train men if they do not want them. To my mind it would be the height of absurdity, first of all, to risk the lives of these young men in the hazardous job of training and, secondly, to spend the people's money. That, I think, is the justification for the closing of the schools after it is no longer considered necessary by the higher command to train men. Do not forget we are not closing all the schools by any means because, I repeat, the air training plan will keep on after 1945.

There was some suggestion that there had been perhaps favouritism shown in closing schools in western Canada and in eastern Canada. Let us see what we have left in the way of flying schools. Prince Edward Island has three flying schools; Nova Scotia has three flying schools; New Brunswick has one; Quebec has four; Ontario has eighteen; Manitoba has eleven; Saskatchewan has six; Alberta has six, and British Columbia has four. With the exception of Ontario, where most of the recruits come from and where most of the schools were established in the early stages, the balance as between the provinces is fairly well kept.

Mr. HANSELL: The figures the minister has given are for a certain type of school, are they?

Mr. POWER: Schools where flying goes on. Of the twenty-eight schools to be closed several are Royal Air Force schools. The Royal Air Force say they want to bring their schools home, and I cannot stop them from doing so nor can anyone else. If they want to bring their men home that is their business, and I do not think any of us can criticize them, for they know their business best. They have said they want to bring their schools home in order to bring their men closer to the front line, so as to bring greater power to bear during the critical year of the war. That is the reason they give, and I think that reason should be good enough for any of us.