

Minutes of the  
War Committee of the Cabinet  
August 13th, 1941.

## CABINET WAR COMMITTEE

A meeting of the War Committee of the Cabinet was held in the Privy Council Office, East Block, on Wednesday, August the 13th, at 3 p.m.

There were present the following members:

The Prime Minister,  
The Minister of Mines and Resources (Mr. Crerar),  
The Minister of Justice (Mr. Lapointe),  
The Minister of National Defence (Mr. Ralston),  
The Minister of National Defence for Air  
(Mr. Power),  
The Minister of Finance (Mr. Ilsley),  
The Minister of Munitions and Supply (Mr. Howe).

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The Under-Secretary of State for External  
Affairs (Mr. Robertson),  
The Secretary (Mr. Heeney).

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### R.C.A.F. aerodrome construction unit for service in the United Kingdom

1. The Minister of National Defence for Air referred to an enquiry, recently received from the United Kingdom, whether the Canadian government could supply an aerodrome construction unit, of up to 10,000 men, for work upon runways, perimeter tracks and aircraft dispersal points in the United Kingdom.

After examination by officers of his department it could not be recommended that such a commitment be undertaken. The cost of providing the numbers mentioned would be some \$24,000,000. The R.C.A.F. did not undertake in Canada construction work of the kind and experienced or suitable personnel were not available. Such operations, in Canadian experience, could be performed much better by civilian labour.

2. The Minister of Munitions and Supply expressed agreement with the views of Mr. Power. Such work should not be done by men in uniform. It was possible that experienced Canadian contractors would be available to do the work required, with civilian labour.

3. The Secretary read to the meeting the communication on this subject from the U. K. government.

(See letter of August 9th, 1941, from the High Commissioner in the United Kingdom to the Under-Secretary of State for External Affairs).

and proposing that the British countries make it clear that any attack upon Thailand would be regarded as a casus belli. It was thought that such a stand might check further aggression by Japan.

(See telegram No. 8 of August 11th, 1941, from the Prime Minister of Australia to the Prime Minister of Canada.)

A telegram from the U. K. government described the possible consequences of a breach in relations between Japan and the U.S.S.R.

Information was given as to the numbers of Canadians in Japan.

Relations with Japan -  
Measures to be taken in the event of war

36. The Prime Minister reported that the special interdepartmental committee which had prepared plans for measures to be taken in anticipation of war with Italy, had now considered and reported upon steps to be taken by the various departments of government in the event of war with Japan.

General ministerial approval of the Report was requested as well as specific decisions whether -

(a) the receipt of the "war telegram" would be taken as a signal for the initiation of all of the measures recommended; and,

(b) the registration of Japanese in British Columbia should be made compulsory and extended to the rest of Canada.

(See memorandum of August 7th, 1941, regarding measures to be taken in the event of war with Japan, also report of the special committee on the same subject, dated July 28th, 1941).

37. The Secretary reported that the interdepartmental committee took the view that, in present circumstances, not only should the registration of Japanese conducted in British Columbia by the R.C.M. Police be extended to other Provinces, but also that a penalty should be provided for those who did not register. A draft Order in Council to this effect was appended to the interdepartmental committee's report in connection with the matter of internment. It was proposed that this registration be proceeded with immediately.

38. After some discussion it was agreed that the registration of persons of Japanese race in British Columbia, authorized by the Committee on January the 20th, 1941, be extended, on the same conditions, to the rest of Canada.

Action upon other recommendations in the report of the interdepartmental committee was deferred.

Progress of the war

39. The Prime Minister read a number of communications regarding the progress of the war. Included were references to:

Africa - German pressure upon the Vichy government for concessions in North and West Africa was likely to bear fruit in the near future; the re-enforcement of Dakar was reported.

U.S.S.R. - Recent reports of fighting on the Russian fronts were given.

Sweden - Indications were that Sweden had fallen under German influence.

Air Base at Northwest River, Labrador.

40. The Minister of National Defence for Air observed that the Permanent Joint Board on Defence had recommended the early construction of an air base in the vicinity of the Northwest River, Labrador, for combined defensive and staging purposes. Such a base would require runways, storage capacity, technical housing and equipment, radio and meteorological stations, hangar, and housing for personnel. If the Canadian government were to decide not to undertake this project, the U. S. government were to be invited to do so.

41. Mr. Power said that the U. S. government were unwilling to undertake partial development of the base, though they would be prepared to do the whole job.

In the circumstances, and in view of the urgency, it was recommended that the Canadian government acquire the necessary property and complete the proposed develop-