

The gigantic proportions of the air training plan are now beginning to be appreciated by the public. At the beginning of August, twenty-four of the training schools had been opened. By the end of October, thirty-six were in operation. To put it another way, throughout that period an average of one school a week was started.

On September 26 the Minister of National Defence for Air welcomed at Vancouver the first detachment of Australian pupils who had come to Canada for their advanced training.

Until recently, progress reports on the air training plan had been confined to announcements of new construction, of new schools opened, and of increases in personnel. I am happy to be able to report that the plan is already beginning to realize the ultimate purpose for which it is designed. The first group of air observers to be trained under the plan completed their training on October 24. In years to come October 24 may well become a historic date in the history of the struggle for freedom.

The progress which has been made in the air training programme has been warmly commended by the British government. Hon. members will perhaps be interested in one or two of the statements which have been made. In reply to a question about the progress of the plan the British Secretary of State for Air, Sir Archibald Sinclair, told the House of Commons on August 20 last:

I do not think I ought to give figures, but I will tell the house this, to show that substantial progress is being made. Whereas we were expecting to reach a certain figure of pilot production from Canada in July, or even as late as August, of next year, we shall reach that figure by April. I think that that will convince the house that more rapid progress than we were led to expect is being made with the empire air training scheme. Let me say how grateful the government are for the energy, the enterprise and the drive which the Canadian government and the Canadian air staff, with the assistance of Air Vice-Marshal McKean who represents us there, have thrown into this empire air training scheme.

The parliamentary under-secretary of the air ministry, Captain H. H. Balfour, visited Canada at the beginning of September. In an interview to the press at the conclusion of his visit he used these words:

I am more than impressed with the progress made here on the empire air training scheme.

Just the other day the present Secretary of State for the Dominions, Lord Cranborne, said in a speech in London that the empire air training scheme when in full operation was designed to produce twenty thousand pilots and thirty thousand air crews yearly, and he added these significant words:

[Mr. Mackenzie King.]

It is months ahead of schedule.

Hon. members will recall that at the time the British government proposed this great undertaking it indicated that with the facilities which Canada possessed this cooperative effort might prove to be of a most essential and decisive character. It is therefore a source of no little satisfaction to the government, as I am sure it will be to the house and to the country, to have the assurance that the plan is more than meeting the expectations of the British government.

Any review, however brief, of Canada's war effort, demands a reference to the losses which our armed forces have sustained. The nature of the war itself has hitherto fortunately spared us from heavy casualties. Our troops, twice under orders to proceed to the front, were denied actual participation in battle, first by the withdrawal from Norway, and next by the collapse of France. The restriction of active warfare, since the fall of France, to Britain and the waters surrounding the British isles, and the comparative rarity of naval engagements, have combined to restrict our losses on land and at sea. In the air up to the present the heat and burden of battle have been largely borne by British pilots.

Our main losses have been at sea. Canada has lost three armed ships, the destroyer H.M.C.S. *Fraser*, with a loss of forty-seven ratings; the destroyer H.M.C.S. *Margaree*, with a loss of four officers and 136 ratings; and the armed trawler H.M.C.S. *Bras d'Or*, with a loss of five officers and twenty-five ratings. In addition to these some twenty-four officers and ratings have been lost in active service from various causes. The total of the lives lost at sea up to the end of October was 241. These figures do not include the losses of Canadian merchant seamen, of which I regret to say no accurate figures are at present available. I should like here to say just a word about the sinking of the *Empress of Britain*. Although she was requisitioned by the admiralty at the beginning of the war, and was not serving as a Canadian ship, her many associations with Canada were such that the shock of her loss brought the reality of war particularly close.

It has been my sad duty to express to the next of kin of the brave men who have died at sea the sympathy, gratitude and pride of the Canadian people. In all such expressions which have been made and in those which may be made I know that every member of this house will wish most sincerely to join.

Our two major losses at sea have been due to tragic accidents of war. The men who lost their lives in the sinking of the *Fraser* and the *Margaree* and the foundering of the