

'operational efficiency.' Stevenson tried to convince the minister that Canadian supervision of RCAF personnel could adequately be handled 'by having senior officers come from Canada to get experience and be in a position to take posts such as Group, Station and Sector Commanders, in RAF'; but Ralston insisted that 'there should be a Canadian Headquarters, with which RAF using these squadrons made up largely of Canadian pilots from the Plan, would clear.' Canada House also objected to the surrender of administrative authority and control that Stevenson's plan entailed, arguing that the Canadian RAF squadrons would, in fact, 'not be any different from ordinary RAF squadrons.' 'For the JATP graduates the Canadian Government would have no responsibility and squadrons formed from them would not be any different from an ordinary RAF squadron. Canadian graduates of the plan would, therefore, in one sense, be divorced from their own country's war effort; nor would this be a voluntary choice on their part, as is the case of Canadians who come to this country from Canada to join the RAF. Furthermore, few of the squadrons in question, even with 100% Canadian flying personnel would have Canadian commanders.'⁶³ The diplomats similarly rejected Stevenson's contention that promotion opportunities would be limited if Canadians were confined only to RCAF squadrons because the current situation (on which he based his argument) was due 'to the fact that there are so few Canadian squadrons here; a difficulty which would not exist if the number of such squadrons increased.'⁶⁴

Sensing that it would not win British support, Pearson discounted the possibility of embodying 'all the Canadian graduates in RCAF squadrons with United Kingdom ground crews,' suggesting instead 'the embodiment of a certain number of Canadian graduates in RCAF squadrons; the others to be RCAF officers attached to the RAF but to be grouped, where possible, in the same squadron.' The issue to settle, therefore, was the extent of Canada's initial entitlement; and on that score it was Stevenson who submitted a plan based on an Air Ministry formula that would 'allow for about 25 RCAF squadrons.' By assuming that there were five 'training, supply, and operational personnel' for every member of an operational air crew and using manpower figures provided by Ottawa, Stevenson managed to produce a final total of twenty-six RCAF squadrons – a figure close to the Air Ministry's own calculation of twenty-seven. In order to reach that total, however, the AOC's figures went up only to January 1942, while the BCATP was not expected to reach its peak until January 1943, and he had to use an actual tail-to-tooth ratio of four to one, not five to one, in his calculations.⁶⁵

Aware that Stevenson's proposal was based on an Air Ministry formula, the diplomats at Canada House endorsed his advice as 'a compromise solution which ... should be acceptable to all concerned.'

We can, I think, fairly ask for 25 RCAF squadrons equipped by the RAF, who will also supply the ground crews; other Canadian pilots to be identified with Canada and, where possible, enrolled in RAF (Canadian) squadrons ...

The 25 RCAF squadrons will be serving in combination with the RAF under the Overseas Visiting Forces Act, but it should be made clear that on any *major question*

of policy concerning their use the Canadian government would be consulted through RCAF HQ or Canada House. In respect of operational and administrative matters not involving questions of policy, no such consultation would be necessary. The RCAF squadrons would be under the immediate control of the higher RAF formations just as a Canadian division in a UK Corps or a Canadian corps in a British army is under control of the GOC.⁶⁶

Ralston, whether influenced by the pro-RAF attitude of No 1 Squadron's pilots or by a new-found sympathy for Britain's plight, decided to accept this recommendation completely rather than carry on with the demand for seventy-seven squadrons. When the two sides finally sat down to discuss Article XV at the Air Ministry on 13 December, therefore, Ralston announced to his hosts that 'there were two principles which the Canadian Government desired should govern the settlement of this question. a) When there was Canadian participation in active operations, the Canadian people should be in a position readily to realise that Canadian personnel were taking part. b) There should be some arrangement whereby, in connection with major operations, there was supervision by Canadian officers in regard to the employment of Canadians in those operations.' He concluded by suggesting that 'if the number of air crews greatly exceeded the requirements of the twenty-five squadrons ... the balance should be utilised to form Royal Air Force (Canada) squadrons.'⁶⁷

For the British negotiators, who had spent the past year worrying that Ottawa might insist upon posting all Canadian BCATP graduates to RCAF squadrons, having their own proposal represented as the Canadian bargaining position must have been very satisfying indeed. Sir Archibald Sinclair's understated reply was 'that we had been approaching the problem on much the same lines.' While willing to form twenty-five squadrons, however, the Air Ministry was not prepared to contemplate the formation of RAF (Canada) squadrons to handle 'surplus' RCAF aircrew despite Ralston's suggestion 'that the segregation of Canadians in squadrons of one type or another would be beneficial from the United Kingdom point of view, in that it would tend to promote *esprit de corps*.' Conceding that Canada's air effort 'clearly justified some representation in the field' but citing 'posting difficulties' and the 'probable canalization of opportunities for promotion amongst Canadians,' Sinclair advised against keeping Canadians together. However, all proposals were left to be examined over the weekend until negotiations were resumed on Monday.⁶⁸

When Ralston telegraphed the results of his meeting to Ottawa the following day he still hoped that Canadian RAF units might yet be formed, although he admitted that 'squadron identification of Canadians outside ... RCAF squadrons seemed to give more trouble.' What he demonstrably did not understand was that the BCATP would shortly be producing thousands more Canadian aircrew than would be required by the twenty-five RCAF squadrons he had settled for. Indeed, as things turned out, he rather naïvely told Ottawa that 'as a matter of fact the question of these twilight formations will not presumably arise until the 25 squadrons are filled up, which may be a year.' Mackenzie King and Power were also looking forward to the creation of these RAF (Canada) squad-

rons but, reflecting his immense confidence in Ralston's abilities – a confidence he did not extend to Power – the prime minister was 'satisfied to follow your judgement' in reaching an agreement.⁶⁹

While Ralston was conferring with Ottawa, Air Ministry staff were reviewing the response to be made to the questions raised in the Friday session, including the Canadian request to have some means of 'supervision by Canadian officers in regard to the employment of Canadians' in major operations. By Monday morning they had agreed that 'a senior officer of the RCAF' should be permitted access to senior RAF officers, including the CAS, and that 'any representations which [Canada] desire[s] to make in regard to the employment of RCAF units or personnel will be welcomed.' They also felt that the transfer of RCAF groundcrew from Canada (with their necessary replacement by Britons) should be encouraged 'with the object of forming homogenous RCAF squadrons,' even though they were aware of 'the general view of the [British] Cabinet against sending trained personnel from the United Kingdom.'

As for the number of RCAF squadrons to be offered, it was agreed that it 'should be 25, and that the numbers should not be increased ... except as a bargaining matter if difficulty were experienced in persuading Mr. Ralston to abandon RAF (Canada) squadrons.' Surplus Canadians 'should be posted to the Royal Air Force,' but RCAF officers would be considered for senior appointments in the RAF command structure when qualified. Perhaps most damaging to Canadian aspirations, however, the Air Ministry opposed the formation of RCAF stations or groups since 'such an arrangement ... would tend to destroy the essential mobility and elasticity in the Royal Air Force.'⁷⁰

If the Air Ministry's officials were still expecting a tough negotiation, they had entirely underestimated the degree to which their position was being advanced as his own by Air Vice-Marshal Stevenson. Prior to the Monday afternoon session, he had prepared his own memorandum for Ralston, questioning the wisdom of forming RCAF-designated squadrons with British groundcrews and, echoing Hollinghurst's argument of two months earlier, suggesting that such squadrons 'would be sailing under artificial identification,' a situation that could be corrected by interchanging RCAF and RAF ground personnel. He also embraced the Air Ministry's view on the question of forming Canadian stations and groups. 'In order that operations and rest may be spread fairly throughout all squadrons of the Air Force, complete flexibility with regards to movements should be permitted. The Air Officer Commanding-in-Chief should therefore have the utmost freedom with respect to the movements and employment of RCAF units within the limits of the safeguards [for consultation] ... It therefore would be most difficult to create purely RCAF sectors and groups, although this might be found more feasible as time goes on. It therefore appears that purely RCAF establishments will stop at squadrons.'⁷¹

For the most part, Ralston was persuaded, his misgivings centring on the number of RCAF squadrons to be formed. Declaring that 'Canada was providing in air-crews a better type of personnel,' the minister 'enquired whether the formation of additional squadrons could not be carried out without any substantial increase in the existing rearward organisation.' His worry 'was that the

number of squadrons arrived at was purely approximate,' and he did not want to see 'a rigid acceptance of whatever arithmetical results might accrue from the application of a formula.' Twenty-five might be acceptable as an initial target but, as Ralston sensed, there was a risk that a 'purely approximate' figure might become a firm upper limit.⁷²

Continuing to labour under the illusion that the problem of surplus aircrew would not arise for some time to come – a misconception encouraged by his hosts – the Canadian minister was ready to leave that question to a later date. The meeting's British secretary was uneasy, however, and on his return to the Air Ministry 'asked [an official] to work out the figures using the programme for formation of squadrons and showing in respect of pilots only, what Canadian personnel would become available after the requirements of the 25 squadrons had been met ... Between now and December next some 2300 Canadian pilots will have become available beyond those required for the 25 squadrons programme.' When the numbers were extended to March, the discrepancy was even greater, as 3800 of the 5000 pilots expected in the United Kingdom would be posted to RAF units. Apparently, no one in Ottawa – and certainly no one advising Ralston – had done the same calculation.⁷³

A draft agreement was produced the following week, initialled by Ralston, and, together with the minister's comments, transmitted to Ottawa for War Cabinet consideration by the 24th. Beginning with the formation of the first three units in March 1941, twenty-five RCAF squadrons were to be formed by April or May 1942, with all RCAF postings being centrally controlled by the Air Ministry – a point, Ralston told Ottawa, on which 'Stevenson feels strongly.' So far as surplus aircrew were concerned, the practicality of forming RAF (Canada) squadrons would be reviewed in September, but the minister repeated the Air Ministry's doubts about being able to work out an effective solution.⁷⁴ At Canada's suggestion, the question of exchanging senior officers had been deleted from the draft and was dealt with in separate correspondence between Sinclair and Ralston. After confirming that the intent behind paragraph six was to send RAF groundcrew to Canada to replace RCAF groundcrew sent overseas, the Cabinet approved the agreement on 2 January 1941 and the Ralston-Sinclair Agreement was signed by both parties on the 7th.⁷⁵

In commenting on these negotiations in his official history of Canadian war policy, *Arms, Men and Governments*, C.P. Stacey contends that 'it is amply clear ... that the Canadians in these discussions felt themselves hamstrung by one awkward fact – that Canada was allowing Great Britain to pay the Canadian airmen whose status was in question.' He goes on to argue that 'Ralston himself must have been the more aware of this aspect since as Minister of Finance in 1939 he had had a primary responsibility for the arrangements.'⁷⁶

There is no denying the fact that by the time Ralston arrived in London, Britain was in desperate financial straits as it tried to pay for its war effort. A huge debt had piled up because of purchases in Canada, and to reduce it steps had been taken to repatriate Canadian government and railway bonds, liquidate British holdings in Canada, and transfer gold. These measures were not enough, however, and in November 1940, finding the financial cupboard bare,

London had gone 'hat in hand to Canada' for additional help. Ottawa had obliged, but was far too gentlemanly to bring that obligation into the current negotiations, and, indeed, Ralston only raised the financial aspect once – in his 14 December telegram to Ottawa in which he reminded his Cabinet colleagues that 'the United Kingdom was providing ground crews, pay and allowances and initial and maintenance equipment.'⁷⁷

In that context, it must be remembered that Canada's desire to form RCAF squadrons overseas would not have increased the financial encumbrance on the British Treasury, but sought only to ensure that its air arm was organized in such a way as to give due recognition to Canada's contribution. As Riverdale himself had observed in March 1940, it would have made 'small difference to us financially whether the ground crews are British or Canadian, or half one and half the other, as there is no question at all that we have undertaken to fight the 43 Canadian Squadrons' at the front and look after them completely after they are in our hands.'⁷⁸

Furthermore, although the full extent of Canadian generosity to the United Kingdom could not be known – by war's end, in outright gifts alone, it was estimated by the British Treasury at \$3 billion – an initial and helpful response had been made to the British request of November 1940, so that there was no cause for embarrassment on that score either. But perhaps the most telling argument is that even in their own preparations for the Ralston-Sinclair meetings, British officials did not raise the issue of money as a possible negotiating point.⁷⁹

If the financial aspects are to be discounted, then, it remains to explain why Canada's politicians, after enunciating the principle that Canadian airmen should serve together in RCAF squadrons, accepted twenty-five as an initial figure while allowing, as King himself acknowledged, that 'a very large number' of Canadian graduates 'will be utilised by reinforcement to Royal Air Force Squadrons.' On this point it is difficult to argue with Stacey's observation that 'it seems fully apparent that the Canadian negotiators leaned over backwards to avoid embarrassing the Royal Air Force or ... presenting unreasonable demands.' That attitude clearly motivated Ralston and was reinforced by the advice he received from both Overseas Headquarters and Canada House. That Mackenzie King also readily accepted the results of Ralston's negotiations perhaps only serves to demonstrate the confidence the prime minister placed in his minister's judgment.⁸⁰ It is also likely that the twenty-five squadron total, which was to be reviewed in September in any event, seemed a sizeable commitment to a government whose air force at that time consisted of only twelve operational squadrons in Canada and three overseas.

Nevertheless, the implications of the Ralston-Sinclair Agreement represented an enormous compromise by Canada. For by settling on just twenty-five squadrons in the first place and then failing to gain any sort of assurance that Canadian aircrew outside them would serve together in the same units, Ralston

* The total number of squadrons that the Air Ministry calculated could be formed if all Canadian aircrew were posted to RCAF units.

did not achieve even the compromise solution recommended by Canada House. As a result, the implementation of the agreement came to resemble a combination of its rejected first and second options, with a minority of RCAF aircrew being 'kept together in squadrons ... given a special Canadian identification' and the majority simply being 'enrolled in the RAF with individual identification only' and 'divorced from their own country's war effort.'⁸¹

While settling the initial number of squadrons to be formed overseas, the Ralston-Sinclair Agreement still left the status of Overseas Headquarters and its role in the administration of those squadrons up in the air. For his part, Stevenson's view that complete responsibility for all Canadian units in the United Kingdom should be handed over to the RAF, and that Overseas Headquarters should be converted into a liaison office, had not changed.⁸² Meanwhile, little in the way of policy direction emanated from Ottawa as Power, by and large, continued to acquiesce in the management of programs reflecting the air staff's preferences while offering little in the way of political input. Such was the case at an expanded meeting of the Air Council, held on 21 February 1941, to brief the AOCs of the various home commands on 'general policy matters.' According to the CAS, 'the dual role of the RCAF in the war effort' was 'to get as many trained personnel as possible in the front line overseas' and 'to provide the air defence of Canada.' As for Overseas Headquarters, the government's decision (as expressed on 9 October) not to allow it to be reduced to the status of a liaison office seemed to matter hardly at all.⁸³

This confusing situation had still not been corrected by early April when the Australian air liaison officer in London sought advice from Stevenson on the best way to arrange the administration of RAAF squadrons. While reiterating his opinion that responsibility for operational control, discipline, and administration of all dominion units should be given over entirely to the RAF, the Canadian also observed that his views had not, as yet, been accepted by his government.

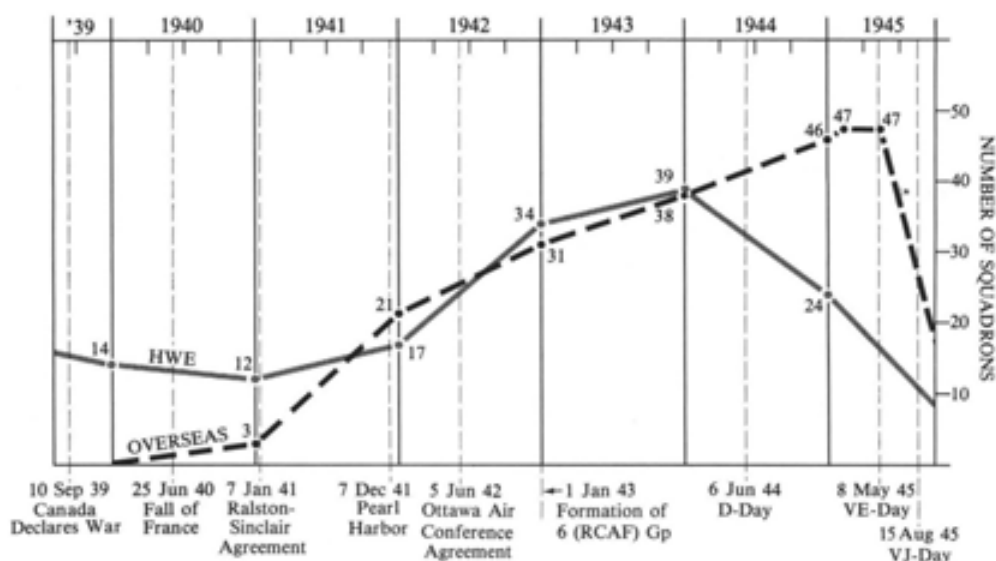
No arrangements have been made with respect to the administration of the 25 squadrons being formed under a recent agreement ... I assumed that these squadrons would be administered entirely by the RAF, assisted by RCAF officers who would be filling positions in various stations and formation Headquarters ...

I have discussed, informally, with Canada House officials the administration of the 25 squadrons, and I believe they take the view that the RAF ground crews should be attached to the 25 RCAF squadrons and be administered by this Headquarters. I feel that this is a step in absolutely the wrong direction.

Therefore, in respect of [administration] this question has not been decided, but it has been recommended that both the 3 present squadrons and the 25 new squadrons be attached to the RAF for all purposes, and that Canadian control be exercised only by the RCAF officers posted to positions in RAF stations, groups and commands within which RCAF squadrons are operating.⁸⁴

Stevenson submitted his recommendations to Canada House on 3 April and to AFHQ the following day. Although quite happy to look after the personnel

RCAF SQUADRON STRENGTH 1939 - 1945



NOTE: *Eight 6 Gp squadrons returned to Canada in June 1945 to re-organize and retrain for the war against Japan. The war ended before they left Canada again.

Reproduced by Mapping and Charting Establishment.

*Compiled and drawn by the Directorate of History.

of Overseas Headquarters, he observed that 'the present system of dual control of RCAF Squadrons by Air Ministry and RCAF Overseas headquarters is definitely wrong.'

This Headquarters, in point of fact, is not a Headquarters at all as it commands no units but endeavours only to undertake certain administrative tasks, jumping a wide gap between this Headquarters and Squadrons, which could be done better by the RAF in the normal channel of Station, Group and Command Headquarters.

The 'long distance' administration by RCAF Overseas Headquarters of RCAF Squadrons, working intimately under the Headquarters of other formations should have been recognized as impracticable before it was adopted and it is high time the system be changed ...

I am, however, convinced of the desirability of retaining some measure of supervision of medical and dental treatment for Canadians and of their personal comfort, and therefore this Headquarters should retain responsibility for medical, dental and auxiliary services, as well as maintaining watch on their method of employment.⁸⁵

While his remarks referred specifically to the three existing overseas squadrons, Stevenson believed that 'the same factors apply to the 25 Squadrons being formed,'⁸⁶ and he requested that the deputy chief of the air staff (DCAS), Air Commodore G.O. Johnson, who was shortly to proceed overseas for a period of duty with the RAF, 'be given direction on this subject and authorized [to] turn over sqns on his arrival after satisfying himself as to desirability.'⁸⁷ As Stevenson had anticipated, his proposals were endorsed by Breadner and recommended to the Air Council. It was left to Power 'to determine the policy to be submitted to the War Committee [of Cabinet].'⁸⁸ One month later, however, the minister still had not seen fit to present Stevenson's proposal to Cabinet, even though Johnson had already departed for London with instructions to hand over total responsibility for the administration of RCAF squadrons to the RAF.⁸⁹

In the absence of any clear understanding of their responsibility for Canada's airmen on the part of the air force's senior officers, it was left to Canada House in London to protect legitimate national interests. As a contemporary critique of air force practice, Lester Pearson's views deserve to be quoted at length:

I am impressed with the importance of the administrative difficulties referred to in the memorandum which arise out of divided control. It is, for instance, obvious that promotions and discipline are inter-related aspects of control. To leave the former with RCAF Headquarters and the latter with the RAF seems illogical. But the question is not, of course, merely one of logic. It is how to combine operational efficiency with the recognition of the fact that the squadrons in question are Canadian and that those in command of them are ultimately responsible to the Canadian Government, via RCAF Headquarters.

I do not myself think that the Canadian Government would wish to turn over to Air Ministry control all the matters recommended by Air Commodore Stevenson, unless there were arrangements to ensure that the specific Canadian interest in these matters was safeguarded. Take repatriation, for instance. It may be, as Air Commodore Stevenson says, a routine matter. But if the repatriation of Canadians were left entirely to the RAF, individual cases might not be approached in the same way as they would be by a Canadian Headquarters. Air Commodore Stevenson admits that himself, when he states that whereas RCAF Headquarters would, in the normal course, send home Canadians unfit for operational work, the RAF might keep them in this country for a

* It does not appear that Overseas Headquarters felt any responsibility for BCATP graduates attached to the RAF at this time. As far as Stevenson's SASO was concerned, Overseas Headquarters was only responsible for permanent members of the RCAF. In discussing the length of time that RCAF personnel should serve overseas, A.P. Campbell 'felt that personnel trained under the BCATP and attached to the RAF need not be considered' since 'it may be assumed that BCATP graduates will serve overseas for as long as the RAF require them, which presumably means for the duration of the war ... We must not forget that it is highly unlikely that BCATP graduates will be granted any Canadian leave and this will lead to unfavourable comparisons. It may be difficult enough to reconcile the return of many Permanent Force personnel to Canada after one year's service overseas with the fact that BCATP graduates serve overseas for the duration.'

thousand and one jobs. That course would have certain advantages, but it might also have disadvantages and result in the retention in this country of persons who, for one reason or another, should be returned to Canada ...

Air Commodore Stevenson's solution is that practically all control and administration should be turned over to the RAF, with RCAF officers attached to the various Departments of the Air Ministry which would exercise such control. This might be satisfactory if those Canadian officers remained as members of RCAF Headquarters, posted to these various Air Ministry divisions, and if they had the right of access to and direct communication with RCAF Headquarters. It seems to me that there must be a line of responsibility direct from the attached officers to RCAF Headquarters, just as there should be some parallel line of responsibility from RCAF officers in the field to RCAF Headquarters; even when the squadrons are under RAF control.

Without knowledge of the administrative and technical questions involved, it is not easy to make useful observations on a matter of this kind. At the same time, technical and operational considerations cannot be allowed to obscure the fundamental fact that, by some means, the responsibility for all RCAF squadrons in the field to the Canadian Government through an RCAF Headquarters overseas must be admitted in principle and worked out in practice.⁸⁹

Pearson sent Stevenson a copy of his views in mid-April together with the suggestion that 'Mr. Massey thinks it might be a good idea if the three of us had a talk about this matter.' There is no evidence that such a meeting took place or that Pearson's memorandum was ever transmitted to AFHQ in Ottawa. Indeed, that it had entered a void – and that declared Cabinet policy continued to be given short shrift – was plainly demonstrated by Air Commodore Johnson after he arrived in the United Kingdom on 20 April. Having first repeated the air staff's desire to turn over the administration of overseas squadrons to the RAF in return for Canadian administration of British schools in Canada, he not only echoed Stevenson's views on administration and the status of Overseas Headquarters at a meeting of the EATS Committee, but also volunteered, in response to questions, that AFHQ had no right to recall BCATP graduates to Canada. They were, he said, 'at the disposal of the UK Government.' On further prompting, he also agreed that the existence of an RCAF liaison organization in Britain should not, under any circumstances, 'be used as a channel in any matter in which the proper official channels were appropriate and had not already been used.' It was left to Percivale Liesching, representing the Dominions Office, to remind everyone that paragraph nine of the Ralston-Sinclair Agreement safeguarded Canadian access to Canadian airmen and that its terms should not be departed from.⁹⁰

By 12 June the DCAS was able to send Breadner a draft memorandum of agreement incorporating most of the points discussed with the EATS Committee. Under its terms, the Air Ministry was to post all overseas members of the RCAF, except those serving at Overseas Headquarters, which was itself to be 're-organized as a Canadian Air Liaison Mission.' (Johnson's covering letter noted that the high commissioner had objected to the use of the word 'liaison' as involving a 'loss of prestige'; but the DCAS did not recommend any alter-

ations.) Moreover, all 'RCAF squadrons and units in the United Kingdom, or other theatre of war, to which they have been moved with the concurrence of the Canadian Government, including Nos 400, 401 and 402 Squadrons which are financed by Canada, and the 25 squadrons to be organized and financed by the United Kingdom ... shall be administered by the Air Ministry of the United Kingdom through the appropriate RAF formations, without prejudice to the terms of the said Memorandum of Agreement.'⁹¹

Johnson's draft agreement was never brought before Cabinet, for by the time Power finally raised the question of overseas policy on 24 June, his outlook had changed dramatically. As though suddenly awakened to the consequences of policy made by the air staff, he no longer wished to see responsibility for the administration of the RCAF Overseas delegated wholesale to the Air Ministry or any change in the status of Overseas Headquarters. His deeds fell short of his words, however, so that, as Breadner pointed out the following October, 'the reciprocal terms in respect of the administration of RCAF Squadrons in [the] United Kingdom [embodied in Johnson's agreement] have, in all essential respects, already been put into effect.' Indeed, its terms would continue to determine how RCAF squadrons overseas were administered until a revised arrangement was formally concluded at the Ottawa Air Training Conference in June 1942.⁹²

By then significant damage had already been done. As of June 1941, 2900 Canadian BCATP graduates had been sent to the United Kingdom, of whom only some 700 would have been required to fill the thirteen RCAF squadrons, formed or forming, overseas. Yet these units were by no means fully manned by Canadians. Three more squadrons had been added to the order of battle by the end of September, but the size of the manpower pool in England was growing at an even faster pace. Of some 4500 RCAF aircrew overseas on 30 September, fewer than 500 were serving in Canadian units. For the other 4000, it was quickly apparent that Overseas Headquarters was unable even to keep track of them, let alone maintain any sort of watch over their welfare.⁹³

Ironically, one of the first Canadian airmen to experience the impotence of Overseas Headquarters was A.P. Campbell, who had left his position as Stevenson's right-hand man in May 1941 to take over command of RAF Station Digby. Under RCAF regulations, commanding officers were entitled to special duty pay, a bonus that was not advanced by the RAF. Campbell wrote to Overseas Headquarters in September seeking the extra money, but was told by the accounts officer 'that it is very unlikely that it will be possible to grant this extra pay to RCAF officers, for it would, *ipso facto*, entitle all graduates of the BCATP to the same privilege; and, as you know, we have enough difficulty even trying to locate their whereabouts without having to establish what specific positions they were filling at any one period.'⁹⁴ Such an admission only underlined the fact that the Canadian air staff had failed the 'acid test' and that Ottawa could not be said to have control over its own airmen. As a result, the RCAF Overseas now had to be 'Canadianized,' a process that would prove to be a long-drawn-out and frustrating experience.

The Foundations of Canadianization, June 1941–June 1942

On 23 June 1941, thirteen months to the day after assuming his appointment as minister of national defence for air, C.G. Power finally wrote to Prime Minister Mackenzie King and admitted that all was not right with Canada's overseas air force.

No *mea culpa*, Power's letter merely expressed a desire to draw King's 'urgent attention to certain matters which have been causing me grave concern for some time past.' According to the minister, it was only 'the rapidly increased output of the JATP' that had now 'brought home to us some of the difficulties regarding Canadian Air Force personnel serving with United Kingdom forces, which though they were to some extent visualized at the time of the signing of the JATP agreement did not assume great significance until we were face to face with the actual facts of the situation.' That was putting the best possible light on his stewardship to date: belatedly, Power had apparently begun to realize the nature of his responsibilities as minister.

There are today in Great Britain, and probably spread elsewhere throughout the war zone, well over five thousand of our young Canadian men, members of the RCAF, who are the moral, if not the legal responsibility of the Canadian Government ...

At the time of the signing of the Agreement you, more than anyone else, had a full appreciation of the difficulties which this aspect of the scheme would eventually entail. Fortunately, your insistence on a saving clause, whereby some identification of our people became possible has permitted us to keep the status of young Canadians to something other than that of hirelings or mercenaries in the service of another State, which however closely we may be associated with it by ties of blood, interest or sympathy, is not the homeland of these young men ...

... we cannot ... completely divest ourselves of the duty which we owe to the Canadian people and to the parents of these boys in keeping in the closest possible touch and exercising the utmost supervision as to their care, comfort, protection and identification, which supervision appears to be impossible under the present system.¹

That the position of Canada's airmen as 'hirelings or mercenaries' of the RAF should suddenly have concerned Power after a year-long period of indifference as to their fate may be wondered at; but it would seem that the

politician in him had come to realize the degree to which the government's fortunes might suffer as a result of its imperfect supervision of Canadian airmen. To illustrate the problem, the minister cited several examples of RCAF airmen who had recently been reported missing on operations about which the government could not provide relatives with any details. One case involved an airman whose family were personal acquaintances. 'Fortunately they made no enquiries of me,' Power admitted, for 'had they done so, I could give them no information because the Canadian Government had none to give.' Moreover, the situation – and the embarrassment – would only get worse as even more BCATP graduates became casualties. It was therefore time to act, and Power proposed not only the strengthening of Overseas Headquarters, 'particularly in records offices ... even at the risk of somewhat expensive duplication,' but also that he go to London in order to clarify and find a solution to the problem.²

Power's request placed his colleagues in a quandary when it was presented to Cabinet the next day. While recognizing the need to send someone to London, they were leery of selecting Power for fear that his intemperance might embarrass them. Only two weeks earlier, he had been found, thoroughly inebriated, wandering the corridors of Parliament Hill by Cabinet colleague Ian Mackenzie, who had quietly steered him into an office and summoned the prime minister. King was not surprised to learn 'that Power was again on one of his sprees' and 'talked with him quite seriously though quietly'; but the latest binge had convinced King that it was 'a serious thing to have the Air Force controlled by a man as weak as he has become of late and I feel the responsibility that rests upon myself in relation to it.' For partisan political reasons, however – Power was the Liberal party's main anglophone Quebec organizer – he would not replace him.³

In the end, the Cabinet agreed that Power should go, provided he was supervised by a colleague. With that less than ringing endorsement, the minister of national defence for air and his chaperone (ironically, fellow-drinker Ian Mackenzie) departed for Britain at the end of the month. The party also included Breadner and the air member for personnel (AMP), Air Commodore Harold Edwards – the latter apparently as a result of a memorandum he had submitted in early June outlining many of the problems developing overseas. Besides the well-known difficulties associated with administration, personnel requirements, and the records office, Edwards was concerned about the commissioning of BCATP graduates, 'which seems to have bogged down,' and the 'interpretation of the Visiting Forces Act which, from the queries received from overseas, seems to be a very obscure subject there.' His misgivings had not been shared by his colleagues in June, and at that time the CAS had rejected his request to visit England; but now that Power himself had concluded that action of some kind was required, Edwards could go.⁴

The Canadians arrived in London on 1 July 1941 and spent their first week touring various RAF establishments. Once discussions began, however, Power wasted little time in outlining Ottawa's concerns.

At the present time there were in the United Kingdom some 5000 aircrew personnel and 1000 radio [radar] personnel. He estimated that in total there would be 16,000 RCAF personnel serving with the Royal Air Force in January 1942, and about 40,000–45,000 in January 1943. He went on to point out that all these members of the RCAF were well-educated citizens of the Dominion, and that the Canadian Government had a moral responsibility in regard to their general conditions and welfare while serving with the RAF. They remained members of the Royal Canadian Air Force, and the connection between them and their Home Government must be more than a gesture, particularly in regard to ranks below commissioned rank ... It was necessary ... to provide closer access to individuals, for steps to be taken in regard to their general welfare and for the RCAF authorities to have some voice in the promotion of RCAF personnel.

To accomplish these goals, Power explained, would require a personnel directorate at Overseas Headquarters as well as guarantees of greater access to RAF posting, records, and pay offices. In addition, more information must be made available to Canadian authorities in regard to the disposition of individuals.⁵ The British were troubled by Power's message. While acknowledging the 'national demand in Canada for the close affiliation of RCAF personnel,' parliamentary undersecretary of state for air Harold Balfour wondered how it could be accommodated in a single 'channel of direct command.' Postings and promotions, for example, had to 'treated as a whole throughout the personnel serving with the Royal Air Force,' the RAF's air member for personnel, Air Vice-Marshal P. Babington, observed, 'otherwise it was impossible to have absolute fairness.' It was simply 'undesirable that there should be watertight compartments dealing with postings of personnel for a particular Dominion or Allied country.' There being little the Air Ministry could do to prevent Ottawa from increasing the size of Overseas Headquarters, however, it was accepted that action should proceed on the lines indicated by the Canadian minister.⁶

In some areas, such as the mechanics of providing Canadian groundcrew for the Article XV squadrons, the exchange of senior officers, and improving the procedures for notifying next-of-kin of RCAF casualties, there was relatively easy agreement. On the question of publicity for Canada's participation in the air war, however, the Air Ministry was loathe to break the rule of anonymity by which all air operations were referred to simply as RAF actions. Commissioning policy also proved contentious, as the Canadians expressed their dissatisfaction with a quota system that allowed only 20 per cent of wireless operators and air gunners eventually to reach commissioned rank. Moreover, Power wanted to increase the percentage of commissions automatically granted to pilots and observers on graduation from service flying training schools to 50 per cent, while Babington would only accept that 'if personnel suitable for commissions were being kept in the ranks because of the quota, the numbers would be increased.' 'Suitable' was left undefined, and commissioning policy would continue to provoke disagreement throughout the war.⁷

Having deprecated the idea of creating RCAF stations and groups during

Ralston's January visit, the British now conceded that 'it would be quite feasible to form RCAF bomber groups when the bomber squadrons became available,' but cautioned that additional units could not be formed quickly. Power was nevertheless quick to emphasize 'that the principle of a Canadian bomber group was accepted and would be a definite objective although delayed.' A Canadian fighter group, however, was rejected by the British unless '40 to 50 RCAF fighter squadrons were available for the purpose,' a possibility that the limits imposed by the Ralston-Sinclair Agreement precluded. Undaunted, Power 'agreed that if 40 to 50 RCAF fighter squadrons were available no difficulty would arise' and then, as the meeting was drawing to a close, suggested 'that the limit of 25 to the number of RCAF squadrons to be formed should now be removed.' Taken aback, Balfour responded evasively, claiming that the question 'would require consideration by the United Kingdom authorities and consultation with other Dominions concerned'; and Power chose not to press the matter. Although fewer than half the twenty-five squadrons had as yet been formed, the minister's proposal was a clear indication of Canada's future intentions.⁸

As an attempt to correct the problems confronting the RCAF Overseas, Power's trip to London was a moderate first step. Although the Air Ministry now understood that Ottawa was to be kept better informed as to the whereabouts of Canadians serving in the RAF and would maintain a greater supervision over their welfare, Power had not attempted to reassert Overseas Headquarters' responsibility for administering RCAF units and controlling postings and promotions, authority only recently ceded to the RAF by the DCAS, G.O. Johnson. Had he done so, many of the delays and frustrations of the next two years might have been circumvented in one stroke. Moreover, despite Power's insistence that Overseas Headquarters keep in closer touch with Canadian airmen, both Breadner and Stevenson continued to distance themselves from the RCAF Overseas. Following the minister's return to Canada, their plans to disband the overseas record office and merge its personnel into the RAF Record Office went ahead even over the objections of the RCAF's own records officer.⁹

Unable to track the exact whereabouts of individual airmen, Overseas Headquarters was nevertheless gaining a reasonable impression of their concerns from British censorship reports on outgoing Canadian mail. Passed on by the Air Ministry, these letters indicated that most Canadians had to make an adjustment to English food and living standards. More disturbing, however, was the evidence of persistent and pronounced hostility between Canadian airmen and RAF non-commissioned officers (NCOs), a sentiment exemplified by one warrant officer at Cranwell who had 'greatly antagonized the Canadians in the past by calling them a "bunch of rotten colonials" in his first lecture.' More generally, 'complaints of English inhospitality continue to appear in this correspondence in considerable volume.'

The feeling of being unwanted and the antagonism towards the RAF, though by no means universal, are as strong as ever among many Canadian personnel.

TABLE 1
RCAF Personnel Overseas, 1941-5

Date	Aircrew	Groundcrew	Women's Division	Total Strength
30 Sept. 41	4,500 ^a	2,300	0	6,829
31 Dec. 41	6,721	4,987	0	11,708
31 March 42	8,867 ^b	7,482	0	16,623
26 June 42	10,305 ^c	8,940	0	19,636
25 Sept. 42	10,360 ^c	10,038	42	20,440
25 Dec. 42	12,197	11,420	41	23,658
26 March 43	14,977	16,699	123	31,799
25 June 43	16,366	20,847	251	37,464
30 Sept. 43	19,646	22,508	546	42,700
31 Dec. 43	21,916	23,459	895	46,270
31 March 44	22,728	26,054	1,040	49,822
25 June 44	25,671	29,438	1,112	56,221
25 Sept. 44	28,215	31,510	1,364	61,089
31 Dec. 44	25,678	34,825	1,470	61,973
31 March 45	22,246	34,256	1,365	57,867

Sources: AMP Progress Reports, DHist 73/1174; 'Strength Return by Units,' DHist 181.005 (D850)

^a approximate

^b Not including prewar regulars and reservists mobilized following the outbreak of war.

^c At the Air Ministry's request, Canada suspended drafts of pilots and WOAGs during June and July 1942. When drafts were scheduled to resume, shipping delays continued to restrict the flow of aircrew from August to October and only 1100 RCAF aircrew reached Bournemouth during these three months, two-thirds of Article XV requirements. This was the only occasion during the war, however, when the overall supply of Canadian aircrew did not meet the RCAF needs.

[A] preference for Scotland ... is still most marked. Scottish hospitality is referred to repeatedly, and Canadians stationed in England frequently go to Scotland for their leave. The Canadian seems to find an immediate affinity with the Scot ...

Not all Canadians are discontented; many are happy and full of enthusiasm, and many speak most warmly of English hospitality. In the balance against the disgruntled ... must be set the good morale of [the others]. But the scales still tilt towards the disgruntled side ...

Canadian airmen attached to the RAF complain that they are 'forgotten men.' Many feel that the Canadian authorities take no interest in them, and do not pass to them their fair share of comforts from Canada.¹⁰

With considerable justification, Stevenson dismissed much of this grumbling as a reaction to wartime conditions in Britain.

Whereas RAF personnel are used to rather indifferent accommodation, messing and treatment and accept it as inevitable, members of the RCAF have probably been used to better accommodation, messing and recreational facilities and therefore complain. There is unquestionably much room for improvement in messing and in accommodation, particularly with respect to heating, but under present conditions it would be impossible to bring these deficiencies up to a state which would satisfy the average Canadian.

The complaints are, however, giving the RAF considerable concern, and I am sure that some improvement will result.¹¹

What could not be so easily dismissed were the differing British and Canadian attitudes towards authority. It was clear from the censors' findings that RCAF other ranks experienced difficulty adjusting to the RAF's formality and reserve.

... class distinctions in the RAF strike Canadians as undemocratic. Canadians have little sympathy for the 'old school tie' ...

The other side of the picture is the Englishman's view of the Canadian. Quoting from an RAF report: 'The New World – American and Canadian alike – is impetuous, enthusiastic, sometimes childish, often self-assured and usually not a little boastful. It likes to seem tough and it likes to show off.' One RAF officer, the CO of an RCAF squadron, told us that Canadians are erratic: they want quick excitement, but cannot settle down to a hard grind. Another RAF officer, the CO of an OTU, said that the Canadians are a pretty unsophisticated lot, who come over with a chip on their shoulder, and put on a tough exterior to cover up a sense of inferiority. A number of RAF officers told us that the Canadians don't know how to hold their drinks. On the other hand, many RAF officers in Canadian squadrons spoke in glowing terms of the fine qualities of the Canadians, especially their friendliness, and resented the possibility of being posted out of the RCAF squadron. An RAF flight-sergeant who had many years in the service expressed his liking for the RCAF squadron because relations with Canadian officers were on a more satisfactory human basis.¹²

Differences between class-conscious Britons and more egalitarian Canadians also influenced the approach the RAF and RCAF adopted to questions of command. To the traditional English mind, leadership was more a function of style than competence, and men had to be the 'right type' in order to be commissioned. Canadians preferred the more functional approach of the Americans, who related rank to the job done and commissioned all pilots, navigators, and bomb-aimers. Commissioning aside, the English view of Canada as a classless society also influenced the RAF's perception of Canadians as suitable commanders. Its bias against RCAF officers was typified by the commanding officer of RAF Digby (which had housed an RCAF fighter wing since April 1941) in a letter to No 12 Group Headquarters in July 1941.

I am of the opinion that the present system of forming Canadian stations manned entirely by RCAF personnel is a mistake, and I am not even convinced that it is a good thing to retain RCAF squadrons as such. My reasons are as follows:

The influence of Canadians in an English Squadron is excellent and I cannot help feeling that the converse is also true. Because of characteristic differences of expression in English and Canadian pilots – an English squadron having a number of Canadian pilots in it is ensured of a vivid display of guts in a tight corner – which is of great benefit to the squadron as a whole. On the other hand, the presence of RAF pilots in a squadron which has a number of Canadians, tends to sober them down a bit, and improve their discipline.

It is probably not generally appreciated that discipline in a RCAF squadron is usually of a type quite different from that of an English squadron. The following conversation recently overheard between a RCAF squadron commander and a RCAF M[otor] T[ransport] driver, driving a lorry, will best explain what is meant:

The squadron commander: 'Hey Bill, where are you going?'

MT driver: 'Lincoln.'

Squadron commander: 'Can you give me a lift?'

MT driver: 'Sure, hop in.'

The possibility is that the MT driver employs the squadron commander in peace time in his work in Canada and therefore, nothing is thought by the Canadians themselves of such conversations; but it is a state of affairs which has definitely to be reckoned with on a station.

I have the greatest admiration for the Canadians who were in the Air Force in the last war, and the RCAF who are on this station now; but I cannot help feeling that Canadians and Englishmen would benefit by serving in the same units.

Although it is possible to train pilots, flight commanders, and even squadron commanders in a comparatively short time, it takes a lot of experience over a period of years to become acquainted with all the administrative paraphernalia connected with the successful running of a station. It is, therefore, impossible for Canadian officers with only a few years service to have absorbed sufficient knowledge to be able to run the administrative side of a station satisfactorily.

To refer to a particular instance, I am sure it is not in the interests of the war effort as a whole that this station should be run entirely by Canadians, and I give the experiment eight or nine months as a maximum before it will fail.¹³

Ironically, the English mindset indirectly cost the anglophile Stevenson his job, albeit through a case of his own making. In late September he visited Fighter Command Headquarters to investigate complaints that No 402 Squadron was being assigned Hurri-bombers – fighter-bomber Hurricanes – rather than the Spitfire Vs in service with the other Canadian fighter squadrons. The man with whom he had to deal, Sir Sholto Douglas, was noted for his condescending attitude towards 'colonials' – a trait that later on proved especially galling to his American allies¹⁴ – and, as Stevenson later explained to Breadner, he had taken: 'rather a strong stand, stating that he had no intention of changing his plan for equipping 402 with Bomber Hurricanes and inferred it was none of my business. I feel that his attitude was one of a very senior officer dealing with a subordinate and that he did not take into account the fact that I was representing yourself in presenting the matter.'¹⁵ Pointing to the recent appointment of an air marshal to fill the senior RAAF post in London, Stevenson believed that 'on many occasions my rank, as compared with those with whom I was dealing, was a handicap which could not help but be reflected in the consideration given by senior [RAF] officers to RCAF affairs.'

You may consider that, as the Senior RCAF Officer Overseas, I must maintain RCAF interests – on the other hand, if one is required to 'dig in one's heels,' so to speak,

discussions become complicated as between senior officers and junior officers, in the course of which some unfriendliness may creep in, which would be entirely absent when all concerned are on an equal footing.

Therefore, I recommend to you that a Senior Officer be granted the rank of Air Marshal and posted to the appointment of Air Officer Commanding, RCAF in Great Britain, to supersede myself.¹⁶

This recommendation, perhaps the wisest advice he was to give in his thirteen months overseas, was quickly acted upon by Ottawa. On 24 October Overseas Headquarters was informed that Air Vice-Marshal H. Edwards, the former air member for personnel (AMP), would be sent to London to replace Stevenson as air officer-in-chief, RCAF Overseas (AO-in-C.)¹⁷

While this move was, in great part, a direct result of Stevenson's own recommendation, it was also evidence that Power did not consider him the man to carry out the Canadianization of the RCAF Overseas. Indeed, Stevenson's continuing opposition to the minister's new course was made abundantly clear soon after his return to Canada. Taking a highly unusual step for a serving officer, Stevenson denounced the government's air policy at a press conference, telling his audience that Canadianization would reduce the efficiency of the British air effort. 'Personally I don't approve. The best squadrons are the mixed squadrons. Every man has something to give, if you put them together they pull. Much better results are achieved by mixing the men ... Canadian aircrews in England are operating under very highly skilled staffs. Any weaklings are tossed out. There is absolutely no mercy about it. The Canadians are well looked after by RAF men with two years war experience ... They are working hard, fighting hard and doing a great job.'¹⁸

The Cabinet minutes reviewing Stevenson's press conference recorded 'that expressions of personal opinion of this kind by Service officers, contrary to Regulations, were not to be tolerated,' but his promotion to air vice-marshal and appointment as AOC, Western Air Command – a position that had assumed great importance in Canada following the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor two weeks earlier – went ahead as planned.¹⁹

The new air officer-in-chief was, like his Air Council peers, a veteran of the First World War. As AMP since February 1940, Edwards had an intimate knowledge of the RCAF's organization and manpower resources – a valuable asset in any discussion with the Air Ministry on the disposition of Canadian aircrew. Described as 'the most forceful man in the RCAF,' Edwards 'was the logical choice [as AO-in-C] because he ... had a good overall view of the RCAF,' even though Breadner had initially 'wanted to go overseas himself' as Stevenson's replacement. Edwards's recognized proficiency 'in administration, Air Force Law, [and] Departmental procedure' and his 'keen interest in the

* Stevenson's title had been air officer commanding, RCAF in Great Britain, until 6 November 1941, when it was changed to air officer-in-chief (AO-in-C), RCAF Overseas. The appointment became air officer commanding-in-chief (AOC-in-C), RCAF Overseas, between 16 July 1942 and 4 February 1943, when it was changed again to air officer commanding-in-chief, Headquarters, Royal Canadian Air Force Overseas.

discipline and welfare of both officers and airmen' were decided advantages; but there was also a combative side to his character that would not easily accept the condescending attitude British airmen still frequently adopted towards their dominion colleagues. Edwards was not afraid to use plain language if he thought it likely to produce results.²⁰

Air Commodore W.A. Curtis was appointed his deputy. Like Breadner and Edwards, Curtis was a veteran of the Royal Naval Air Service during the First World War, but unlike them he had gone into private business after the war, becoming founder and president of a prosperous insurance firm. His astute business skills translated well to air force administration, and his sound reasoning and considered approach to Air Ministry liaison would prove a restraining influence on the more emotional Edwards. With his chief frequently rendered *hors de combat* by ill-health throughout their two years in London, Curtis's role at Overseas Headquarters was destined to be a large one.²¹

Before proceeding to the United Kingdom, both officers met with Power to discuss overseas policy. While Edwards's claims that "'Chubby" gave me damn little lead' other than a mandate 'to put the RCAF on the map' were undoubtedly true in terms of the specific direction he received, the minister did not mince words in indicating what he had in mind. According to Curtis, they were 'instructed to make the Canadians known' and 'to get as many of the squadrons as possible complete with Canadian aircrew and Canadian commanding officers.' These instructions harmonized with Power's desire to lift the twenty-five squadron limit, for if the Article XV squadrons were completely filled with Canadians while thousands of others were being posted to RAF units, Ottawa would be in a stronger position to request a further allocation of squadrons. Until the existing RCAF squadrons were fully Canadianized, however, the Air Ministry could deny the need for more Canadian units, no matter how many thousands of RCAF aircrew were serving in RAF squadrons. Already, following the September 1941 review required by the Ralston-Sinclair Agreement, the Air Ministry had indicated that it was 'unlikely that it would be possible to form, by the 30th June, 1942, any more Dominion squadrons than those already agreed to.'²²

As if to demonstrate the impracticalities of forming RCAF squadrons, the Air Ministry had organized only twenty-two before the June deadline – asserting that it was impossible to do more – while forming thirty-nine RAF squadrons. Yet the latter included some 2000–3000 Canadian airmen, about three times the number serving in RCAF squadrons, suggesting that these impracticalities had little to do with the gross supply of Canadian BCATP graduates. Indeed, 10,000 of them had arrived in the United Kingdom by the end of June.²³

AFHQ knew what was happening and, prompted by the Air Ministry's warning that changes in Bomber Command establishments would delay the creation of new units – squadrons would expand from sixteen to twenty-four crews – Ottawa decided on 17 October to alter the form of its Article XV contribution. Instead of five new bomber squadrons, it asked the Air Ministry to form five new RCAF fighter squadrons. Although it was explained that to do so would re-

duce the number of Canadians able to be posted to RCAF squadrons by more than 1000 (single-seater fighters required no navigators, bomb-aimers, air gunners, or radio operators), Ottawa was not dissuaded, AFHQ shrewdly calculating that it was better to form the fighter squadrons immediately, while 'the additional RCAF personnel that will be serving in RAF squadrons will provide a basis for claim for additional RCAF squadrons.' It was that policy – to form the twenty-five Article XV squadrons as quickly as possible and then press the Air Ministry for more – which Power communicated to Edwards and Curtis before they left for London.²⁴

There was nevertheless much to do before they could begin, if only to remind the overseas staff that Stevenson's era was over. 'I found the place, to be quite honest with you, as dead as a door-nail,' Edwards informed AFHQ, 'everyone complaining that they had nothing to do, but nobody doing anything about it.'

In fact, I am pretty disgusted with the whole thing ...

The discipline of the place is lousy. The men are turned out in a frightful manner. Nobody seems to give a goddam whether the ship sinks or swims, but above all, I found that everybody was diametrically opposed to all the policies emanating from Canada.

I got all the officers together the moment that I appeared in the office, and for the first time in my life I felt I was in a hostile atmosphere, but I do think that when I had finished with them, they were more friendly disposed, and could see the light as I wished them to see it.

As far as our troops in the RAF are concerned, I find that they are being dispersed all over Hell's half acre, without restraint. The officers that we have put in the posting departments have apparently, due to poor direction, just let the thing slide, and have done little towards concentrating our troops into Canadian Squadrons ...

Stevenson's declaration to the Press in Canada, on his arrival, will give you a clearer picture of exactly what I mean.²⁵

Edwards soon fell ill, however, so that Curtis had to inform the Air Ministry of the new attitude.

Definite instruction have been received at this Headquarters from RCAF Headquarters, Ottawa, to the effect that action is to be taken to ensure that the personnel comprising the aircrews of all RCAF squadrons, is to be made completely Canadian as rapidly as possible.

In spite of the very evident desire to co-operate toward achieving this end on the part of both Air Ministry and this Headquarters, there have been many recent examples of postings which have had the effect of postponing, rather than advancing, the date of arriving at a condition under which all aircrew positions in RCAF squadrons would be filled by RCAF personnel ...

There are RCAF officers with considerable operational experience who are considered competent to fill the squadron and flight command vacancies in the newly forming

RCAF squadrons, yet apparently due to the fact that recommendations for postings are frequently made at the Group level, RAF personnel are posted to positions in RCAF Squadrons at considerable inconvenience to the RAF, when, in actual fact, eligible RCAF personnel are available in other Groups.

As a temporary remedy to this undesirable situation, it is requested that, before postings are made which affect the positions of squadrons and flight commands in RCAF squadrons, the proposed postings be referred to this Headquarters, and that before vacancies in RCAF squadrons are filled by RAF personnel, this Headquarters be asked for recommendations of RCAF personnel, it being understood that, subject to RAF concurrence, the vacancy be filled from RCAF personnel.

Curtis went on to give examples of RCAF officers whom he had considered capable of filling the vacant commands of Nos 416 and 417 Squadrons, but who had been posted to RAF units while RAF COs (one of them a New Zealander) were sent to the Canadian squadrons. To avoid any repetition, Curtis recommended posting RCAF officers to the staff of each command and group to advise them on Canadian personnel matters 'and maintain contact with this Headquarters in all cases of postings affecting RCAF aircrew personnel.'²⁶

It was about time. Not only was the process of forming RCAF squadrons in arrears, but they were (in some cases) only nominally Canadian. Although the aircrew component of the nine single-seat fighter squadrons was 94 per cent RCAF, in the others the figure stood at just 43 per cent at a time when Canadians were still being posted to RAF squadrons in large numbers (see table 2). Determining who was responsible for this unsatisfactory state of affairs was difficult, however. Under the RAF's decentralized system, the Air Ministry played only a very general coordinating role, while Flying Training Command screened and posted aircrew to Advanced Flying Units (AFUs) and the operational commands controlled the OTUs, where crewing-up took place and whence crews were posted to their squadrons. The OTU was the crucial focus. It was there that RCAF crews would, or would not, be formed; and it was there where decisions were taken to post them to RAF or RCAF squadrons: but it was easy for one element in the chain to pass the blame elsewhere whenever Overseas Headquarters enquired about the lack of progress, and it did not take long for the forthright Edwards to become exasperated with the entire process. As he confided to Ottawa in early January, 'I find myself in the state that I want to get at somebody's liver, fry it and jam it down his neck, but for the moment I cannot get my hands on the proper person.'²⁷

The AO-in-C vented some of his frustrations at a press conference in January when he revealed that during a recent visit to eight Article XV units he had found a 'disappointingly low' number of RCAF aircrew in the 'so-called Canadian Squadrons.' Although concerned about how Edwards's outburst might affect his own reputation, Power nevertheless accepted its essential truth and, with Breadner, reaffirmed their earlier instructions to the AO-in-C to Canadianize the RCAF Overseas as quickly as possible. An overall Canadianization

TABLE 2
Canadianization Rates, 1941-5

Date	BCAF Aircrew in BCAF Squadrons	BCAF Aircrew in Non-BCAF Squadrons	Other Aircrew in BCAF Squadrons	Total Aircrew in BCAF Squadrons	BCAF in RCAF Squadrons (Canadianiza- tion rate, %)	BCAF in Single-seat Squadrons (%)	BCAF in Crewed Squadrons (%)
31 Dec. 41	597	— ^a	532	1,129	52.9	94.0	43.0
26 March 42	878	— ^a	421	1,355	64.8	95.5	58.7
26 June 42	928	— ^a	384	1,312	70.7	96.3	64.8
26 Sept. 42	1,261	— ^a	494	1,755	71.8	97.1	67.1
26 Dec. 42	1,656	— ^a	776	2,432	68.1	97.6	64.6
26 March 43	2,032	2,155 ^b	1,073	3,105	65.4	99.4	61.6
26 June 43	1,900	2,213 ^c	952	2,852	66.6	98.7	62.7
26 Sept. 43	2,441	2,534	1,326	3,767	64.8	98.6	61.2
26 Dec. 43	2,689	2,787	1,335	4,024	66.8	98.4	63.6
26 March 44	3,320	3,409	1,288	4,608	72.2	99.6	68.9
26 June 44	4,024	4,272	1,198	5,222	77.2	99.8	75.0
30 Sept. 44	4,855	4,566	1,167	6,022	80.6	99.6	79.1
31 Dec. 44	5,433	4,753	941	6,374	85.2	99.5	84.2
31 March 45	5,160	4,524	691	5,851	88.2	100.0	87.2

Sources: BCAF Squadron ORBs, DHist; BCAF Squadron Progress Reports, DHist; AMP Progress Reports, DHist 73/1174; 'Statistical Return on Canadianization,' DHist 181.003 (D3596); 'Strength Return by Units,' DHist 181.005 (D859)

^a figures unavailable

^b as of 30 April 1943

^c as of 31 July 1943

rate hovering below 50 per cent was unacceptable in itself, but also weakened Canada's claim for additional squadrons. 'If Air Ministry is responsible,' the CAS told Edwards, 'please convey to it in strongest possible terms Canadian Government's desire to use Canadians in Canadian Squadrons and keep continued pressure to this end. Our policy must be to build up Canadian Squadrons as quickly as circumstances permit.'²⁸

With thousands of RCAF aircrew already overseas and so few in Canadian squadrons, Power concluded that the Air Ministry must have obstructed Canadianization in some way, and he told the CAS that if the situation did not improve dramatically in the near future, he would attempt to embarrass the British into action by revealing the lack of progress to the House of Commons and the Canadian press. The CAS relayed the minister's views to Edwards in early February, asking whether 'early and effective remedial action' could be taken.²⁹

Edwards himself moved quickly and boldly. Although cautioning Ottawa that the process was not as simple as everyone seemed to think (in part because of the restrictions against breaking up formed crews), he was prepared to block all postings to RAF squadrons 'until this demand has been met.'

I am putting officers in each command to watch postings ...

I cannot get to the root of the trouble. The Air Ministry is most co-operative but people in the field do not or will not realise the importance of this matter. The Air Ministry has sent and continues to send strong letters to commands. If I cannot make a more satisfactory report by March 1st I shall be prepared to recommend that the RCAF be withdrawn from Air Ministry control and that we organize our own air force, the Joint Air Training Plan Agreement notwithstanding.³⁰

Two weeks later, the air minister signalled to 'approve your action in notifying Air Ministry that serious situation might ensue if proper action not, repeat not, taken in immediate future.' In the meantime, Edwards had reminded Babington of Ottawa's concerns and that 'everything possible must be done to bring about the Canadianization of RCAF Squadrons in this country immediately.'³¹

The new Canadian attitude did not go unnoticed – or unchallenged – by the Air Ministry. Babington was quick to point out, in the case of a recently formed bomber squadron, No 420, for example, that his branch 'did not get sufficient warning from D[irector] of O[perations] of the type [of aircraft] selected when this Article XV Squadron was being formed and we were, therefore, unable to get the RCAF personnel into the Hampden OTU in sufficient time for them to be trained when the Squadron was formed.'³² The AMP went on to assure Edwards that commands would make 'adjustments as far as they can,' but stressed that the RAF 'cannot now break up these crews in order to rectify matters without imperilling their safety and general operational efficiency.' Nonetheless, he had 'again written to Commanders-in-Chief personally ... and impressed upon them the need for Canadianising and maintaining the Canadianisation of the Article XV units.'³³

Certainly his letter to the AOC-in-C of Coastal Command, Air Marshal Sir Philip Joubert de la Ferté, had not minced words.

I am bound to say that, as regards your Command, the position is not satisfactory and indeed it looks as if very little effort has been made at the OTU's when crewing up personnel to ensure that the crews are all Canadian or Australian or whatever the case may be. Indeed, it almost looks as if somebody had taken the trouble to thoroughly mix up the crews so as to ensure that they are *not* 100% Canadian, Australian, or whatever is required.

I must appeal for your personal help in getting the position right as soon as possible. The Dominions, particularly Canada and Australia, are complaining in no uncertain voice that their Article XV Squadrons are not being Canadianised or Australianised as the case may be, and that they are full of other nationalities whilst at the same time their own nationals are scattered about the RAF in more than adequate numbers to man their own squadrons if they had been put into the right place. With the Canadians and Australians this complaint has become a first class political issue, and the Canadians have gone so far as to forbid us to post any Canadians overseas until their squadrons are Canadianised. I am doubtful whether they would attempt to uphold that veto if it was challenged, but you will recognise that feelings are a little strained, and that it is essential for us to remove the cause of this feeling as soon as it possibly can be done.

... I think you should tell your OTU commanders that they have definitely got to crew up Canadians together, and Australians together, and so on, and that they are not to make up mixed crews until they have made up the maximum number possible from each Dominion's personnel.³⁴

These instructions were taken to heart by at least one of Joubert's subordinates. Group Captain I.T. Lloyd's No 16 Group quickly achieved a vast improvement in No 407 Squadron when the replacement of second pilots by observers in Hudson crews allowed for the exchange of RAF for RCAF aircrew with RAF Hudson squadrons in the group. By the end of March, both of No 16 Group's RCAF squadrons, Nos 407 and 415, were 96.9 per cent Canadian – a sharp contrast with No 18 Group's lone RCAF unit, No 404, which remained at a disappointingly low 43.5 per cent even though its three-man Blenheim crews should have been easier to fill with RCAF aircrew than the four-man crews in No 16 Group's two squadrons. As a result of No 16 Group's efforts, the Canadianization ratio in Coastal Command as a whole improved from 45 per cent in January 1942 to 79 per cent six months later.³⁵

There were positive signs in Bomber Command as well, where the acting AOC-in-C, Air Vice-Marshal J.E.A. Baldwin, filling in at High Wycombe prior to the arrival of Sir Arthur Harris, clearly accepted 'the necessity for ensuring that Dominion personnel go to appropriate Squadrons.' Writing to the AOC of Bomber Command's operational training group at the end of January, Baldwin explained that 'if you will let the Operational Groups know when you have Dominion crews available for disposal, I will take the necessary steps to see that the Operational Groups do post them to the right Squadron, anyhow until

such time as these Squadrons are complete and up to establishment with Dominion crews.³⁶

The AOC concerned, Air Commodore F. MacNeece-Foster, shared Baldwin's belief that Canadianization should (and could) be achieved quickly. While some planning would be required, particularly in view of 'the rival calls of type of aircraft and nationality,' he nevertheless did not see 'that there should be any real difficulty.'

My rough estimates of my present pupil population indicate that there are about 1,500 Dominion personnel to 2,700 English personnel. While it may have resulted in Dominion personnel going to English squadrons I cannot see why, if the matter is handled carefully, the Dominion Squadrons should not be full of their own personnel.

This is particularly the case in view of the relatively few Squadrons which are as yet allotted to the Dominions. My 'P[ersonnel]' Staff are going into this matter very carefully and I would indeed ask you as Commander-in-Chief to send an instruction to the Operational Groups so that the question of the suitable allocation of Dominion personnel from the OTUs may be constantly in their minds.

It is really our duty to allot Dominion personnel to a particular Group and we await the instruction of the Group as to what Squadrons they go to; so, au fond, the ultimate responsibility must inevitably be on the Operational Group – always provided that we in the OTUs split up our personnel as far as possible into Dominion crews in the first instance.³⁷

Neither Baldwin nor MacNeece-Foster remained in their appointments for long, however. With Harris's arrival at High Wycombe, the former returned to No 3 Group (where he proceeded to Canadianize No 419 Squadron fully within three months) while MacNeece-Foster was retired from the RAF (on the grounds of age) a month later. Meanwhile, their positive attitude to Canadianization was not shared by many of their colleagues. As Curtis later recalled, 'most of the British officers were very unco-operative – unwilling ... [The AMP] said he would do his best to further Canadianization but go down to another level and they didn't give a damn what he said.'³⁸

The views of Air Vice-Marshal Slessor, AOC of No 5 Group, were typical.

Under the Empire Air Training Scheme the policy was to form what became known as 'Article XVI [sic] Squadrons,' composed exclusively of nationals of the various Commonwealth countries contributing to the Scheme ... I felt that in deciding on the Article XVI system we were missing an invaluable opportunity of cementing the Commonwealth by mixing up the best youth of its many constituent countries side by side in the same squadrons, living and fighting together and thus getting to know each other and forming lasting friendships. I discussed this view with Air Vice-Marshal McKean, the able head of the RAF Mission in Ottawa, and urged it on Mr. Power, the Canadian Air Minister, and his deputy Mr. Duncan. But I was on a bad wicket; the political factor was too strong and Canadian public opinion would not have been satisfied with anything less than their own Canadian squadrons fighting in the forefront of the battle. That is a very understandable attitude, and anyway the Article XVI system was retained

and ultimately produced scores of excellent Commonwealth squadrons within the framework of the RAF – the Canadians had a whole Group, No 6, in Bomber Command later in the war. It was inevitable, but I still think it was a pity from the broad point of view of Commonwealth unity.³⁹

Slessor's attitude was reflected in his record of postings to the two RCAF squadrons in his group; but when Curtis complained to the Air Ministry about the lack of cooperation from 'some OTUs and Groups in Bomber Command,' No 5 Group quickly absolved itself of any responsibility for the fact that only thirty-nine of 172 aircrew in Nos 408 and 420 Squadrons were RCAF. Rather, London was to blame. 'This business of Article 15 Squadrons is awfully difficult,' Slessor explained, 'particularly until we can persuade the Air Ministry to post Dominion crews to the right OTUs serving the proper Dominion Squadrons.' We have had an awful lot of trouble with the Australian Squadrons from this cause. What happens at the moment of course is that we get dribblets of crews at odd times and they have to go anywhere where there is a vacancy; subsequently it is very difficult to move them because it means breaking up crews and usually they are extremely averse to leaving the Squadron with which they have begun their operations.⁴⁰

To demonstrate that he was not opposed to Canadians per se, Slessor went on to point out the large numbers of RCAF crews serving in his other squadrons – refuting his 'dribblets' allegation in the process – but would not allow that they could be moved to his two Canadian units. 'I have one Squadron, No. 61 (Manchester), which has a Canadian Wing Commander commanding it' and quite a lot of Canadian crews, and when the question of the formation of 420 was in the wind I wanted to turn over 61 to be an Article 15 Canadian Squadron and form 420 as an ordinary RAF Squadron. They would not do that without changing the number of 61, and the Squadron were very averse to just that, as, of course, they would be very opposed to having their Canadian crews posted away to other Squadrons.⁴¹

In No 3 Group, meanwhile, Baldwin continued to crew up Canadians and post them to No 419 Squadron with relative ease, casting some doubt on the validity of Slessor's arguments. While the latter's two Canadian squadrons were only 22.6 per cent RCAF at the end of January and 33.8 per cent one month later, No 419 was 58.2 per cent Canadian at the end of January and 83.7 per cent by 28 February. The figures for the end of June presented an even sharper contrast. While the RCAF squadrons in Coastal Command's No 16 Group and Bomber Command's No 3 Group were a combined 94 per cent Canadian at the end of June 1942, those in Nos 4 and 5 Groups (Bomber Command) and No 18 Group (Coastal) were only 54, 52, and 41 per cent Canadian, respectively; none of them had any special aircrew requirements other than the standard numbers of pilots, observers, wireless operators, and air gunners – of whom there were more than 10,000 overseas at the end of June but only 928 in RCAF squadrons.⁴²

* This was, of course, a Canadian in the RAF.

In Fighter Command, where single-seat squadrons did not pose the same obstacle to Canadianization, the difficulties centred around the three night-fighter squadrons and the appointment of RAF squadron and flight commanders to RCAF units. Explaining why, in mid-February 1942, seven of the eleven squadrons under his command should still have British commanding officers, Sholto Douglas maintained (perhaps rightly) that the Canadians had 'so far produced very few officers fit to lead squadrons in battle. We shall have to wait, until some of the Canadian officers in the Canadian squadrons qualify for command. It is no use, however, the Canadian authorities trying to wish on to me middle-aged RCAF Squadron Leaders to command Canadian day squadrons. In fact it would be sheer murder to put this type of officer to lead a fighter squadron on an offensive "sweep."' As for the night-fighter units, Douglas promised that 'every Canadian pilot and Radio Observer who goes through my Night Fighter OTUs will be posted to a Canadian squadron so long as there is a vacancy. This process, however, is bound to take time.'⁴³

Fighter Command's comments did not ring true to Edwards's director of air staff, Wing Commander G.R. MacGregor, himself a veteran of the Battle of Britain with No 1 (now No 401) Squadron – and only, at best, a lukewarm supporter of Canadianization. MacGregor pointed out that nine Canadian officers had 'been promoted to squadron command while serving in the RAF' (although primarily in RCAF squadrons) while four promising RCAF flight lieutenants had recently been posted from Canadian units to command flights in RAF squadrons. 'Nothing is further from [OSHQ's] intention than that Canadian squadrons should be led by officers of limited experience or ability for no better reason than that they are Canadian, but the present policy of posting away from Canadian squadrons officer pilots acting as flight commanders ... can never produce the desired Canadianization.' Douglas's promise to Canadianize his night-fighter squadrons as vacancies occurred, meanwhile, 'will undoubtedly take an infinite amount of time since the C-in-C has stated in a letter that vacancies in Canadian Night Fighter Squadrons will not be created except through normal wastage which at the present rate of casualties means approximately never.'⁴⁴

Tempers flared when, a short time later, Edwards met with Douglas, to discuss some of the difficulties. 'My biggest opponents were Sholto Douglas of Fighter Command and Leigh-Mallory of No 11 Group – it didn't take long to find that out ... I felt that it was a great moment, Sholto, standing high and clear by his successes of the Battle of Britain, was hostile. I told him our problem and he almost laughed. We came to severe grips and I am afraid the language was not as diplomatic as it might have been but I do think that he might turn around to our side.'⁴⁵ Even the good-natured Curtis found the behaviour and attitude of certain British officers difficult to swallow. As he later recalled, 'Leigh-Mallory was one of those who was opposed [to Canadianization]. He was a big fellow and full of hot air. You couldn't talk to him. He was a puffed-up, chest-out, big fellow but prick him and he would collapse.'⁴⁶

Curtis and Edwards nevertheless remained optimistic that progress was possible. When they repeated to Babington their own view that 'crews must be

made up all-Canadian in OTUs' in order to 'keep pals together,' the AMP responded positively enough. 'Most OTU Groups now realise the necessity for taking every step to see that Dominion personnel go to the correct Dominion Squadrons, and I have rubbed this point in to all operational Group Commanders. By the end of the month I feel certain we shall see a real improvement.'⁴⁷

Indeed, after three months of impressing upon the Air Ministry the importance of Canadianizing RCAF squadrons, Overseas Headquarters had reason to be optimistic. The overall percentage of RCAF aircrew in Canadian squadrons had increased from 53 per cent at the end of December to 65 per cent by the end of March 1942, and in those squadrons with two or more per crew the numbers had improved from 43 per cent to 59 per cent. However, most of the improvement was still accounted for by the impressive results achieved by Nos 3 and 16 Groups, whose three Canadian squadrons were now 93 per cent RCAF. The rest in Coastal and Bomber Commands were only 45 per cent Canadian, a scant 10 per cent increase over the December figure. Canadianizing the single-seat squadrons remained a straightforward task, with 95.5 per cent of the fighter pilots being RCAF, but five of the eleven Canadian fighter units continued to have RAF commanding officers even though Overseas Headquarters had convinced Fighter Command to cancel Squadron Leader L.V. Chadburn's posting to the Middle East and appoint him CO of 416 Squadron.⁴⁸

Despite Edwards's cautious optimism, he remained acutely aware that as air officer-in-chief he could only plead his case to the Air Ministry and had no power to implement changes himself. 'My position is ridiculous,' he wrote Power at the end of March, 'I have a high-sounding title with no authority.' Undaunted, however, he assured Ottawa that 'whatever difficulties may be presented, or whatever opposition, personal or otherwise, I shall inevitably meet with, you may rest assured that I will go ahead even if it brings about my social, if not my official, utter damnation.'⁴⁹

Edwards's mandate went well beyond Canadianizing RCAF squadrons, and to increase his influence over the lives of RCAF airmen he wanted to have some input into those Air Ministry processes that affected Canadians in them.⁵⁰ 'I dropped a hint in a devious way,' he had told AFHQ in early January, 'that I would not be satisfied, as far as Canadian representation and control is concerned, with less than membership on the British Air Council.' Apparently it is shaking them to the core, realizing as they do, the justice of the request and yet the extraordinary situation that it would create. Harold Balfour, I am told through my moccasin telegraph, spilt the thing in Council the other day, and was pounced upon by the rest of the Council. I can only wait for a week or two to see which way the cat jumps, before tearing off the silk gloves and going into battle.'⁵¹ To strengthen his hand, Edwards had recruited the Canadian high commissioner in the United Kingdom, Vincent Massey, to press his suggestion, but Massey made no better progress than Edwards and the proposal was flatly rejected, not least because it would 'open the door to similar requests' from Australia and New Zealand. The most that the Air Ministry was willing to offer was an invitation for Edwards 'to attend a meeting of the Council when some predominantly Canadian

matter of sufficient importance is under discussion. This, however, will be a rare occurrence.⁵²

In Ottawa, meanwhile, the AO-in-C's initiative was also deemed 'neither necessary nor desirable' by both Power and Breadner, perhaps because they did not want to create a similar opening for an RAF representative on Canada's Air Council (Robert Leckie, an RAF officer on loan,* sat on council as the air member for training and did not represent British interests).⁵³ A frustrated Edwards could only lament his continuing lack of power. 'As far as my own position is concerned, in spots it is ludicrous, for although we are breaking in everywhere we can and taking control wherever we can, I have no command whatsoever except the handful of men at Headquarters. It just means this, that I, or the man who may replace me, will get tired of breaking his way in, with the consequent nuisance and unpopularity.'⁵⁴

In the one area where Edwards did exercise control – Overseas Headquarters – he had long since taken practical steps to increase its effectiveness. The first problem to be addressed had been to develop a means of tracing the whereabouts of RCAF airmen in RAF units, a point that was driven home to Edwards when he attempted to locate his own nephew. 'No one could tell me and it struck me that if I, as an Air Vice-Marshal, could not find my nephew, what hope was there for the ones who did not have an uncle as an Air Vice-Marshal ... The Air Ministry has decentralized postings (God forbid that we should ever do the same!) and consequently the only way to find out where a man is, is by first knowing where he was last (and few people know) and start on the way from there.'⁵⁵ Accordingly, a Records and Statistics Directorate was established in London with a card index system to keep track of Canadians from posting lists, Post Office reporting cards, and pay ledgers. Although 'only as accurate as available sources permit,' it was 'the first even approximate picture of the situation ever compiled' and enabled headquarters to answer 'an ever growing stream of inquiries, including some which emanate from the Air Ministry itself.'⁵⁶ He also increased the Canadian medical staff at RAF hospitals, set up leave facilities for RCAF airmen, improved the haphazard postal services available at RAF stations, and began a newsletter called *Wings Abroad* with items of specific Canadian interest. In making these moves, Edwards was simply recognizing that the needs of Canadian and British airmen were not identical. 'If an English boy does not get his mail it is unimportant, in that within a short space of time he can get leave to go and see his family or he can send a telegram for nothing. To a Canadian boy, who has no similar privilege, a letter or a parcel is of much greater significance and importance. It boils down to this, that to a Canadian lad, a letter is as equal in importance as four days leave.'⁵⁷

There were changes, too, in the overseas staff. While holding himself, as former AMP, 'entirely blameworthy' for earlier appointments, 'when anyone [who] fell short of requirements in was posted to England for duty,' he now

* The British-born Leckie had spent ten years of his youth in Canada.

asked for good men.⁵⁸ His pleading did not go unheeded, and Wing Commander H.A. Campbell – not to be confused with the anglophile A.P. Campbell – was posted to Overseas Headquarters the following month. Hugh Campbell had previously worked for the air member for training in Ottawa, Air Commodore Leckie, who had found him to be ‘an exceptional officer both in his service knowledge and capacity for hard work. I have a very high opinion of his capabilities.’⁵⁹ That opinion was soon endorsed by Curtis, and in July Campbell replaced MacGregor as director of air staff (DAS) in London because of the latter’s attitude to Canadianization. (It was, he had said, ‘all right in due course, but in the meantime it was necessary to to get on [with the] war and Canadians could do that much better by being mixed with the RAF and other Dominion Air Forces than they could as a separate entity.’⁶⁰) Together, Curtis and Campbell were two of the RCAF’s most capable staff officers,* and both strongly supported Edwards’s efforts to re-establish a measure of national control over Canada’s overseas airmen.

Part of that process involved strengthening the ties between Overseas Headquarters and individual squadrons. To that end, a conference of commanding officers was convened on 6 March 1942, at which Edwards and Curtis acquainted everyone with the new direction in Canadian air policy and impressed upon them the importance that Ottawa now attached to filling the existing Article XV units with RCAF aircrew as quickly as possible.

The Canadian Government has now decided that definite steps must be taken immediately to carry out the original intention and to have implemented the policy for Canadianization of the RCAF Squadrons. The problem at hand now is to effect as nearly complete 100% Canadianization of Article 15 Squadrons as is possible, consistent with efficient operation, within the next two to three months. It is understood, of course, that this cannot be accomplished without some inconvenience and disruption of the even tenure of squadron operation, but as the job must be done, the sooner serious concerted action is taken the more likelihood there is of accomplishing our purpose in the time allotted.⁶¹

In view of the Air Ministry’s haphazard approach to the problem, Curtis suggested that the COs take a more active role and proposed that ‘where other Empire personnel are mixed with Canadians on RCAF formations, immediate steps should be taken to divorce these men and crew up completely with Canadians.’ Although this ran counter to the general policy of avoiding the breaking-up of formed crews, changes in crew composition in multi-engine squadrons (as second pilots were replaced) and the current decrease in operational activity meant that some moves might be possible. ‘It is appreciated,’ he explained, ‘that 100 per cent Canadianization of RCAF Squadrons and Stations is a large order for Commanding Officers. It is not intended that it be pushed to the extent of requiring a squadron to be pulled out of operations, or cause too much confusion. It must be kept within bounds so that operations are

* Both would serve as CAS after the war.

efficient. While no actual dead-line has been set as to when this must be effected, every effort is to be made to accomplish our goal within the next two or three months. Now is believed to be the best time because of the present lull in operations.⁶²

Whether or not it was his intention, Curtis's remarks left the distinct impression that mixed crews were to be broken up and re-formed with RCAF personnel, a misunderstanding that Edwards soon had to clarify. For if there was one way to guarantee British opposition to Canadianization, it was to attack the sanctity of the formed crew.⁶³ 'The policy,' the AO-in-C repeated, 'is to post on arrival from the OTUs only, and Dominion aircrews in non-Dominion Squadrons are to remain in those Squadrons at any rate for their first tour of operations.'

The suggestion that crews were to be broken up because of political pressure is quite unfounded.

It is requested that you will pass this information to all Dominion personnel, and reassure them that they will not be posted from their crews until the completion of their present tour.⁶⁴

While Canadianization lay at the centre of Ottawa's air policy, the 6 March meeting had also allowed Overseas Headquarters to explain the services it provided – medical, chaplaincy, and the like – and to discuss uniquely Canadian approaches to trade-testing for groundcrew, remustering to aircrew, and promotion and commissioning policy. In addition, the COs were informed that liaison officers would be sent into the field to 'cover the Article 15 Squadrons, and afterwards as many other Units where there are RCAF personnel as possible, for the purpose of helping Commanding Officers to deal with problems which arise in the treatment of RCAF personnel ... It was stressed that these officers will not act in the capacity of "inspecting officers," but are provided for the purpose of co-operating with Commanding Officers in dealing as far as possible with problems found, and reporting to this Headquarters any difficulties that cannot be settled during their visit.'⁶⁵

The sensitive question of 'waiverers' – aircrew who suddenly refused to fly – was discussed by the overseas director of personnel, Wing Commander J.L. Jackson, who announced that any recommendation to deprive a man of his flying badge 'must eventually find its way to this Headquarters for submission to the Minister.' 'This subject has been clearly defined by the Minister of National Defence for Air, who has ruled that no personnel shall be deprived of their flying brevet without his approval.' It was clearly Ottawa's intention to handle these cases in as humane a way as possible, without making 'what is already unpleasant any more grim than can possibly be helped' or 'make the man feel that the removal of the badge is the end of the road.' However, he '...stressed that there should be no thought that this Headquarters was trying to handle waiverers with padded gloves, and that if a man was not suitable for flying duties the intention was to remove him from such work as quickly as

possible but to do it without breaking him. If the Station Commander approves, the man will and must fly. There are borderline cases of men who might be made good flyers with proper handling.⁶⁶

On the question of discipline and morale, subjects dear to Edwards's heart, the COs were told that the AO-in-C was 'of the opinion that it is not all it should be at many units throughout the UK.' Part of the problem lay in the fact that 'aircrew, both junior officers and NCOs, had the mistaken impression that once they left their aircraft their responsibilities and duties ceased.' By far the greatest difficulty seemed to be experienced with aircrew NCOs. 'These personnel do not appear to be NCOs in the normal sense of the term and apparently do not consider themselves to be. Many do not assume the responsibilities of the rank nor set the example expected of them. Matters were made somewhat worse through their apparent automatic promotion to Flight Sergeants, which had the effect of making the groundcrew NCO feel that his rank was not worth working for; that his authority had slipped and that his position had been emasculated, all of which is having a bad effect on the general discipline and morale.'⁶⁷

Explaining Canadian policy to RCAF COs was a relatively easy task compared with convincing British officers of its necessity. Even when corresponding with Overseas Headquarters on their efforts to 'Canadianize' the RCAF units under their command, many senior RAF officers attempted to persuade the Canadians that the policy was ill-advised. The AOC of No 4 Group, for one, Air Vice-Marshal C.R. Carr, himself a New Zealander in the RAF, claimed to 'have noticed a decided disinclination on the part of some Canadians in the Group to be posted from the Squadrons where they have been operating and have made friends.'

They must leave the crews they have been working with and start afresh with strangers ...

I feel that your Canadians miss a lot by being posted direct to RCAF Squadrons. In RAF Squadrons they mix and operate with English personnel and personnel from the other Dominions, and all get to know and respect each other. The various personnel gain a great deal from this association and assimilate fresh ideas from many parts of the world, which broadens their outlook.⁶⁸

Not surprisingly, Carr's tepid reaction to Canadianization was reflected in his feeble attempts to place RCAF aircrew in his lone Article XV squadron, No 405. While that unit's ratio of Canadian aircrew improved from 49.3 per cent in February 1942 to 56.6 per cent in March, it declined to 50.3 per cent by July.⁶⁹ If, as Carr had claimed in his letter, he was breaking up crews containing RCAF members, he was clearly not posting the latter to No 405 Squadron.

There was evidence that some Canadians were 'not at all anxious to be put into Article XV units' and that a few of them 'had put in applications to remain with RAF units.' Babington reassured Edwards that the Air Ministry would take no account of these exceptions and that its primary goal was 'to get RCAF

personnel into the RCAF squadrons.' There were, however, 'two reasons which RCAF personnel adduce which have considerable force.'

The first one is that if a Canadian is crewed-up with one or more British personnel or is serving in a RAF unit they more frequently go to RAF homes when on leave or go on leave anyhow with RAF personnel who know the way about this country better than they do. This will not be so easy for them when they are in RCAF units because they will not have the same guidance by RAF people.

The other point is an old one, and that is that they are very happy where they are and they don't want to be moved, having presumably got the squadron spirit.

I do not suppose that the first of these reasons had ever been realised by any of the political people, even if the latter may have been, and you may like to draw their attention to it.⁷⁰

Despite Babington's contention 'that a real effort is being made' to post Canadian aircrew to RCAF squadrons, by applying a very broad interpretation to 'operational efficiency' he could, at the same time, justify posting more highly skilled RCAF aircrew to RAF squadrons even when vacancies existed for all-Canadian crews in Article XV units. Quoting a note from Bomber Command, on 23 February the AMP had reported that 'the big snag is that we have to select more promising pupils for training and transfer ... to the Middle East. Many of the more promising candidates are those from the Dominions and we cannot send poor material to fly these machines out. Another limiting factor is that the next best brand of pupil is selected for training as a pilot for heavy bombers and here, again, a certain number of Dominion personnel are concerned.'⁷¹

There was a logic to this, despite the fact that no RCAF squadron had yet switched to four-engine machines, and Edwards did not contest the procedure. Moreover, given the surplus of Canadian aircrew available in the United Kingdom, the practice of selecting higher-rated pilots for heavy bombers or the Middle East need not have retarded the pace of Canadianization, although it did have an indirect impact in terms of determining who would be available to become flight and squadron commanders. Nonetheless, by June 1942 it was becoming still more evident to Overseas Headquarters that 'to achieve Canadianization, it will be necessary for planning to take place in the OTUs' where crews were initially formed, and where unhelpful AOCs, like No 5 Group's Slessor, could still post RAF crews to RCAF squadrons, and vice versa.⁷²

This time Babington's reply focused on an alleged shortage of Canadian aircrew in the United Kingdom (which meant that 'the necessary quantity of all categories of RCAF aircrew were not always available at the appropriate moment') and on imbalances in output from OTUs which meant that when Canadian crews did graduate there were sometimes no vacancies in RCAF squadrons 'whereas there are vacancies in other units.'⁷³ However, as recently as 15 April the Air Ministry had informed Overseas Headquarters that 'due to congestion in the various stages of training, they will be unable to accept any further RCAF personnel for training' for a two-month period in either the wireless operator

(air gunner) or pilot categories.⁷⁴ 'It is of utmost importance that sending of pilots to this country from SFTSS in Canada should be held up temporarily in view of alarming way in which they are accumulating at Bournemouth. Unless it is held up at once, period of waiting for OTU training, which is already too long, will have to be progressively lengthened.⁷⁵ Under the circumstances, Babington's explanation had a decidedly hollow ring.

Still, opposition to Canadianization was not confined to the RAF, as Edwards discovered during a meeting at No 12 Group Headquarters in April where, much to his chagrin, the greatest hostility came from A.P. Campbell, Stevenson's former SASO and the current commander of RAF Station Digby in Fighter Command. After the meeting, Edwards took Campbell aside and 'pointed out to him that whatever his opinion might be our policy should be furthered by everyone in a position to do so.'

Campbell could not change his opinion. I have given him several days to reconsider his stand and had him come to London on Wednesday. He still holds that our policy is wrong and he cannot change. I pointed out that whatever a man's opinion might be it must be submerged if it conflicts with the policy which has been laid down by those in authority. I have told him that he cannot remain in England under these circumstances and that I am recommending his return to Canada at an early date ... I regret that this action is necessary and would impress that Campbell otherwise is doing a good job and that personal relations previously existing between us have not been disturbed by this. Nevertheless I feel that if Canadianization is to be pursued with any speed whatever such obstructing influences must be removed.⁷⁶

At Edwards's request, Campbell was removed from command of Digby and repatriated to Canada. Posted to Eastern Air Command in October 1942, he resigned from the RCAF in May 1944 on receiving a permanent commission in the British service.⁷⁷

Although the improved Canadianization percentages at the end of March 1942 led Edwards to report that 'considerable progress' was being made, he was convinced that any attempt to establish a national identity for the RCAF Overseas was doomed to failure so long as Canada's air force continued to be administered by Whitehall. Furthermore, even if he had enjoyed some success in improving Canadianization rates, making himself unpopular in the process, there was still the problem of RCAF personnel serving in RAF squadrons. What was required, Edwards told Ottawa at the end of March, was a new approach.

Whether we get the Article 15 Squadrons Canadianized or not is not, to my mind, the proper answer. Under the existing conditions we shall never be able to have a truly Canadian Air Force overseas. I think that in time the only way to do it is to follow roughly the processes that the Americans are proposing. They admit that there must be unified direction, and, as far as Fighter Command is concerned, Chaney, the American Chief here, is recommending ... that their Fighter units and formations should take their instructions from Fighter Command. As far as Bomber Command is concerned, they are all out to have a Bomber Command of their own which will

operate independently but get direction as to objectives from the Air Ministry, where they would have representation, in order not to have the RAF and themselves doing the same job.*

Whether the British Authorities would agree to such a change or not, bearing in mind the Joint Air Training Plan Agreement, I do not know, but I do think that sometime in the future the people of Canada will make the discovery that they have not got an Air Force at all, with consequent complaint. It would, of course, run into more money. Whether Canada would be prepared to meet it or not, or whether we could do it through Lease Lend or not, I do not know, but I do feel that more and more developments will be unsatisfactory ...

To have a unified Canadian Air Force overseas, with Canadian control and, of course, complete co-operation, is, to my mind, our only and final objective, if for no other reason than to meet the demand of national pride.⁷⁸

It was just this policy that Edwards hoped to impress on the Canadian government if he was granted permission to attend the May 1942 Ottawa Air Training Conference that was being organized to extend the BCATP agreement for a further three years.⁷⁹

He was not alone. The air member for organization at AFHQ, Air Commodore A.T.N. Cowley, had arrived at remarkably similar views and presented them to the CAS in April. 'The greatest contribution Canada can make towards ultimate victory,' he told Breadner, 'is to develop overwhelming air strength.'

In the BCATP Canada has demonstrated her ability to organize, build and operate a machine to produce pilots, air observers and wireless operator air gunners in numbers heretofore thought fantastic.

But the role of schoolmaster and supplier of fighting men is not enough. Canada should fight – not as a part (however vital that part may be) of the great RAF, but as a self-trained, self-equipped, self-controlled RCAF ... We must completely equip and train fighter, bomber, reconnaissance and army co-operation squadrons, wings, groups and commands so that as soon as is humanly possible Canada will have a powerful striking force which may be used either for the defence of Canada at home, or in any theatre of war as may be decided by the Supreme Council of the United Nations.⁸⁰

The government, too, was unhappy with the status quo, having informed London in early May that Canada's overseas 'organization should be such as will permit the RCAF to exercise maximum control of RCAF squadrons overseas that is consistent with the maximum efficiency of our united efforts.' The Cabinet also wanted to have the 'Canadian quota of squadrons ... increased in keeping with the increased effort and finance that Canada is putting into training in Canada,' the additional units to 'include the squadrons necessary for close co-operation with the Canadian army ... Most of these ... would be employed operationally in other commands ... until such time as the Canadian army becomes actively engaged in operations.'⁸¹

* A degree of British control that the Americans rejected when they finally arrived in force.

The British representatives arrived in Ottawa with the sure knowledge that 'the main snags are going to be Power's strong desire for 100% commissions amongst aircrews ... and his anxiety to press ahead faster with Canadianisation in Britain,' but they were probably quite unprepared for the extent to which Edwards's recommendations had been adopted as Canadian government policy.⁸² In Cabinet on 22 May, for example, Power had bluntly acknowledged that although 'the United Kingdom were strongly opposed to a policy of Canadianization' and 'many senior RCAF officers agreed with this view,' the tremendous build-up of Canadian aircrew in England was reason enough for proceeding with 'the agreed government policy of providing, so far as possible, for incorporation of Canadian personnel in all-Canadian squadrons.' To absorb the surplus Canadian aircrew, he proposed seeking a specific commitment from the British 'as to a definite number of all-Canadian squadrons' and then, to ensure that they were Canadianized, to give Overseas Headquarters 'control over postings of Canadian personnel.' Similarly, 'Canadian records should be under Canadian control so that the government would have full and up-to-date knowledge of the movements of all Canadian aircrew, whether serving in RCAF or RAF squadrons.' While agreeing that 'it was not practicable to go the length of asking for an independent Canadian Air Force,' the Cabinet concluded that 'Canada should contend for as much autonomy as was possible.'⁸³

Mackenzie King explained the broader motives underlying his government's policy in a subsequent conversation with the governor general, Lord Athlone, to whom he described 'how difficult it was to get the British to allow us to have Canadian squadrons in England. When we wanted to get a thing done we did it through the Americans. We had had, for example, with the Munitions Board, more trouble with the British than we had had with the Americans ... Power was fighting for the right to have Canadian squadrons instead of having Canadians mixed up with Australians, New Zealanders, etc., simply [as] ... part of the Royal Air Force. I spoke of Churchill making no mention whatever of the Dominions and ... asked how he could expect us to get French Canadians to enlist on the score that it was Canada's battle that was being fought and not some Empire affair.'⁸⁴

When the British and Canadian delegates finally sat down to begin their private negotiations on 23 May, Power immediately raised the issue of an independent RCAF overseas. 'The going today has been fairly sticky,' Harold Balfour reported to London later that night, 'and there is a big drive for general Canadianization.' Three days later, Power handed him 'an amazing document' – Edwards's memorandum – 'setting out the ultimate Canadian objective which is really an independent air force in the same way as the USA have, and with no closer relationship than that of the USA. However, Power asked me to hold this document as he had not shown it to Mackenzie King.'⁸⁵

Why Power should have kept Edwards's memorandum from the prime minister, and told Balfour as much, is difficult to understand unless it was a negotiating tactic aimed at displaying his essential reasonableness. The message it contained was not new, Balfour having already been told much the same story by Ralston and Massey, and it did not conflict in any way with what

Mackenzie King was saying. Indeed, for the longer term Balfour was convinced that 'our Government is going to have to face an independent Canadian movement so far as the RCAF is concerned.' In the meantime, however, he was confident that 'we shall be able to surmount Canadianization difficulties, meeting them on many minor points, but giving away nothing in principle if we act swiftly.'⁸⁶

The concessions the British delegates were willing to grant in order to delay that eventuality for as long as possible were outlined to the Air Ministry by Hollinghurst.

We are being pressed very strongly by Canadian Government to implement understanding that eventually there would be Canadian bomber group ... Compromise suggested after tiring discussion is: 405, 408, 419 and 420 Squadrons to be concentrated in a single group and to be located in proximity to each other. Stations at which squadrons are located to be commanded by RCAF officers provided suitable officers available. Station headquarters personnel to be replaced gradually by RCAF personnel when available. Selected posts at Group Headquarters to be double-banked by RCAF personnel so as to provide nucleus Canadian group staff. Any additional RCAF bomber squadrons formed to be placed initially in the selected group. Canadian bomber group to be formed as soon as it is an economic formation. This group will of course be within Bomber Command.

We appreciate fully practical advantages of this compromise including different aircraft equipment of existing RCAF bomber squadrons. Nevertheless with precedent of United States bomber force in mind, Canadians are firm that there must be a Canadian group ...

We have agreed as aim, repeat aim, only that an additional ten, repeat ten, RCAF Article XV squadrons should be formed within normal expansion during 1942. These will include any additional RCAF army co-operation squadrons decided upon. Balance bomber squadrons. Progress to be reviewed in August.

As regards fighter squadrons, Canadians appreciate difficulty of Canadian fighter group but request that two fighter stations additional to Digby be converted gradually to Canadian stations.⁸⁷

By and large, these were not difficult concessions for the Air Ministry to make. The principle of forming a bomber group had already been conceded during Power's trip to London the previous July, and the formation of up to ten additional Article XV squadrons and two fighter stations was not particularly problematic given the 9000 RCAF aircrew now serving in RAF units. Yet Whitehall was not happy, especially with the bomber group proposal. Insisting that 'we must preserve homogeneity of aircraft equipment in each Group,' the Air Ministry nevertheless wanted to retain the freedom to equip Canadian units with any type of aircraft, even if this meant that some of the RCAF's bomber squadrons would have to serve in other groups.⁸⁸

As the man on the spot, Balfour sensed what could be pushed and what was best left alone, and he chose not to pass on London's counter-proposal in the hope that the Canadians would be satisfied with what they had gained and thus

be readier to make concessions in other areas. And, indeed, they were. Having initially asked that '100% commissions should be given to the 3 major members of aircrew [ie, pilot, navigator, and air bomber], irrespective of personnel being of commissioning quality and standard,' after 'long arguments' they had 'abandoned this principle and we have reached an agreement ... by which, in return for some complication of the machinery, present standards of commissioning of United Kingdom, New Zealand and Australia will be maintained with result that Canadians are generally likely to conform. Power definitely stated today that he did not wish to lower the officer class or have lower standards than other partners in the plan but we feel it probable that political considerations may to some extent whittle down this intention.'⁸⁹ Nonetheless, the British minister was confident that he had 'arrived at a formula which, I think, gives us 95 percent of what we want. Australia and New Zealand are standing by us as regards retaining standards, and I believe Canada will, in practice, broadly do the same.'⁹⁰

Ottawa had at least been granted the power to decide for itself the extent to which its airmen would be granted commissions. In future, 'all pilots, observers, navigators and air bombers who are considered suitable according to the standards of the Government of Canada and who are recommended for commissions will be commissioned.' The quota system of the 1939 agreement would still be applied to both wireless operators and air gunners, but 'some flexibility will ... be permitted to ensure that airmen in these categories who have the necessary qualifications are not excused from commissions on account of the quota.'⁹¹ As part of this concession, however, the British also insisted that 'individuals who are to be commissioned at the sole instance of the RCAF authorities will be transferred to an RCAF squadron or be repatriated before such commissioning will be put into effect,'⁹² even if it meant breaking up crews in the midst of their operational tour – a practice that, until now, had been entirely deprecated. Clearly, where British interests were at stake, more flexibility than usual was possible.

When on 24 May the two delegations met privately for the second time, the Canadian quest to gain 'as much autonomy as was possible' centred around the question of 'the status and function of the Air Officer in Chief of the RCAF Overseas.' As Balfour had expected, this part of the negotiation proved to be the most contentious. In a general discussion of the control exercised by Overseas Headquarters over RCAF personnel in the United Kingdom, Power accepted the fact 'that this control should not be permitted to interfere with operational efficiency,' but he felt that a greater measure of control should be possessed by RCAF Overseas Headquarters.⁹³ It was left to Edwards 'to outline his proposals in detail.'⁹⁴

Balfour described the negotiations to the Air Ministry the following day.

* This policy would result in (among others) at least one air gunner who had previously been convicted of murder, had his death sentence commuted to life imprisonment, and then been pardoned gaining a commission. See Brereton Greenhous, "'You Can't Hang a Million Dollars': The Life and Times of George Rutherford Harsh," *Canadian Defence Quarterly* 19 (June 1990): 56–60.

... we have virtually reached agreements on all Canadianisation points except that of status and functions of Canadian Headquarters overseas referred to in following paragraphs. This measure of agreement is subject, however, to your concurring in proposals [for a Canadian bomber group] ...

Apart from this the main outstanding issue is control of RCAF squadrons and RCAF personnel attached to RAF through increased status and responsibilities of Canadian Overseas Headquarters.

We told Power that the questions raised were fundamental in relationships of force of one country in Commonwealth operating on territory of another. Relations are in the main governed by the Visiting Forces Act but Power maintained that Canada's ready co-operation in JATP effort has prejudiced her opportunity of having an air force operating in Britain under self-contained conditions as McNaughton's Canadian army, and is anxious for political reactions [and insists therefore] that a great measure of control of RCAF units by Canadian Overseas Headquarters should immediately be agreed to. We replied that although these questions were doubtless ones which warrant early exploration, nevertheless a Training Conference of Air Ministry delegates in Ottawa was not the appropriate body to do this work and, amongst other considerations, many of the proposals put forward in [the Canadian] memorandum lie in the field of operations.⁹³

Power, however, was not easily deflected. The Visiting Forces Act applied only to the legal relationship between the RCAF and the RAF in terms of the application of military law, and did not address the central issues of control and administration so important to the Canadian government. As a result, Balfour had little choice but to discuss the six measures Power had placed on the table.

1. Canadian Headquarters Overseas shall have the control over discipline and postings and internal administration of all Canadian squadrons overseas.
2. Canadian Headquarters Overseas shall be consulted on matters of strategy and tactics in which Canadian squadrons are concerned.
3. Canadian Headquarters Overseas shall have the full responsibility for discipline and administration of Canadians in reception depots and postings therefrom.
4. Canadian Headquarters Overseas shall have a general supervision over RCAF personnel attached to RAF [and] shall be entitled to enquire into and make direct representations to the Air Ministry regarding the well-being and interests either individual or collective of such personnel.
5. Canadian Headquarters [Ottawa] will be entitled to recall to RCAF overseas or to Canada any individual provided there are no objections on the ground of immediate operational expediency.
6. In order that Canadian Headquarters Overseas shall be fully informed as to proposed utilisation of Canadian personnel and as to changes of Air Ministry policy which marks Canadian personnel, Air Officer Commanding Overseas shall be made an ad hoc member of Air Council to be consulted when matters affecting Canadians are to be discussed.⁹⁴

As might have been expected, these proposals were hotly debated over the next several days – and at a pace set by Balfour. 'Our JATP work has been constant day and night ... We [the British delegation] all agreed that the best policy was to push on and give our Canadian friends not a moment's peace or rest. We have found the atmosphere surprisingly good. We have big differences but there have been no frayed tempers except very occasionally, and [United Kingdom high commissioner] Malcolm [MacDonald] and I have found Power in a cheerful – in fact jovial – and not unhelpful attitude of mind. I hope he lasts the pace which has been and is swift!'⁹⁵

Balfour's confidence was not misplaced. For all of Power's tough talk and posturing, and despite the backing he had from his Cabinet colleagues and Edwards, the British delegation would give up very little. Nowhere was this more clearly demonstrated than over the question of the control of postings to RCAF units. As Edwards had consistently explained (and as a report on Canadianization the following year would confirm), Canadian control throughout the chain from Bournemouth to Article XV squadrons was 'tantamount to the success of Canadianization.' Yet this key recommendation was 'abandoned' by Power, albeit 'after much argument,' during the first day's discussion of the six points. Similarly, although the Canadians continued to seek control over discipline and internal administration, the British stood fast, and 'Power was persuaded to withdraw' these claims a few days later. In a last-ditch effort to gain at least some measure of influence over postings, however, Power asked that 'a separate Canadian P[ersonnel] R[ecption] C[entre] at Bournemouth' be established 'with some control of postings.' It was eventually agreed that 'the O[fficer] C[ommanding] RCAF Personnel Reception Centre will be responsible for the selection of RCAF personnel for postings from the PRC to training and other units.' However, this limited extension of Canadian authority still did not address the RAF's failure to post sufficient RCAF aircrew to the OTUs backing Article XV squadrons in order to form all-Canadian crews. To that end, Power was able to add a provision to the agreement calling for the establishment of 'a central postings organization and a central record office, the staff of which will include RCAF personnel' to facilitate arrangements for posting RCAF aircrew to Canadian squadrons.⁹⁶

Two of the other six points in the Canadian memorandum were settled without much debate. The second proposal for consultation 'on matters of strategy and tactics in which Canadian squadrons are concerned' was also withdrawn by Power, while the responsibility for maintaining a general supervision over RCAF personnel contained in the fourth paragraph merely restated provisions already made in the Ralston-Sinclair Agreement. The sixth paragraph proved somewhat more contentious, but Balfour was once again able to report that 'in face of arguments Power abandoned proposal that Edwards should be ad hoc member of Air Council.' In doing so, however, the Canadian minister had 'stressed that Ralston-Sinclair Agreement had not worked out in practice and that Edwards did not get information he felt Canada should have.' To address these concerns, the British delegates agreed that 'there shall be con-

sultation before decision on administrative matters ...' but not on 'day-to-day routine operations.' The Air Ministry agreed that the Canadian AO-in-C would 'be furnished with advance information about any major questions which arise from time to time affecting the employment of RCAF personnel and squadrons.'⁹⁷

With these issues settled, the point that provoked the greatest discussion was Power's request that Ottawa should 'be entitled to recall to RCAF overseas or to Canada' any RCAF personnel serving in RAF units. Balfour believed that the British delegation had to 'resist this entirely for obvious reasons and also on grounds that it is outside Conference scope. We feel we must stand fast on this.' Having given way on most of the original six points, Power was equally determined to reassert Ottawa's sovereignty over its own citizens, but when faced with Balfour's resolute resistance the Canadian minister asked that the question be referred to the Air Ministry. Balfour agreed, carefully prompting London that 'it would be most helpful if you could reply supporting our arguments against Canada's proposals on merits of case, and our contention that these matters are of a scope much wider than we here can deal with.' As instructed, Sir Archibald Sinclair told Power that the Air Ministry was 'sorry that we have not felt able to accept' his recall proposal 'for the cogent reasons which Balfour will have explained to you.'⁹⁸

When handed the reply, Power 'accepted it courteously' though Balfour felt that 'it achieved no concrete alteration of view.'

Tacked on to this question of administration and powers of RCAF Headquarters overseas in regard to RCAF personnel is the whole issue of Canada's control of her own forces overseas and Power's keen desire for an ultimate position for the RCAF parallel with that the McNaughton and the Army. He and his colleagues are in fact trying to guard the theory of their constitutional positions in a form of words, and will not make a new agreement with anything like Article 14 of the old one which lays down that the output of the JATP other than that required for home purposes shall be at the disposal of the United Kingdom Government.

In face of our continued resistance Power took the issue to his War Council today although Prime Minister was absent. He tells me they were in full support and High Commissioner and I both feel Prime Minister will undoubtedly back his Ministers, especially in light of present difficulties with Nationalist Quebec. Amongst other things we stressed that if we give a right to Canada other Dominions will require the same and allied countries may also press for concessions. We must at all costs preserve our ability to conduct operations and though we are very sure that a conflict is, in practice, never likely to arise between the RCAF and RAF or between the two Governments we must eliminate risks of operational effect on any such conflict.⁹⁹

As Power had informed his British counterpart in the negotiations, the Canadian Cabinet had indeed 'approved the principle of control of RCAF personnel by Canadian Headquarters Overseas, subject to considerations of operational expediency.'¹⁰⁰ Yet, when Balfour insisted 'on the final decision resting with those responsible for the conduct of operations,' Power relented, and a

new clause was drafted for the Air Ministry's approval.¹⁰¹ 'RCAF personnel placed at the disposal of the United Kingdom Government will be attached to the RAF. The RCAF reserve the right to recall any officer or airman so attached to service with the RCAF, subject to operational expediency. The final decision as to operational expediency rests with those responsible for the conduct of operations.'¹⁰²

Even this paragraph did not go far enough in London's eyes, the Air Ministry insisting that "operational expediency" is interpreted in a wide sense and covers operational training requirements, for example, A[dvanced] F[lying] U[nit]s and OTUs. We would like acceptance of this broad interpretation recorded in some way in the records of the Conference.'¹⁰³ After confronting Power with this latest demand, Balfour realized he had pushed the Canadians about as far as he could and informed London that 'short of provoking a major Conference crisis,' he could 'do no more than provide [the] safeguards' contained in the original draft. 'Power declines to put on paper confirmation of a broad interpretation of "operational expediency." Alternatively I tried to extract a confidential note from him to myself. His reply to both proposals is that we must have some trust and politically he cannot "water down" any further the general provisions and he already regrets having conceded the final decision to ourselves but will stand by what he agreed with me. He gave me full verbal assurance that if we trust the RCAF we shall not in any way be disappointed.'¹⁰⁴

By the time the British delegates left Ottawa in early June, they had neatly deflected Canada's drive for greater autonomy by adhering to Balfour's original strategy of 'meeting them on many minor points, but giving away nothing in principle.' Not only had the British been able to circumvent Canada's insistence on its right to recall RCAF airmen serving in RAF units, but they were obligated to form only ten additional Article XV squadrons – a number well short of that required to absorb even half the RCAF aircrew being sent overseas – and with no deadline as to their formation. In the event, the last three Article XV squadrons would not be organized until late 1944; yet in December 1943 less than a third of the 9118 RCAF aircrew in operational employment overseas were in RCAF units.¹⁰⁵

Nonetheless, the Canadians did not walk away from the conference empty-handed. Their gains included the formation of a Canadian Personnel Reception Centre at Bournemouth, with some influence over postings of personnel to the RAF's training organization, and the creation of a central postings organization to facilitate the posting of aircrew to RCAF squadrons. In addition to reaffirming Canada's right to be consulted on 'major operational questions,' they had also agreed that 'any army co-operation squadrons allotted to Canadian Army formations will be RCAF squadrons,' and that Overseas Headquarters would be consulted before posting RCAF squadron COs and all 'RCAF officers of the rank of wing commander and above.'¹⁰⁶

The key British concession, however, had been the agreement to form a Canadian bomber group. Even though the principle of forming such a group had already been conceded during Power's trip to the United Kingdom the previous year, concrete action was now proposed, including the formation of

a Canadian Bomber Group Progress Committee 'to keep the carrying out of this policy ... under constant review.' By conceding these points, Balfour had achieved his main objective of keeping Canadian airmen generally under the RAF's control. The extent to which Ottawa's objectives had been met, however, would only become evident following Edwards's return to Overseas Headquarters.¹⁰⁷

Struggle and Dissent, June 1942–May 1945

It was an optimistic Edwards who returned to Overseas Headquarters from the Ottawa Air Training Conference at the end of June 1942. Back in London, the AO-in-C told his staff that negotiations had been 'most amicable and that the requests of the RCAF were acceded to almost without exception.' Canadianization was now 'to proceed as rapidly as possible,' with the number of RCAF squadrons being increased from twenty-eight to thirty-eight, and its progress 'reviewed in September 1942 to ascertain if a further increase is advisable.' The belief that Overseas Headquarters' status had been enhanced by the Ottawa agreement was also reflected in Edwards's promotion to Air Marshal and the adoption of the new title of air officer commanding-in-chief.¹

That optimism carried over to the successful first meeting of the Canadian Bomber Group Progress Committee on 3 July, which held out the promise of a speedy and relatively straightforward formation of an RCAF group.² The new, more assertive Canadian attitude was again in evidence the following month when Power arrived in the United Kingdom to discuss the overseas air force with the Air Ministry. Informed by Balfour that he might 'anticipate trouble' from the AOC-in-C of Bomber Command, Sir Arthur Harris, over formation of the Canadian bomber group, Power, according to his own account, did not mince words.

To Bomber Command, travelled down with Balfour. He made some reference to Canadianization. I told him I was fed up with going around asking favours and would ask no more. I realized that there was so much antagonism that from now on I would run my own show.

He talked of Bomber Group and intimated that Harris was sticky on it. I said that if Harris mentions it to me I would most impolitely tell him to go to hell and that it was none of his business but a matter of Government policy. Balfour agreed.³

Balfour's apprehension was undoubtedly fueled by Harris's recent fulminations against nationally distinct units and formations. The AOC-in-C was already 'most perturbed' at the idea of forming an RCAF group and found it 'quite unacceptable' to have 'almost the entire expansion going into Canadians for the rest of the year.' 'What with Canadians, Poles, Rhodesians and Australians