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CANADA
DEMOCRACY AT WAR

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Potentially Canada can win the war for the British Empire. By next spring she'll be turning out 650 pilots a month with a proportionate number of gunners and mechanics to man the 300 planes she will build every month

Typical scene at any of the 43 air-training schools that Canada has already built: A group of student pilots with eyes to the sky as they note and learn from maneuvers of the training planes overhead

Canadians who wondered why they were fighting at all or what for—whether for Britain, for Canada, democracy, or for the preservation of a way of life common to the mother country and to the Western Hemisphere—stopped wondering. Isolationists yielded to interventionists, for they became convinced at last that their nationhood was at state.

Churchill's message also had a specific meaning to Canadians. He had said something about air supremacy, hadn't he? Well, the air is Canada's baby—or it will be, beginning practically right away.

Potentially, Canada can win the war for the British empire. In the matter of airmen Canada is the most important defense factor in the Western Hemisphere.

In November the first pilots were graduated from the empire training schools of Canada. How many we cannot tell you, though they were only a

handful. But next spring, unless something goes radically wrong with the training system, Canada will be producing 650 pilots every four weeks with a proportionate number of gunners, observers and mechanics. The rate of production of air crews of all categories —not counting technicians, mechanics, groundsmen—will be 25,000 to 27,000 a year by the end of 1941.

The United States is twelve times bigger than Canada in capital, industry, labor and population. So when Canada produces 650 pilots per month, it is equivalent to an American pilot-training rate of 7,800 monthly.

To understand why Canada is potentially a decisive factor in the air-power war, you've got to know about Matt Berry and Wop May and Punch Dickins and the other "bush fliers." Canada has only two railroad lines, strung across the width of that wild country. These hug the border pretty well and one of them short-cuts across Maine to get to Halifax. But up in the Northwest Territory, the Hudson Bay region, the Yukon, when Canadians think of transportation they think first of the airplane, then of the dog sled and lastly in terms of railroads.

The airplane opened up that wild region, roughly one third the total area of Canada, and made possible the discovery of new gold mines and establishment of fur-trading posts.

What Canadians like Billy Bishop, Collishaw, McLeod and Barker did to establish a great Canadian war tradition the bush pilots did for Canadian civil aviation. The Berrys, the Con Farrells, Wop Mays and Dickinses became the heroes of Canadian kids.

Those bush pilots, flying in old Fokkers and Junkers, with wings that literally flapped over the wilderness, carried whisky, tools, medicines, food, tents, dog sleds and fresh apples and newspapers to points previously reachable only by hacking one's way through the tundra at ten miles a day. They flew through hells of wind, ice, fog and blinding sun, at the icy fringes of the Arctic apron where a compass needle spins round crazily and you fly by sight, sound, smell and hearing, by the seat of your pants, divine guidance and the almanac.

Their landing fields were invariably the lakes that splatter the bush country. In summer the pilots used pontoons, in winter, skis. Twice a year, during the freeze-up just before winter sets in for keeps and in the spring just before the lakes become free of ice, the boys hole up in the St. Charles Hotel in Winnipeg, or the Prince George in Edmonton.

Matt Wants His Share, Too

The St. Charles has a room set aside for them where they can do their backlogged drinking by night and revive with steaming java in the morning. Frenchie looks after the boys. Frenchie is in her fading forties, with a sweep of raven hair over a wide brow.

Frenchie mothers all the boys and right now she's worried about Matt Berry.

In the last war, Matt was an instructor. What war flying he did was at dual

tor. What war flying he did was at dual controls, teaching some punk how to drive an airplane. He never had any fun. He never triggered lead out of a cranky Browning that fired through the prop, and when Matt heard about those Spitfires and Hurricanes with their eight machine guns he itched to be in one with a Heinkel or a Messerschmitt in the sights—but Matt, you see, is fifty-one. Last reports from Winnipeg are that he's considering the humiliation of a toupee to try to trick some enlistment officer who maybe doesn't know him.

Those bush pilots fly more freight a year than all of the American air lines put together, just to give you a rough idea. They fly doctors to babies born and unborn in the frozen villages of the north country. They sometimes pancake on a frozen lake, and for days, weeks, fellow pilots search the country, and the papers are filled with stories of those men and their exploits, and Canada's young boys have their heroes—the men who fly the bush. Not radio comedians, or cowboys, or football players.

That's why, when Canada followed England to war against Germany by a week on September 10, 1939, 178,000 young men presented themselves at enlistment stations demanding to be rapidly converted into pilots, gunners, observers. They didn't care what, so long as it had something to do with flying. When 178,000 Canadian huskies presented themselves for enrollment in the Royal Canadian Air Force, it was as though 2,136,000 young Americans had volunteered for service in the United States Air Corps. Canada has the material.

Why Canada Wasn't Ready

But there were things Canada didn't have. There were no uniforms, quarters or equipment for even a fraction of these men, assuming they all passed the physical examinations. Canada for more than twenty years had concentrated on the pursuit of profits safe behind the bulwarks of the American and British navies. She had less than five thousand men under arms, a navy composed of thirteen overage ships, the heaviest of which was a destroyer, and only a nucleus of an air force. Canada, on September 10, 1939, when Canadian Prime Minister Mackenzie King gunned his country into the war, rated below the lowest Balkan bush-league country in military air power.

Canada had first of all to decide in what fields she could best aid Great Britain to defend the empire. Obviously, with so small a population, the men she could send overseas would be relatively few. Canada raised about 500,000 troops in the last war. This time, with her population increased, she could raise an army of at most 750,000 which, as armies go nowadays, wouldn't exactly scare Hitler and Mussolini into suing for peace. Canada wisely decided that she could become an ideal training center for pilots and airmen generally. Canada could produce munitions in her factories. Conditions were ideal for both pursuits. Canada was far

from the madding bombs. This remoteness from the war, and the psychology of security it engendered in the Canadians, was disastrous to the early efforts to get her war effort started. Britain wasn't much help either.

At the outbreak of war, Mother England assured Daughter Dominion that there was plenty of time. Canada could take three years, at least, to accomplish the task of rearming and regearing industry to war production.

Lord Riverdale, a tough old Tory who was all for empire and to hell with all such nonsense as "nationhood," arrived in Ottawa in the early days of October, last year. He found he wasn't dealing with Englishmen, but with a new race of men who were more North American in their outlook than British. Lord Riverdale and his British air mission found that Canadians carried this silly business about "nationhood" into their thinking regarding the war.

Just before the dominion entered the conflict, isolation was a popular trend, especially in the province of Quebec, where nearly four million Canadians of French blood live. They couldn't become properly excited about saving the British empire. These Frenchmen remembered, too, how they were kicked around in the last war. Canada was disunited and worried about where the money was all coming from when Lord Riverdale landed in Ottawa.

Riverdale showed the Canadians what England expected them to do. Roughly it amounted to this: Canada, like other elements of the British empire, was to furnish whatever the empire needed and pay the bill. Canada was to become the training center for air men of all categories and from all parts of the empire, New Zealand and Australia and England herself. The units trained in Canada were to be used as replacements in the British Royal Air Force.

The fight this precipitated is something Lord Riverdale, the British empire and everybody connected with the inside story of what happened will remember as long as they live. It is memorialized now with the mild appellation of the "Revolt of the Officers' Mess." Canadian air officers were not particularly interested about the financial angles, but they would be damned if they were going to lose their identity as Canadians.

It was mild little Mackenzie King, Canada's premier, who brought up the matter of money. The empire air-training scheme as sketched by Lord Riverdale would cost $300,000,000 every year from then on. Canada, milord said, would be expected to pay the bill. King, however, thought differently. He argued and fought and finally won Lord Riverdale's and England's pledge that the mother country would pay slightly more than half the cost.

Lord Riverdale retired to his ample suite in the Château Laurier in Ottawa and had a nervous breakdown. Canadian politicians, professional soldiers, industrialists, businessmen, Liberals, Tories retired into a smug little shell of complacency. They had drawn up the

diagrams and set down rows of figures. There it was, all nice and neat—tax schedules, organizational plans for the increment of industrial output, plans for factories, plans for training troops, seamen, airmen—plans, plans, plans and they had three years to do it all in and they sat back and enjoyed themselves. The war remained a distant thunder across the protective Atlantic.

Canada Chooses the Air

And then came June 13th. Canada saw the possibility of a British defeat at the hands of the Axis powers. The collapse of France won the "battle of Ottawa" for England and Lord Riverdale. Canada suddenly was not only anxious to fulfill England's demands, but she became equally eager to do so at her own expense. She was ready to arm or bust. Canada took over the expensive air-training baby Lord Riverdale had left on her doorstep.

However inexpertly Canada may have planned on other fronts in the defense effort, she did a creditable job on air training. Her tanks, machine guns, rifles, airplanes and most of the other paraphernalia of contemporary warfare is still "on order." At the end of October, 1940, Canada hadn't built one single fighting plane worthy of the name in modern warfare, not one cannon, not a single antiaircraft gun despite propaganda to the contrary. Munitions manufacture, with one factory turning out 65,000 shells a week and another 2,500,000 rounds of small-arms ammunition each week, was moving along nicely. But it is in the air-training program that Canadians could take pride.

It took time and a sharp scalpel to cut away red tape before the air training got under way. England had promised to send Hurricanes, Spitfires, Blenheim bombers and other models to be used to train airmen. A number of these arrived promptly, but when war in earnest started, they were immediately requisitioned for use in England. In fact, a shipload or two of equipment for the Royal Canadian Air Force was halted and turned back in mid-ocean last June when the Germans broke through at Sedan and Namur.

Canada was supposed to manufacture one standard type of training bomber powered by engines built in England. The motors began to arrive and just as Canada had organized production on this basis, Britain, hard-pressed for engines, with her production constantly menaced and badgered by German Stukas, called the deal off.

Back in the Bottleneck

Canadian manufacturers shopped around, found a suitable twin-engined American bomber that was as good or better than the English type. It used thirty per cent less gasoline, for one thing. One of the machines was flown up to Canada and the R.C.A.F. inspectors okayed it and authorized a contract for a large number. Next day England said she had reconsidered and would supply Canada with engines. Ottawa reluctantly cancelled the arrangements to buy American bombers.

That, of course, was long before that fateful day in June rolled around. Since then, England has notified Canada that she must depend almost exclusively upon the U. S. for motors and aircraft.

The worst bottleneck of all to break, that of the Canadian version of the old school tie—the Tory big businessmen whose motto was "why, sure, we'll make the planes, cannon, tanks, anything you want, right away sure, okay," and then had another drink. They got these boys one fine day when extraordinary powers were invested in the Wartime Prices and Trade Board and in the controllers who were appointed to administer with dictatorial powers the oil, steel, timber, machine tool, nonferrous metal and power industries.

There was another bottleneck to break, and this one still exists and may cripple Canada's air-training program unless liquidated quickly—the lack of training planes. As far as present requirements are concerned, officials say this problem has been met.

But Canada capitalized quickly on what resources she had with which to begin making men into airmen. There were the bush pilots to draw from for instructors, 522 of them, with 595 air engineers. The Royal Canadian Air Force itself contained 450 officers and 4,000 airmen. About 135 Americans joined the Canadians in various training capacities.

By November 1st, forty-three of the planned eighty-three air-training schools were operating, four equipment depots had been established (full quota planned) and the projected four main air commands had been established. There were 6,000 air-crew pupils in training as compared to only 4,500 on September 15th, with 8,000 men learning to be mechanics. This makes 14,000 in actual training as compared to the 30,000 who will be absorbed into the schools by the end of this year.

The Canadian air recruit goes through the following stages: From the twenty recruiting centers he is sent to the three "manning depots." Here the raw kid from Medicine Hat or Rat Portage is given tests to determine whether, despite perfect health and other prerequisites, he's got what it takes to fly at all or be flown as a gunner or observer.

From the manning depot, the recruit goes to the initial training schools, of which there are three in Canada, for a four weeks' preliminary course. At these schools the men are divided into pilots, air observers and air gunners, and intensive training is begun. The pilots are sent to elementary-flying training schools for a seven weeks' course. Then to service-flying training schools for seven weeks and five weeks of advanced training follows.

Air observers get an intensive navigation, reconnaissance and photographic course before entering bombing and gunnery, where they stay six weeks instead of two. The air gunners get eighteen weeks in wireless schools and then four weeks in bombing and gunnery. One hundred and fifty flying hours after the kid from Medicine Hat enters the training machine, he emerges as a pilot —not the best pilot in the world, but

good enough for all practical purposes. He gets his polish in England or wherever he's sent for service.

It took a sharp fight with Lord Riverdale and that old bugbear, tradition, to obtain British approval for the Canadian training methods. The British idea was to turn out finished airmen, who could gyrate planes in echeloned triads and knew every trick of the craft from piloting to taking apart a plane and reassembling it. The Canadian idea was to make pilots and make them quickly and it finally prevailed.

One of the most important things that's happening in Canadian aviation and, for that matter, in Canadian armaments production too, is the tendency toward standardization with American armaments, planes and equipment. This is partially due to necessity, but it is largely due to a desire on the part of Canada to become part of an eventual Western Hemisphere defensive unit.

Canadian planes, after a while, will be American planes. All the trainers in use in schools now are North American trainers. Up there they call them Oxfords and Yales, but they are the same planes used by our air force for training purposes. The trainers being made in Canada, at the rate of about 200 per month—with production promised at 400 by next year—are American machines. They don't "make" planes, they merely assemble them, of course. It is estimated that it will be a year and a half after the first contracts are let before an engine will be produced in a Canadian factory. The first of these will be English Rolls-Royces and Merlins, according to present indications.

As in this country, machine-tool shortage remains the most serious barrier to peak production. In this emergency, Canada looks to the United States, hopes that it will obtain machinery previously earmarked for France and that America might be induced to part with some of it even before thinking of installing it in her own factories.

They Give Till It Hurts

It might be thought from all this that Canada is still in the process of preparing to make a war effort rather than in the midst of one. This is only partially true. So far as the people are concerned, and Canada's total population is only slightly more than that of Greater New York City, they are war-efforting until it hurts. War is costing Canada over three million dollars a day, or the equivalent of $36,000,000 for this country.

England, fighting for her life, is spending about $40,000,000 a day, so in terms of population Canada is bearing a fair share of the war burden. To the taxpayer it means that he pays as much as eighty-seven per cent of his income to the government and in the higher, millionaire-income brackets, taxes are nearly confiscatory.

There isn't a home in Canada that war doesn't reach. In every house they pay taxes and from every house a man has been called to the army, the navy or the air force. Until June 13th they grum-

bled about it and there were those who muttered "What a pension bill!" when the parading soldiers went by. They were thinking about what would happen after the war—new taxes to meet new demands, the support of disabled ex-servicemen, pensions to widows, reconstruction generally.

One of the biggest Canadian sources of income used to be the American tourists and sportsmen. Americans used to shell out from $250,000,000 to $300,000,000 to see the totem poles and catch trout and muskellunge. Misinformed Broadway columnists' cracks that travel had become dangerous or difficult in warring Canada has cut this to a small fraction.

Canadians are busy now cutting their trade with America to bare essentials and war materials to make up the loss.

As though Canada didn't have troubles enough, this year, Nature stepped in to give her another. Canadian farmers have just harvested over 500,000,000 bushels of grain. There were 280,000,000 bushels left over from last year's big crop making more than 700,000,000 bushels that must be sold somewhere. Britain will take some of it—70 per cent of her requirements—but the bulk will remain. Right now the government is buying it from the farmer on a quota basis—at 70 cents a bushel and that, obviously, with strain.

Canadian capitalists and businessmen assure me that the Canadian government will manage, somehow, to pay the farmers. Well, maybe it will, this year.

But what about next year and the year after that? Some of the franker and more hardheaded Canadians candidly said:

"Look, old boy, let's quit kidding. Sooner or later, America will have to help us, somehow."