

and its application to peace surveys is being carefully studied, but at present the process is generally more expensive than normal methods, and less accurate. The Ordnance Survey has full information on the subject, and is in touch with those who carried out air surveys on the Western Front and elsewhere. Some of these officers are now on the Ordnance Survey staff.

#### Air Ministry Finance

ASKED by Sir F. Banbury, on November 10, what suggestions of the Select Committee of National Expenditure he proposes to adopt, Mr. Chamberlain, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, said that with regard to the presentation of the 1919-20 Air Ministry Estimates to Parliament before the consent of the Treasury had been obtained, definite instructions have been given that in future no Estimates shall be presented to Parliament before the consent of the Treasury has been obtained.

With regard to the strengthening of the position of the Assistant Financial Secretary, Mr. Chamberlain explained that the Financial Secretary to the Treasury had summoned periodical meetings of the financial officers of other Departments, and was considering with them methods for strengthening the hands of the financial officers within their own Departments.

The position of the Assistant Financial Secretary at the Air Ministry was similar to that of the Assistant Financial Secretary at the War Office, each having independent power of criticism and of appeal, if necessary, to the Council through the Finance Member.

#### Air Service

CAPT. WEDGWOOD BENN, in the House of Commons on November 12, asked the Prime Minister whether the Government adheres to its pledge to maintain the unity of the Air Service?

Mr. Bonar Law: The answer is in the affirmative.

#### Resignation of Maj-Gen. Seely

MAJ.-GEN. SEELY (speaking from the Front Opposition Bench): The House generally wishes to know the reason for the retirement of any of its members from the Ministry, and in a very few words I will endeavour to tell the House the reasons which have impelled me to resign the high position which I have hitherto held. When the Government was first formed the Prime Minister asked me to go to the Air Ministry, and in a curious phrase, as announced officially, to "preside over the Council." It was a curious arrangement in that the right hon. gentleman opposite (Mr. Churchill) was to hold the seals of both offices as Secretary of State for both War and Air. It had the obvious anomaly that the Admiralty was left out of the business altogether. But I accepted it because I had a very deep interest in the Air business for a very long time. Indeed, I was charged by Mr. Asquith, then Prime Minister, with the task of being President of the Committee of Imperial Defence, which laid the foundations of our present Air Service. Also we were not then at peace with Germany, and I thought it my duty to take any office in which one could be of service. It involved, obviously, the dangers of dual control. Dual control is a dangerous thing anywhere, and, as my right hon. friend the Secretary of State for War would be the first to admit, it is peculiarly dangerous in the air. Nevertheless, I undertook the duty gladly, and endeavoured to work it, but it very soon became apparent that the thing would not work, not for any personal reason, but because by actual fact and by statute the only man who can preside over the council is the Secretary of State. He cannot divorce himself from his responsibility, even if he wishes to do so. All questions such as these, submissions to the Sovereign, memoranda to the Cabinet, dealings with the responsible heads of other Government Departments, where any question of controversy arises, and, above all, on questions of high policy, must be the duty of the Secretary of State, and of him alone.

As soon as this became apparent I informed the Leader of the House, through my noble friend the member for Chichester (Lord Edmund Talbot) that the arrangement was bound to be inefficient and wasteful and that I would ask for a change. He begged me to wait until after peace was made with Germany. I accordingly did so. When the Prime Minister returned in July, I then put the case before him, and in very precise terms stated that the present arrangement, for the reasons I have shortly given, was one which I thought was not in the interests of the State, and, above all, inimical to the interests of the Air Service, and I asked for a change. The decision was delayed, first owing to the Prime Minister's absence in France, having a much-needed rest, and then owing to the railway strike. The matter came up finally for decision twelve days ago. The Prime Minister treated me with the utmost courtesy and consideration, begged me to reconsider my position, and finally told me that he had decided on the present plan after due consideration, and that he did not propose to abandon it. The only possible

course for me to take, as I am sure the House will agree, whoever of the two of us was right, was for me, to resign and be no longer responsible for an arrangement which I was convinced was wasteful and inefficient.

There is no personal question involved. There is no personal question between myself and my right hon. friend the Secretary of State for War. If any man could have done two things he could have done, with his boundless industry. I have never met so industrious a man—and with his care for the Air Service as a whole, than whom it has had no better friend. If any man could have done it he would have done it, but the thing is obviously impossible. The War Office is a whole-time job, as I have reason to know, and the duty of the Secretary of State for Air—this service, with its vast possibilities—is a whole-time job too. A man cannot be in two places at once, even if he is the Air Minister. The very fact that the offices are distinct, that the Air Ministry is a distinct office, makes it quite impossible for the responsible head of one to be also the responsible head of the other. Still less is there any personal difficulty in the Air Ministry itself. I can say truly, and I have had some experience of public life, that never has a man been so faithfully served by loyal and devoted servants as I have been in my position by the members of the Air Council, and especially by Sir Hugh Trenchard and Gen. Sykes, whom I think the State is fortunate in having at the head of their respective Departments. The issue involved is very clear and very definite, and involves questions of vast importance. By deciding as the Prime Minister has done that the Air Ministry is to receive its guidance from its responsible head, from a man who can only give a fraction of his time to it, it seems to me that three certain consequences follow. First of all, because such a man, however industrious, cannot possibly give enough time to enable business to be efficiently conducted, and it must mean delay, and delay must mean waste—waste of time, waste of energy, waste of money. Secondly, the fact that the Admiralty is left out of the business must make it difficult to work in with that great Department. How can the First Lord of the Admiralty appeal to the Air Ministry for a proper allocation of funds and a proper allocation of energy, with the infinite possibilities of air effort in regard to the Navy, when all the time he finds that the man he is addressing is the Secretary of State for War?

Over and above all, the result of this decision must be that the Air Ministry is condemned definitely to be a subordinate office and an annexe of the War Office, with results, I am sure, inimical to the good of this country. We must be involved in waste of our commercial possibilities. We must be involved in waste of money on a gigantic scale by not taking advantage of the new inventions and of the new power that the air has given us, to enable us to undertake our great and increased responsibilities throughout the world. If anybody doubts that, let him consider what is the possibility of the air. One aeroplane has saved a war in Afghanistan, and in future aeroplanes may do much more. If it be said, on the plea of economy, that it is wise to combine the offices, then I would say that it is wasteful in the extreme. We cannot possibly hope to maintain our position throughout the world unless we use science to the utmost, and especially the science of the air. I could no longer consent to agree to a plan which I thought would have these fatal results, and I so told the Prime Minister. Believing as I do that the result must be a loss of millions of money and of thousands of lives, I asked him to relieve me of that duty. He may say that he knows better. He may say that this is the old dispute between brigade headquarters and general headquarters, and that from that there can be no appeal. In that case there is no appeal, but here there is an appeal. There is an appeal to this House and to this House, accordingly, I appeal.

Lord Hugh Cecil: In view of the importance of the statement to which we have just listened from the right hon. gentleman, shall we be given an opportunity of discussing the statement, and the circumstances in which it has arisen, and, if so, on what day?

Mr. Bonar Law: It is not usual, I think, for a member of the Government to say anything in reply to a personal statement such as my right hon. friend has made, and I should not have done so except for the noble Lord's intervention. Since I am on my feet, however, I desire to say, on behalf of the Government, how much we regret that our right hon. friend has found it necessary to resign, but at the same time to say that it is simply a question of difference of opinion; he takes one view and we take another. As regards time for discussion, we shall, of course, follow the wishes of the House. I cannot name a day, but if there is a desire for such discussion we shall be very glad to afford the opportunity for it.

Mr. Billing: May I ask whether the right hon. gentleman the Leader of the House can say if it is the policy of the Government to appoint another Air Minister?



#### Roll of Honour

The War Office announced on November 12 that Capt. St. C. C. TAYLER, M.C., R. Suss. Regt., attd. R.F.C., who was previously reported missing, is now reported killed.

#### Deaths

Sec. Lieut. CHARLES CRAWFORD BRONCKER, R.A.F. (late London Scottish), who was previously reported missing on November 4, 1918, and is now presumed killed on that date, was the only son of Mr. and Mrs. Herbert Broncker, of The Elms, Parkside, Eltham, and Flotsam, Hythe.

#### Married

Capt. BERNARD JAMES BEETON, M.B.E., R.A.F., was married on November 11 at St. Peter's, Brighton, to DULCIE, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. TILLSTONE, of Brighton.

#### To be Married

The marriage arranged between Capt. EDWYN TYRRELL BECK, D.S.O., M.C., Royal Fusiliers, attached R.A.F., and

Miss MOLLIE DUGDALE will take place on Wednesday, December 17, at St. Mark's, North Audley Street.

#### Items

Maj.-Gen. the Right Hon. J. E. B. SEELY, M.P., was received in audience by His Majesty at Buckingham Palace on November 12, upon his resignation as Under-Secretary of State for Air.

All officers of the old staff of the R.A.F. Armament School are invited to a re-union on December 5, at the Connaught Rooms, Great Queen Street, Kingsway. Assemble 19.00; dinner 19.30. Tickets £2 (obtainable up to December 1). Apply Maj. G. E. Smith, 10, Chevening Road, Brondesbury, N.W. 6.

Col. E. R. ENGLISH, D.S.O., late A.P.M. of the London District, has been appointed secretary of the new London Flying Club, Hendon.

The will of Lieut. EVAN LINDSAY PRICHARD, R.A.F., of Cardiff, has been proved at £4,328.