

*War Appropriation—Air Services*

crew necessary to care for, repair and maintain the aircraft were other than Canadians, for normally these groundcrew number many times more than the aircrew who actually fly the machines.

There is a story told by a newspaper correspondent of having visited a Royal Air Force squadron in Africa, and on entering the officers' mess he found a placard posted up with these words, "Canadian spoken here; English understood."

Besides, the joint air training plan was intended only for the purpose of producing aircrew. It was never intended under the original agreement that we should send any groundcrew over to the United Kingdom. It was considered that if Canada set up the ground establishment in Canada to train flyers, and that meant employment of over 150,000 people on the ground, it would have done its share in the air war effort by sending the trained flying personnel overseas to fight as member of the commonwealth air forces in any of the commonwealth units anywhere. But, because we desired further identification of our forces, and because we had some of the best mechanics and groundcrews in the world, eager and ready to proceed overseas, we set up these overseas air squadrons, and personally I am exceedingly proud of the action we did take.

To judge by the paucity of public information carried in the British and American press, and in official statements and communiques with respect to the thousands of our men in the Royal Air Force, I should judge that if we had not had these squadrons of our own, even the people of Canada, not to speak of our allies and partners, would have been almost totally ignorant of the large and important part Canada is playing in the air war and the defeat of Germany.

I am often asked, when I speak of Canadians in the Royal Air Force, what proportion of our men compose the Royal Air Force strength. In groundcrew our proportion is small since we have only supplied groundcrew for our own squadrons, the remainder of Canadian groundcrew being kept in Canada for the purposes of the joint air training plan which trains flyers for all the allies and the commonwealth forces.

With regard to aircrew, that is men who fly, the situation is different, and our proportionate strength to that of the Royal Air Force is very much higher. I have not the exact figures for overseas. I know, however, that Canada is now, and has been for many months, the largest and principal producer of aircrew for all the commonwealth forces. I know that, of the aircrew of all the partners produced in Canada, Royal Canadian Air Force graduates

make up considerably more than one-half of the total. All others combined, including Australian, New Zealand and British, and all the peoples who make up the Royal Air Force quota of trainees, make up less than half the graduates.

I know how many thousands of pilots, observers bombaimers, wireless operators and air gunners we have overseas. I am fully informed as to the number of such aircrew there are at any given moment in Royal Canadian Air Force squadrons. I have not figures of the numbers of these graduates in Royal Air Force squadrons at any given time. They vary with commands, with postings, with casualties, with sickness, with leave and numerous other factors.

But with the best information I can obtain, I should say that from 22 per cent to 25 per cent of all the aircrew in the European and Mediterranean areas under British tactical command—and this includes British, New Zealanders, Australians, Poles, Czechs, Norwegians, Belgians and Free French—are Canadian boys, enlisted in Canada, trained in Canada, paid for by Canadians. That proportion will tend to increase rather than decrease as the men whom we have overseas proceed through their final courses to the operational squadrons, until Canadians comprise about one-third of the total content of these British-Dominion-allied aircrew strength.

I have deliberately omitted reference to the Indian theatre of operations; I know how many Canadians are there, but I do not know their relative strength compared to other allied forces. I have also omitted reference to the south Pacific where we have practically no representation, but where Australia and New Zealand, with very little publicity on this continent, are heroically bearing the burden on land, sea and air, along with United States forces.

Necessarily I have not the details of the operations to which Canadians loaned to Royal Air Force squadrons took part. Suffice to say that they are in almost every formation of the Royal Air Force and have been in every sortie, every raid, every operation undertaken by the Royal Air Force. I have, however, the details of the work of our men who are grouped together in Royal Canadian Air Force squadrons and this work I now propose to review.

Operations of Royal Canadian Air Force units overseas. The Royal Canadian Air Force entered the year 1944 with forty-two squadrons overseas, operating under the direction of the Royal Air Force bomber command, coastal command, fighter command, allied